



DATINI STUDIES  
IN ECONOMIC HISTORY

MEZZI DI SCAMBIO NON MONETARI. MERCI E SERVIZI COME  
MONETE ALTERNATIVE NELLE ECONOMIE DEI SECOLI XIII-XVIII

ALTERNATIVE CURRENCIES. COMMODITIES AND SERVICES AS  
EXCHANGE CURRENCIES IN THE MONETARIZED ECONOMIES OF  
THE 13<sup>TH</sup> TO 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES

edited by  
Angela Orlandi

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I testi pubblicati in questa collana raccolgono i risultati di ricerche originali attivate dalla Fondazione Istituto Internazionale di Storia Economica “F. Datini”, sulla base di un progetto varato dai suoi organi scientifici. Gli autori vengono selezionati a seguito di una Call for papers che indica gli obiettivi scientifici del progetto; la selezione è effettuata sulla base di proposte circostanziate contenenti indicazioni sulle questioni storiografiche che si intende affrontare, l'area e il periodo storico preso in considerazione e la tipologia delle fonti da utilizzare. La Giunta del Comitato scientifico, eventualmente integrata da specialisti, analizza le proposte e seleziona quelle ritenute più valide e coerenti con il progetto generale di ricerca. I testi risultanti dalle ricerche vengono presentati e discussi in occasione della Settimana di Studi. Nel mese precedente al suo svolgimento, essi vengono messi a disposizione dei partecipanti, per consentire il necessario approfondimento della discussione. A seguito delle osservazioni e del dibattito svolto durante il convegno, gli autori inviano i loro testi definitivi. Tutti i testi vengono sottoposti a duplice peer review anonimo integrato da una terza valutazione in caso di pareri discordanti. Questo volume raccoglie solo quelli che hanno registrato un giudizio positivo.

The works published in this series represent the collected original research works initiated by the “F. Datini” International Institute of Economic History (Fondazione Istituto Internazionale di Storia Economica “F. Datini?”), based on a project launched by its scientific bodies. The authors are chosen following a Call for Papers indicating the scientific objectives of the project; the selection is performed on the basis of detailed proposals containing indications regarding the researched economic history topics, the area and historical period considered, as well as the sources used. The Scientific Committee analyzes the proposals, choosing those considered the most valid and coherent with the general research project. The works resulting from research are presented and discussed during the Study Week. During the month preceding the Study Week, the works are made available to the participants to ensure a more detailed discussion. Following the comments and the debate held during the conference, the authors send their final texts, which are submitted to two anonymous peer reviewers; the review is supplemented by a third evaluation in case of divergent opinions. This book only contains the essays recording a positive judgment.



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Erik Aerts

*Alternativo ma non arcaico*

Signor assessore, cari colleghi, studenti e amici della Fondazione Datini,

Con «Mezzi di scambio non monetari e merci e servizi come monete alternative» il tema centrale del convegno del Datini di quest'anno entra nel vivo della storia economica. Il comportamento mutevole del denaro, sia esso alternativo o meno, influenza infatti i movimenti economici, ma determina anche i prezzi, i salari, il potere d'acquisto, l'occupazione e altre variabili economiche. Alcuni recenti bellissimi libri sostengono addirittura che il denaro non solo abbia contribuito allo sviluppo del capitalismo, ma anche reso possibile l'economia di mercato, il commercio internazionale, la pubblica amministrazione e la civiltà umana (Desan 2014; Goetzmann 2016). Il Professor Philippe Bernardi, con la sua prolusione, vi introdurrà certamente al tema in modo esauriente, ma permettetemi di spiegare in poche parole la sua importanza e anche perché il Comitato scientifico abbia deciso di dedicare il convegno di quest'anno a questo argomento.

È risaputo che i più antichi metodi di pagamento nella storia dell'umanità consistevano in materiali e prodotti di valore come pellicce e pelli, conchiglie, sale, semi di cacao, tabacco e ovviamente bestiame. Tra il VII e l'VIII secolo prima della nostra era, la moneta metallica fu introdotta quasi contemporaneamente, ma in modo indipendente, in Cina e in Asia Minore. Da quel momento in poi, la cosiddetta economia monetizzata si diffuse nell'impero romano, nel Medioevo e nella prima età moderna. In questi ultimi due periodi emerse un sistema trimetallico con monete d'oro, d'argento e di rame in cui, secondo una divisione interna del lavoro, l'oro e le grandi monete d'argento erano usate per il commercio internazionale, le monete d'argento più piccole per le transazioni quotidiane e le monete di piccolo taglio, contenenti principalmente rame, come spiccioli. Insieme alla diffusione di ogni genere di moneta di conto, sia la moneta fisica che circolava realmente che il denaro immateriale, «la moneta fantasma» (Cipolla 1957, 51-52; Wood 2002, 76; also Goldthwaite 2009, 57) che esisteva solo su pergamena o carta, svolgevano le note tre funzioni fondamentali definite oggi dagli economisti: misura del valore, mezzo di scambio e riserva di ricchezza (Langholm 1983, 39-40). Questa immagine era ancora molto presente nelle relazioni e discussioni della Settima Settimana dell'Istituto Datini quasi mezzo secolo fa (Barbagli Bagnoli 1981).

Secondo quest'ottica, si presumeva che l'economia monetizzata rappresentasse uno stadio di sviluppo superiore rispetto alla cosiddetta economia primitiva, in cui prevalevano i pagamenti in natura e le transazioni di baratto. Inoltre, questo modello

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Erik Aerts, *Alternativo ma non arcaico*, © Author(s), CC BY 4.0, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0347-0.02, in Angela Orlandi (edited by), *Mezzi di scambio non monetari. Merci e servizi come monete alternative nelle economie dei secoli XIII-XVIII / Alternative currencies. Commodities and services as exchange currencies in the monetarized economies of the 13<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries*, pp. 1-4, 2024, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 979-12-215-0347-0, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0347-0

di economia monetaria medievale e della prima età moderna poggiava sulla forte convinzione di un processo di sviluppo lineare, persino di una progressione teleologica in cui il denaro si è evoluto da oggetti fisici a monete di metallo prezioso fino a cartamoneta senza valore; un'evoluzione che sarebbe continuata senza sosta, fino ad arrivare al denaro digitale, oggi basato semplicemente sulla fiducia e senza più alcun riferimento al mondo fisico. Solo nei periodi bui, come quelli prolungati di guerra, le persone sarebbero tornate alle vecchie abitudini pagando con prodotti o merci come francobolli o sigarette.

Da allora la ricerca accademica ha fatto molta strada e la realtà monetaria del passato si è rivelata più complessa di quanto si ritenesse 50 anni fa. Ora sappiamo che i mezzi di scambio medievali e della prima età moderna erano molto lontani dai magnifici pezzi d'oro e d'argento delle collezioni museali e consistevano piuttosto in un miscuglio di monete vecchie, logore, tagliate e di scarsa qualità (Muldrew 2001, 90). Ricorrenti periodi di scarsità monetaria o carenza di lingotti e la continua mancanza di monete di piccolo taglio (Goldthwaite 2005, p. 614) costrinsero le persone a usare mezzi di pagamento alternativi e strumenti di scambio diversi, come i trasferimenti cartacei e l'onnipresente «mare di credito» (Muldrew 2001, 84). Le persone comuni si affidavano al credito anche per acquistare cibo e bevande, mentre i mercanti usavano la moneta «il più raramente possibile» (Bolton 2017, 100; Spufford 2008, 43-44). Nonostante la monetizzazione delle campagne e dell'economia rurale nel lungo XIII secolo (Spufford 1988, 382), i contadini di alcune regioni erano impegnati in un sistema di reciproco scambio di lavoro, beni e servizi. Poiché questi prodotti venivano sistematicamente valutati in termini monetari, lo scambio non costituiva una primitiva forma di baratto (Lambrecht 2003, 237, 244).

Le recenti ricerche non considerano queste transazioni in natura come un'arcaica reliquia di un'economia 'naturale' povera di contante e neppure come il segno di una forma sottosviluppata di scambio. Questi mezzi di pagamento alternativi o «quasi-denaro» sono attualmente visti come fenomeni sociali essenziali nell'economia monetizzata, presenti in una larga varietà di transazioni giornalieri, finanziarie, commerciali e manifatturiere, e non solo nei periodi di carenza monetaria o di svalutazione delle monete. Questi mezzi di scambio non monetari erano largamente usati in transazioni quali imposte, vendite, locazioni, affitti, rendite, pensioni, estinzioni dei debiti, obblighi signorili, regali e doni, doti e, in particolare, salari che spesso venivano pagati in natura (Muldrew 2018).

Da un'attenta lettura dei 26 interventi di questo convegno si apprende che i mezzi di scambio alternativi consistevano prima di tutto in beni e più specificatamente in prodotti di base come cibo (cereali, formaggio, carne, sale), bevande, abitazioni e ripari, vestiti (lana, tessuti) e scarpe, ma anche animali (buoi, pecore, maiali, cavalli), cose per la casa (stufe, paioli, piatti, coperte, cuscini), attrezzi per il commercio e la manifattura (lingotti o barre di ferro, olio d'oliva, legname), oggetti personali (inclusi coltelli e spade), oggetti di lusso (seta, ma anche gemme, perle e altri gioielli) e beni immobili. Oltre ai beni, si usufruiva di tutti i tipi di servizi lavorativi (dal lavoro della terra alla tintura dei tessuti) in cambio di altri servizi senza contanti. Da questo elenco sembra che quasi tutto potesse essere usato come mezzo di scambio quando una

delle parti coinvolte preferiva non usare denaro contante o non poteva farlo. In qualche raro caso anche gli esseri umani venivano usati come ostaggi o schiavi.

Le stesse relazioni dimostreranno che le monete alternative non si trovavano solo nella vita quotidiana dei contadini e degli artigiani, dei piccoli commercianti e degli uomini d'affari locali, ma apparivano anche nelle transazioni di mercanti-banchieri internazionali e negli ambienti dei funzionari e dei burocrati, nelle amministrazioni delle chiese, delle cattedrali, dei monasteri e delle istituzioni benefiche. Gli studiosi proveranno in modo convincente che l'uso dello scambio non monetario non si riferiva affatto a condizioni economiche più primitive o a una fase precoce e poco sofisticata nel percorso verso un'economia pienamente monetizzata. Infine, i contributi in questo convegno forniranno risposte alle intriganti domande sul perché le persone si siano impegnate in queste transazioni senza usare una misura monetaria del valore e sulla possibile relazione tra l'uso di mezzi di scambio alternativi e una particolare situazione economica.

Non mi resta che ringraziare tutti i collaboratori di questa Settimana, gli autori naturalmente, ma anche i partecipanti alla tavola rotonda, i colleghi del Comitato scientifico, le signore della segreteria e specialmente il collega Philippe Bernardi che non solo ha suggerito l'interessante tema, ma che si è anche reso disponibile a preparare la prolusione.

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Philippe Bernardi

Traduzione di Angela Orlandi

*Prolusione*<sup>1</sup>

La mostra dal titolo poetico *L'albero degli zecchini. Moneta e mezzi di scambio alternativi: dalle origini a un futuro da comprendere*, che è stata allestita al Museo di Palazzo Pretorio di Prato<sup>2</sup>, invita a un lungo viaggio nel tempo attorno al tema del denaro nella storia: dagli oggetti che potremmo definire 'moneta prima della moneta' agli strumenti virtuali come il denaro elettronico e digitale. La collezione di 'monete primitive' di Pietro Voltolina, avviata all'inizio degli anni Settanta del Novecento, mostra l'infinita varietà degli oggetti di scambio, di cultura e di socialità: lingotti, noci di cola, fave di cacao, foglie di tabacco, polvere d'oro, perle di vetro, conchiglie, oggetti di madreperla, tessuti, armi e gioielli, punte di freccia, piume, perle.

Essa introduce perfettamente questa Settimana tramite il confronto tra collane di dischi fatti di uova di struzzo (dal Nilo Blu al Kalahari) o di gusci di lumaca (Achagua dal Venezuela), di denti di cane, di facocero, di delfino o di pipistrello (Melanesia). Tutti questi oggetti ci segnalano la dimensione sociale e politica che possono assumere i mezzi di pagamento. Il contributo dell'antropologia è fondamentale in questo campo e ribalta una concezione troppo strettamente economica dell'uso del denaro (Muldrew 2001, 118),<sup>3</sup> come il rifiuto del baratto al di fuori degli scambi monetizzati (Humphrey e Hugh-Jones 1998<sup>2</sup>).

La concezione del baratto come «scambio diretto di beni o servizi senza l'uso di denaro» (Silem e Albertini 1995) affonda le sue radici in una 'storia della moneta' che deve molto al XVIII secolo e ad Adam Smith (Polanyi (1944) 1967; Chapman 1980; Humphrey 1985; Servet 1994; Graeber 2011). Nel suo libro sulla *Ricchezza delle Nazioni*, Smith (1776) spiega che la divisione del lavoro deriva da una «naturale inclinazione al commercio, al baratto e agli scambi» (Smith 1776, 16) e che

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<sup>1</sup> Desidero ringraziare sinceramente Laurence Fontaine, Angela Orlandi e Erik Aerts per l'aiuto fornito nella preparazione di questo articolo.

<sup>2</sup> *L'albero degli zecchini. Moneta e mezzi di scambio alternativi: dalle origini a un futuro da comprendere*, mostra a cura di Angela Orlandi, aperta dal 14 maggio al 19 novembre 2023 nelle sale espositive del Museo di Palazzo Pretorio (Orlandi 2013).

<sup>3</sup> «The modern assumption that money can be interpreted as a neutral means of exchange is in part an illusion based on the fact that most people now take for granted the efficiency of the banking system to move, store and maintain the value of money». Si veda anche, tra gli altri: Fontaine 2008a; Boone e Howell 2007.

l'aumento di questa divisione porta alla ricerca di «[...] a certain quantity of some one commodity or other, such as he imagined few people would be likely to refuse in exchange for the produce of their industry» (Smith 1776, 28). «Ragioni irresistibili» (*irresistable reasons*), secondo Adam Smith, portarono all'adozione dei metalli a questo scopo ed «It is in this manner that money become in all civilized nations the universal instrument of commerce» (Smith 1776, 35).

Questa visione, sostenuta dall'economia politica che stava diventando una disciplina autonoma (Servet 2001, 16), presenta il baratto come una modalità di scambio «primitiva», e proclama la «modernità del denaro» (Weber 2000). Si dispiega una storia che porta, come si legge sul sito ufficiale del Ministero francese dell'Economia, delle Finanze e della Sovranità industriale e digitale, «dal baratto al denaro» (Ministère de l'économie, des finances et de la souveraineté industrielle et numérique s. d.): una formulazione in cui il confronto tra i due termini trascrive sia l'anteriorità che l'incompatibilità.

Karl Polanyi, tuttavia, già nel 1944 aveva richiamato l'attenzione sull'«importanza fondamentale del baratto e dello scambio» nell'economia capitalista, chiedendo di «abbandonare le superstizioni economiche del XIX secolo» (Polanyi (1944) 1967, 56).<sup>4</sup> L'economista Jean-Michel Servet preferiva il termine «favola» o «mito» per indicare questa concezione del baratto primitivo (Servet 1977; 1988; 2001). Un 'mito' che, sostenendo certi pregiudizi, vede negli scambi monetarizzati la più compiuta illustrazione della socializzazione.

Lungi dall'essere scomparso, il baratto è ancora presente «nel cuore delle economie monetarie», per usare le parole di Fernand Braudel (1967, t. 1, 338). L'antropologia, testimonia che, «nell'una o nell'altra delle sue varie forme», il pagamento in natura coesiste con altre forme di scambio come il dono, la permuta, il credito, il commercio formalizzato e lo scambio monetizzato di beni (Humphrey e Hugh-Jones 1998, 2). Infatti, «il denaro non cancella il baratto. Non lo rende obsoleto né lo sostituisce» (Chapman 1980, 54-55). Inoltre, l'esistenza stessa del «baratto puro» è messa in discussione (Humphrey 1985, 48; Chapman 1980, 36) e, nel suo libro pubblicato nel 2011 (*Debt: the first 5000 years*), l'antropologo David Graeber, rivisitando il «mito del baratto», arriva a scrivere che «In realtà, tutto fa pensare che il baratto non sia un fenomeno particolarmente antico, e che si sia diffuso davvero solo in epoca moderna» (Graeber (2011) 2016, 59). L'uso del baratto nella Russia post-sovietica ha attirato particolarmente l'attenzione degli antropologi e ha messo in luce la possibile coesistenza di baratto e denaro. Sottraendo il baratto a una forma di esotismo, ha portato a interrogarsi sulle sue interpretazioni tradizionali (Woodruff 1999; Brana, Mesnard e Zlotowski 2002; Sapir 2002, 90-91; Dufy 2008).

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<sup>4</sup> «The dominating part played by markets in capitalist economy together with the basic significance of the principle of barter or exchange in this economy calls for a careful inquiry into the nature and origin of markets, if the economic superstitions of the nineteenth century are to be discarded». È nella selezione di riferimenti che propone alla fine del volume (p. 274 e segg.) che vengono proposti stralci dell'opera di Karl Bücher (1917) o Raymond First (1929) dimostrando che: «Individual acts of «truck, barter, and exchange» are only exceptionnally practiced in primitive society».

La rilettura delle pratiche di baratto, scambio o pagamento in natura così intrapresa non può lasciare indifferenti gli storici. Offre strumenti concettuali per avvicinarsi a un interrogatorio offre strumenti concettuali per affrontare un interrogativo già delineato da Roberto Sabatino Lopez nell'introduzione alla Settimana dedicata, nel 1981, a *La moneta nell'economia europea* e in cui lo storico invitava a non isolare «la moneta metallica dalle altre monete o quasi monete come gli strumenti di credito e gli oggetti di baratto» (Lopez 1981, 3). Negli ultimi anni, diversi lavori di ricerca hanno dedicato un capitolo o qualche paragrafo al fenomeno, facendo emergere gradualmente il posto originale e importante che queste monete alternative possono aver occupato nell'economia dei secoli XIII-XVIII.

Tentare di fare il punto su queste pratiche economiche su larga scala è sembrato un compito all'altezza delle «Settimane di studio» di Prato, che qui mi limito a presentare, in una prolusione principalmente dedicata al tema del baratto in molti dei suoi aspetti.

Per farlo, tornerò innanzitutto sulla coesistenza di baratto e denaro, prima di considerare la diversità delle forme assunte dal pagamento in natura e concludere le mie osservazioni con una discussione sui suoi ambiti di applicazione.

## 1. La coesistenza: Moneta e monete alternative

Molto prima di Adam Smith, la questione dell'origine del denaro e del suo rapporto con il baratto preoccupava pensatori come Nicolas Oresme che, nel XIV secolo, scriveva che per superare le difficoltà poste dagli scambi in natura «gli uomini immaginarono l'uso del denaro: esso sarebbe stato lo strumento di scambio delle ricchezze naturali» (Oresme 1989, 48).

### 1.1 Permutatio e valore di scambio

La comprensione del baratto sembra essere strettamente legata alla nozione di scambio o permutatio, che viene intesa in modo più o meno ampio a seconda del secolo e della scuola di pensiero. Non è mio scopo né mia competenza tentare un'analisi di questi concetti giuridici ed economici complessi e persino ambigui. Mi limito a constatare che la nozione di scambio può aver abbracciato, in certi periodi, tutti i contratti, ma in epoca moderna è arrivata a riferirsi solo alla vendita; «il nome di baratto [è] stato attribuito al trasferimento di cose» (Poughon 1987, 131). Mi accontento di sottolineare che la limitazione dello scambio alla vendita sostiene una certa idea dell'evoluzione delle pratiche.

Se invece si adotta una concezione ampia di scambio o *permutatio* (Servet 1994, 104),<sup>5</sup> le parole di Nicolas Oresme non escludono il ricorso a un baratto

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<sup>5</sup> «Que trouve-t-on dans ces textes anciens? En général une phrase laconique comme celle-ci: “avant la monnaie existait la permutation”. Certains ont traduit un peu rapidement *permutation* par *troc*».



«imperfetto» in cui il denaro consentirebbe di raggiungere un accordo sul valore di scambio di oggetti e servizi.

Una piccola nota di conti del pittore Nicolo' di Piero Gerini conservato nell'archivio Datini lo illustra attraverso i pagamenti legati almeno in parte alla pittura del tabernacolo del giardino del palazzo del Mercante (Romagnoli 2012), nel 1391:

Chominciai il lavorio di Francesco di Marcho da Prato a dì XI d'aghosto anno detto sopra.

Ricievetti da Francesco di Marcho per parte di pagamento del suo lavorio per Ia dodicinia di lino f. uno... f. 1 d'oro.

Ricevetti ancora staia sei di grano per soldi trenta lo staio, a dì [...] d'aghosto, in tutto l. nove... l. 9

Ricevetti da fondaco in Firenze, dì 18 di settembre... f. 6 d'oro.

Ricevetti a dì [...] di settembre dal fondaco suo in Firenze ... f. 4 d'oro;

Ricevetti di 30 di settembre dal fondaco suo f. quattro... f. d'oro.

Ricevetti di 25 d'ottobre braccia tre  $\frac{3}{4}$  di panno cilestrino per fare chalze... l. 8 s. 17 pi.<sup>6</sup>

[...]

I pagamenti effettuati da Francesco di Marco per remunerare il lavoro del suo pittore non sono tutti effettuati, come si vede, in denaro. Vengono citati lino, grano e «cilestrino per fare chalze», ma la cosa più interessante è che anche se il pagamento del servizio è in parte “in natura”, il pittore si preoccupa di registrarne l'equivalente in denaro.

## 1.2 Monete alternative, monete invisibili

Questa pratica è ampiamente attestata e si può trovare applicata nelle valutazioni relative a perizie o stime di beni e servizi (De Munck e Lyna 2015; Stabel 2008; Boone e Howell 2008, 53-70; *Experts et expertise au Moyen Age* 2012; Denjean e Feller 2013; Feller e Rodríguez 2016; Boucheron, Gaffuri e Genet 2016). Ha attirato l'attenzione dei matematici e fornisce, ad esempio, il materiale per diversi problemi aritmetici proposti da un trattato trevigiano del 1478 (Swetz 1987). L'anonimo autore sottopone ai suoi lettori tre casi: i primi due riguardano un baratto di vestiti con lana; il terzo merita di essere presentato in dettaglio per la complessità dello scambio che propone.

La dichiarazione è la seguente:

Due mercanti desiderano barattare. Uno di loro ha 1 pexo di balsamo del valore di 150 ducati. Vuole scambiarlo con tre tipi di merci, cioè cera a 5 ducati al quintale, zucchero a 6 ducati al quintale e zenzero a 8 ducati al

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<sup>6</sup> Archivio di Stato di Prato (ASP), *Datini*. 1173. *Miscellanea, Documenti d'Arte. Folio di lavori di Nicolo' Gerini*. c. 1115r.

quintale. Desidera avere la stessa quantità per tutti e tre i beni (Swetz 1987, 152-53).

L'operazione è, ovviamente, di natura teorica, ma è in linea con le preoccupazioni pratiche del mondo mercantile, da cui sono tratte le situazioni descritte. Infatti, come ha notato Matthieu Scherman (2015), troviamo riferimenti a questa pratica in alcuni trattati di contabilità, tra cui quello di Luca Pacioli, stampato a Venezia nel 1494.

Riconoscendo «la permuta di beni» come uno dei nove modi «in cui si fanno abitualmente gli acquisti» (Pacioli 1975, 199), il Pacioli dà il seguente consiglio:

Se hai disposto di beni mediante scambio, come, ad esempio, mille libbre di lana inglese scambiate con, tra l'altro, duemila libbre di pepe, e chiedi come devi registrare questa operazione nel Libro, ti dico di fare così. Stimare il valore in denaro del pepe, secondo la vostra idea. Supponendo di averlo fissato a dodici ducati al quintale, le duemila libbre valgono 240 ducati. Quindi accreditate alla lana i 240 ducati per i quali si suppone che l'abbiate venduta" (Pacioli 1975, 302-03).

Il denaro viene usato per 'valutare' il prezzo delle merci, non per pagarle; il corrispettivo può essere monetario senza implicare un effettivo pagamento in denaro (Muldrew 2001, 83; Dufy e Weber 2007, 40). Ma la preoccupazione del mercante in questo caso è soprattutto quella di come registrare la transazione di baratto nel suo libro contabile.<sup>7</sup> Il denaro facilita la vita del mercante perché può essere usato come unità di conto.

Il modo di registrazione raccomandato da Pacioli enfatizza il substrato monetario della transazione, cancellando così lo scambio di merci. Si pone allora il problema della nostra capacità di apprezzare la portata del fenomeno del baratto, dipendenti come siamo da fonti contabili la cui logica interna ci porta a ridurre la maggior parte delle transazioni a un equivalente monetario.

### 1.3 Il baratto nel mercato

Questi scambi di beni e servizi, lungi dal sembrare rispondere a una logica propria ereditata da una lontana economia naturale, sono, come possiamo vedere, pienamente parte di un'economia monetaria di cui adottano lo standard e in cui si fondono letteralmente. In questo contesto, sono solo un "modo" tra gli altri di comprare e vendere basato su operazioni che non sono 'primitive' nel senso di 'rozze' o 'grezze'.

Se ci allontaniamo dal mondo dei mercanti, lo sfondo monetario di certi scambi può diventare meno evidente. Che dire del *companage*, quella parte del salario pagata in cibo? E il censo in natura? E gli affitti à *mi-fruits* (*champart*, *mezadria*, *infurción*,

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<sup>7</sup> Si veda, ad esempio, per il settore dell'edilizia (Bernardi 2004). Philippe Lardin parla del «caractère souvent fictif des chiffres indiqués dans les comptabilités» (1999, 146).

*tasque o Teilbauverträge*)? Cosa possiamo dire, più in generale, degli oneri e dei compensi che si riferiscono a una quota della produzione?

In alcuni casi, siamo al limite del dono o di un simbolismo più o meno feudale che non è mai lontano in termini di proprietà terriera o di relazioni professionali (Bernardi e Lauwers 2021). Ciò non significa che il riferimento monetario sia totalmente assente da queste pratiche.

Al di là della mescolanza di numerosi pagamenti in parte in denaro e in parte in natura, sembra che proprio la parte di salario pagata in natura - il più delle volte in cibo - potesse essere valutata in denaro, come dimostra, ad esempio, la fissazione nel 1212 dei salari giornalieri dei carpentieri londinesi a tre denari più cibo (*conredium*) o a quattro denari, senza cibo. O ancora, nella stessa città ma nel 1446, a quattro denari con cibo, contro cinque e mezzo senza (Salzman 1952, 68, 75). I vestiti 'regalati' dal maestro al suo apprendista non erano esenti da una stima, come nel 1523 quando, ad Aix-en-Provence, il contratto di lavoro di un futuro scalpellino specificava che avrebbe ricevuto: un vestito del valore di 30 grossi, un paio di scarpe del valore di due fiorini e un berretto del valore di otto grossi (Bernardi 1995, 94).

Per quanto riguarda i censi e le altre royalties e remunerazioni relative a una quota della produzione, è sufficiente vedere che sono inclusi in un'economia monetaria se notiamo che, a seconda della situazione economica, essi (come la parte in natura dei salari) possono essere sostituiti e ricevuti in una quota fissa o in denaro.

Come si vede, lo sfondo monetario emerge rapidamente quando si considerano le operazioni di baratto non singolarmente ma nel loro insieme, nei periodi che ci interessano. Non posso dire se il 'baratto puro' esista o sia esistito, ma è chiaro che «il pagamento in natura e il pagamento in denaro non si escludono a vicenda» (Fabre 2021, 347). E il fatto che alcuni pagamenti possano combinare denaro e beni o servizi indica chiaramente la natura porosa del confine tra beni, servizi e denaro. Tali pagamenti 'misti', inducono uno storico come Philippe Wolff a «vederli come una sorta di sostituto del denaro, con ogni probabilità» (1954, 347).

Senza soffermarmi ulteriormente, vorrei ora considerare le forme e i mezzi adottati da questi scambi di beni e servizi.

## 2. Forme e mezzi di scambio di beni e servizi

Il pagamento in natura, come suggeriscono le nostre fonti, non era probabilmente utilizzato in modo uniforme; il suo impiego variava a seconda delle epoche, del luogo e del tipo di scambio previsto. Era comune nell'interno dei Paesi Bassi meridionali dove, negli anni 1754-1778, «i pagamenti in denaro rappresentavano solo l'1,3% del valore del lavoro», ma era meno comune nello stesso periodo nelle grandi fattorie della Vallonia (Lambrecht 2003, 242-43).

Le varie strade che questa pratica può prendere le permettono, in ogni caso, di interessare, più o meno, tutti i contesti e di adattarsi a molti tipi di atti. Uno studio regionale come quello condotto da Lisa Caliste sulle botteghe e le imprese della regione di Lodève nel XV secolo (Caliste 2021, 512-29) mette così in evidenza i

diversi tipi di contratti in cui si poteva ricorrere allo scambio in natura. Atti di vendita, «in contanti, a credito o anticipati»; «riconoscimenti di debito e transazioni amichevoli»; «contratti di lavoro»; «contratti di cessione a tempo determinato di un bene mobile o fondiario»; «doti e donazioni per servizi resi»; ecc. L'elenco delle transazioni in cui tutto o parte dello scambio può essere fatto in beni o servizi è lungo, ma tutte, più o meno, fanno riferimento a una valutazione.

## 2.1 Tra prezzi di mercato, calcoli eruditi ed expertise: la valutazione

Nel contesto degli scambi in natura, i metodi di valutazione di beni e servizi non sono sempre facili da ricostruire. Per i beni e i servizi più comuni si fa spesso riferimento al prezzo di mercato. Ma si fa riferimento a un prezzo di mercato che può tenere conto delle variazioni stagionali ed essere il prezzo di un determinato prodotto alla data stabilita per la conclusione dello scambio.<sup>8</sup> Per le valutazioni più complesse, come quelle di lavori particolari, di beni meno comuni o di seconda mano, è probabile che si ricorresse a esperti del settore, come dimostrano gli inventari post mortem (Smail 2016, 301; Verna 2017, 262).

Tuttavia, i calcoli possono andare oltre il valore del bene per includere ciò che deve essere aggiunto o sottratto nello scambio. Questo è il caso della vendita sovrapprezzo che un mercante di fronte a un prodotto sopravvalutato dovrà applicare al proprio prodotto per «non essere imbrogliato» (Swetz 1987, 152-153). Questo è ciò che mostrano i trattati di aritmetica destinati ai mercanti (Beaujouan 1958; Egmont 1981; Franci, Toti Rigatelle e Gori 1982; Hoock e Jeannin 1993; Hoock, Jeannin e Kaiser 2001; Labarthe 2002; Labarthe 2004; Lamassé 2004; Lamassé 2007) attraverso alcuni dei problemi suggeriti per spiegare l'applicazione della cosiddetta «regola del barato», a partire dall'inizio del XIII secolo.<sup>9</sup>

Un altro modo di scambiare: due mercanti vogliono scambiare le loro merci; tutte le merci dell'uno valgono 60 lire (con vendita in contanti), ma lui le vuole vendere per 80. Ci si chiede: a quanto l'altro mercante dovrà «sovraprendere» la sua merce che vale 9 lire in contanti?

Risposta: secondo la regola del tre, se da 60 lire valgono 80 a quanto arriveranno 9 lire? Moltiplica e dividi e troverai 12 lire. E a tanto deve «sovraprendere» la sua merce (Lamassé 2004, 88).

Al contrario, il prezzo della merce scambiata può essere deliberatamente sottovalutato. È quanto nota Catherine Verna a proposito del baratto del ferro a Vallespir, dove il prezzo stimato è talvolta «più alto del prezzo medio al dettaglio», ma può anche, se descritto come «il prezzo comunemente pagato in una situazione

<sup>8</sup> Nel 1472, ad esempio, i lavori di ristrutturazione di una casa nei pressi di Aix-en-Provence furono stimati in cinque fiorini e mezzo, dai quali si doveva detrarre un carico di grano e una certa quantità di vino «al prezzo che sarebbe valso». Archives départementales des Bouches-du-Rhône (AD13), 309 E 243, fol. 6v, [...] *per VIII dies ante incobationem dicti operis, unam saumatam annone et II metretas vini meri rubei, precio quas valebit.*

<sup>9</sup> Stéphane Lamassé (2004, 88) ne cita la presenza nel Liber abaci di Leonardo da Pisa del 1202.

simile» - cioè per pagare un salario - rivelarsi «molto basso», inferiore a certi prezzi all'ingrosso (Verna 2017, 263). E i conti di Olivier de Serres, all'inizio del XVII secolo, vanno nella stessa direzione, testimoniando la concessione da parte dell'agronomo di uno sconto del 10-15% sul valore del grano con cui pagava i suoi servitori (Margnat 2002).

Il confronto tra scambio monetario e baratto rivela ancora una volta i suoi limiti ed è rivolgendosi a studi condotti in altri campi che lo storico può cercare strumenti per comprendere meglio queste pratiche complesse.

## 2.2 Baratti più che baratto: scambi polimorfi

Il Codice Civile della Federazione Russa distingue quattro categorie principali di scambi in natura, che utilizzerò come base per considerare le varie forme assunte dai pagamenti in beni e servizi nelle società che ci interessano.

La prima di queste categorie è quella dei contratti di scambio con cui «ciascuna delle parti si obbliga a consegnare alla proprietà dell'altra un bene in cambio di un altro» (Dufy 2008, 103-04). Si potrebbe parlare di «baratto semplice»<sup>10</sup> in contrapposizione a una seconda categoria chiamata «scambio compensato» per via dell'«operazione di compensazione che può essere effettuata al termine di successivi scambi in natura tra gli stessi due partner» (Dufy 2008, 103-04).

Gli esempi di baratto semplice sono frequenti, ma non è raro che una somma di denaro (a saldo) compensi le disuguaglianze di valore tra i due beni o servizi scambiati. Tuttavia, nelle nostre fonti, la transazione può passare da «semplice» a «compensata» se si considera che il pagamento del saldo può essere, esso stesso, oggetto di accordi successivi.

È il caso di quanto accadde nel 1481, quando uno scalpellino di Marsiglia promise di costruire una finestra in pietra nella casa di Bernard Lhataud. La costruzione di questa finestra aveva un valore di otto fiorini, esclusi i materiali che Bernard Lhataud promise di pagare in venti misure (*metretas*) di vino puro, a nove grossi per misura. Il prezzo totale del vino scambiato ammontava a quindici fiorini, il che significa che, alla fine, l'artigiano doveva sette fiorini al suo datore di lavoro. Ma il datore di lavoro doveva ancora detrarre da questi sette fiorini il valore della pietra che acquisterà per lo scalpellino.<sup>11</sup> Cosa succede se alla fine vende più di sette fiorini di pietra? Il contratto non ci dice come sia stato regolato l'accordo, ma ci invita a rimanere cauti nel distinguere tra queste due categorie.

Proseguiamo con la cessione del diritto di esigere che consente di trasferire i diritti di credito. Alcuni pagamenti (compresi quelli in natura) vengono effettuati in contanti, ma il tempo concesso per gli altri introduce una variabile temporale con la quale è sempre possibile un gioco.

Roberto Lopez si riferisce agli strumenti di credito come «quasi monete», accanto agli «oggetti di baratto». Il debito poteva circolare «come la carta moneta»

<sup>10</sup> Philippe Wolff usa questo termine, ma in un senso leggermente diverso, per distinguere il baratto «puro e semplice», in cui non è esplicitamente coinvolto il denaro, dal baratto «misurato» in denaro (Wolff 1958, 347).

<sup>11</sup> AD13, 351 E 432, fol 324v, le 24 octobre 1481.

(Fontaine 1994, 1386). Mi rifaccio agli archivi provenzali per illustrare questo aspetto con un atto del 1462 in cui i fratelli Cordurier, falegnami, riconoscono di essere debitori di 24 fiorini nei confronti dei fratelli Poselli per l'acquisto di un mulo e propongono, per pagare parte del prezzo di questo animale, di trasferire loro un riconoscimento di debito di 10 fiorini che avevano da un certo Pierre Vivian per il quale avevano fatto dei lavori.<sup>12</sup> In questo caso, non sappiamo da quanto tempo fosse stato contratto il debito, ma quando Josse Jacob, un ebreo di Aix, volle estinguere un debito di 60 fiorini nel 1457, «non avendo denaro a disposizione» (*cum ipse Josse Jacob non habeat pecuniam promptam*), in riduzione, propone di trasferire al genero una serie di cinque debiti, per un totale di 11 fiorini e 9 grossi, che il figlio Vital Josse deteneva da un aratore e che erano oggetto di atti notarili datati tra l'ottobre 1447 e il giugno 1453.<sup>13</sup> Dieci anni prima, nel caso del più vecchio!

Nella Provenza tardo-medievale, come nelle alte valli del Delfinato nei secoli XVII e XVIII, o nella Corona d'Aragona, il debito appariva «come un bene che poteva essere trasferito e venduto» (Furió e García Marsilla 2014, 513). Per usare le parole di Antoni Furió e Juan Vicente García Marsilla, esso fu «reificato» e «divenne un bene tangibile e reale come i beni mobili» (Furió e García Marsilla 2014, 513).

L'ultima categoria che citiamo è quella del lavoro in conto prodotti che, nella Russia post-sovietica, «dà a un'impresa la possibilità legale di trasformare materie prime per conto di un fornitore e di remunerarsi in natura prelevando una parte dei beni prodotti» (Dufy 2008, 103-04). Nel contesto che ci interessa, questa è la base per gli affitti à *mi-fruits* già citati, ma anche per la remunerazione di mestieri come i mugnai, che, secondo le norme parigine del XIII secolo, avevano diritto a riuiscuotere, ad esempio, 1 *boisseau* di farina per ogni *setier* di grano macinato (Lespinasse e Bonnardot 1879, 16).

Non si intende affermare che questa categorizzazione degli scambi in natura sia ideale o completa.

Per esempio, dove dovremmo collocare i prestiti in natura, talvolta indicati come *mutuum* (Verna 2017, 262)?

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<sup>12</sup> AD13, 307 E 60, le 4 décembre 1462, Quosquidem florenos viginti quatuor dicti Johannes et Gladius fratres debitores per se et suos ut supra unacum pretio etc. dare, tradere, solvere et realiter per integrum expedire promiserunt memorato Guilhermo Posselli creditoris dictis nominibus presenti et stipulanti ut supra aut in hunc modum videlicet florenos decem dicti fratres debitores assignaverunt eidem Posselli in probum virum Petrum Viviani alias Selha Blanca de Aquis in deductione horunc in quibus dictus Petrus Viviani eisdem fratribus tenetur causa eorum laboris passi in constructione jassi dicti Viviani quos dictum Posselli [...].

<sup>13</sup> AD13, 306 E 301, le 17 octobre 1457, [...] cumque Johannes Clementis laborator castris de Gardana teneatur et sit efficaciter obligatus Vitali Josse filio dicti Josse Jacob in summa florenorum undecim et grossorum novem constantibus notis sumptis una videlicet per magistrum Ludovicum Divi condam notarium habitatorem Aquensem sub anno domini millesimo IIIc XLVIIo et die Xa mensis octobris alia vero sumpta per magistrum Jacobum Raynaudi notarium Aquensem sub anno domini millesimo IIIc XLIX die Xa mensis marcii alia vero sumpta etiam per dictum magistrum Jacobum Raynaudi sub anno domini Mo IIIc L die XVIII augusti alia vero per eundem Raynaudi Mo IIIc L die octava januarii alia vero per magistrum Guilhermum de Palandruto sub anno domini millesimo IIIc LIII die vero octava junii verum cum ipse Josse Jacob non habeat pecuniam promptam [...].

Quando il bene prestato viene semplicemente restituito (esso o il suo equivalente quando sia stato distrutto o consumato), possiamo classificare l'operazione come un semplice scambio. Lo dimostra la registrazione di Datini, nel 1387, del prestito concesso dall'Ospedale della Misericordia di 100 mattoni l'8 novembre, di altri 100 il 12 novembre e di 50 il giorno successivo, e poi della «restituzione», il 3 dicembre dello stesso anno, di 250 mattoni.<sup>14</sup>

« Lo Spidale de la Misericordia de' avere a dì VIII di novembre per cento mattoni chotti i quali mi prestarono rechò Antonio renaiuolo... l.

A dì XII di novembre me ne prestarono cento mattoni chotti rechò Antonio renaiuolo ... l.

A dì XIII di novembre me ne prestarono L mattoni rechò Antonio renaiuolo ... l.

Ànno auto a dì III di dicenbre i quali rendetti loro mattoni CCL i quali feci loro riportare ad Argomento.

Si tratta di un semplice scambio di mattoni. A volte, però, al mutuatario può essere richiesto di pagare una sorta di affitto, come ricorda, ad esempio, un piccolo signore della regione di Embrun, Fazy de Rame, nel suo diario l'anno 1474, quando scrive: «*Moi, Fazy de Rame, j'ai donné à Claude Serench du Coing, une paire de bœufs de ce jour à un an, ce qui me fait une saumée de blé. Maître Antoine Vasserot a l'acte* – Io, Fazy de Rame, ho dato a Claude Serench du Coing, una coppia di buoi da questo giorno fino a un anno, in cambio di una soma di grano. Il maestro Antoine Vasserot ha l'atto» (Manteyer 1932).

Sarebbe quindi necessario aggiungere all'elenco proposto una categoria di permuta o prestito a interesse o compensato. Lo stesso vale per il pagamento di tasse in natura, che è ben attestato per i periodi di nostro interesse, ma che logicamente non trova posto nella categorizzazione degli scambi proposta dalle autorità russe.

La classificazione operata non intende coprire tutte le forme di pagamento in natura. Tuttavia, ha il vantaggio di proporre un modo di intendere queste pratiche che tiene conto della loro diversità e si allontana dall'alternativa troppo semplicistica tra baratto «puro» e «imperfetto». Le categorie andrebbero discusse e integrate, cosa che a mio avviso può essere fatta solo collettivamente, attraverso il confronto delle esperienze e che, alla fine, fornirebbe una tassonomia più raffinata e un vero e proprio strumento per gli scambi sul tema. Forse in questo approccio si dovrebbe tenere conto anche della natura stessa del bene o del servizio scambiato.

### 2.3 Monete alternative

Dalla semplice constatazione dei diversi beni e servizi menzionati nelle transazioni, sembrerebbe che tutto possa essere scambiato. Ma alcuni beni o servizi sono più comuni di altri. I grani si trovano dalla Galizia alle Alpi e spesso

<sup>14</sup> ASP, *Datini* 199, fol 150r.

predominano (Belmon 2003, 116; Rios Rodriguez 1985, 197). Anche il vino è molto frequente, così come i muli, gli asini, i debiti e le giornate di trasporto.

Questa frequenza comporta talvolta la distinzione tra il bene o il servizio acquisito e il bene o il servizio utilizzato per pagarlo. In altre parole, la doppia coincidenza alla base del baratto o dello scambio reciproco («io ho qualcosa che ti serve e tu hai qualcosa che mi sarebbe utile») potrebbe, almeno in alcuni casi, essere falsata dal fatto che alcuni beni o servizi sembrano essere strumenti di scambio più efficienti o ‘universali’ di altri. Tuttavia, è importante tenere in considerazione l’arco temporale in cui può verificarsi la doppia coincidenza. In questi scambi reciproci, la compensazione prevista non è sempre immediata e la promessa di un bene più soggetto a scarsità rispetto ad altri può apparire, come una sorta di capitale, di credito aperto o di riserva che può essere mobilitato al momento più opportuno. Forse dovremmo considerarla una forma di «preferenza per l’illiquidità» che, come sottolinea Laurence Fontaine, costringe le persone a risparmiare (Fontaine 2008a, 304-306).

Questa funzione, aggiunta a quella di strumento di scambio, di unità di conto, che permette di valutare e costruire equivalenze, e a quella di mezzo di pagamento, permetterebbe ad alcuni beni o servizi di riunire le quattro funzioni della moneta definite dall’economia politica classica (Dufy e Weber 2007, 47). Esistono, ovviamente, diverse definizioni di cosa sia una moneta, per cui mi asterrò dal parlarne e mi atterrerò al termine «moneta alternativa», fermo restando che i beni o servizi barattati non possono pretendere di essere un equivalente universale, né diventare veri e propri strumenti di politica economica.

Ciò premesso, quali sarebbero queste monete o quasi monete alternative?

Nelle loro varie forme, i beni e i servizi più comunemente utilizzati come mezzi di pagamento sono ‘prodotti’ abbastanza diffusi e ampiamente utilizzati, il cui prezzo è facilmente conosciuto da tutti, il che rende facile il riferimento al mercato e limita le controversie. A livello locale, altri mezzi di pagamento possono essere utilizzati più frequentemente di altri, introducendo sottili sfumature tra le regioni, o anche al loro interno, a seconda del predominio di una particolare cultura o di una particolare industria.

Anche se non possiamo pretendere di delineare una geografia di questi mezzi di pagamento preferiti, l’attenzione prestata all’uso preferenziale di certi beni o servizi potrebbe forse aiutarci a comprendere meglio l’importanza locale di certe attività?

Nel 1954, Philippe Wolff vedeva nel panno di lana, usato per comprare rendite o i diritti fondiari, un «sostituto del denaro», ma per la stessa regione era anche la legna da ardere a sembrare «un eccellente strumento di monetizzazione» (347). Camille Fabre richiama l’attenzione sul fatto che questo prodotto ha il vantaggio di essere di qualità omogenea, di essere facilmente divisibile ciò che gli permette di «svolgere il ruolo di quasi-denaro» (2021, 347). Questo è uno spunto di riflessione






Senza negare in alcun modo che il legname, il ferro, l’olio d’oliva, il grano, il vino o la giornata di lavoro, tra gli altri, possano apparire come monete alternative, va notato che la loro moltiplicazione e il loro inserimento in contesti particolari ne limitano il ruolo di equivalenti.

Perché dunque ricorrere a essi?



### 3. Le molteplici motivazioni del baratto

La consultazione di un sito come [www.troc-echange.com](http://www.troc-echange.com) solleva domande sulle motivazioni che spingono i contemporanei a scambiare beni e servizi.

Echange 17/03/23		vêtements taille 36, bottes 39 En échange de : petits travaux électricité	Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Var 83000 Toulon Vêtements Mode
Echange 17/03/23		Congelateur 4 tiroirs en échange de : Peinture blanche	Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur Var 83000 Toulon Electroménager
Echange 22/02/23		Un clic clac et micro onde avec grill En échange de : Aide pour porter 3 petits meubles une petite cuisinière et une machine à laver	Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Vaucluse 84200 Carpentras Mobilier
Echange 21/02/23		fruits et légumes de saison En échange de : objet ou service de valeur équivalente	Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Var 83300 Draguignan Gastronomie / Nourriture
Echange 17/01/23		Congelateur 4 tiroirs En échange de : buffet vaisselle	Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Var 83000 Toulon Electroménager

1. Abiti taglia 36, stivali taglia 39  
In cambio di: piccoli lavori elettrici
2. Congelatore a 4 cassetti  
In cambio di: vernice bianca
3. Un divano letto e un microonde con grill  
In cambio di: aiuto per il trasporto di 3 piccoli mobili, un fornello e una lavatrice
4. Frutta e verdura di stagione  
In cambio di: oggetti o servizi di valore equivalente
5. Congelatore a 4 cassetti  
In cambio di: credenza per stoviglie

Il primo annuncio mostra chiaramente che la persona che lo ha pubblicato possiede vestiti che non gli servono e ha bisogno di rivedere il suo impianto elettrico, senza necessariamente avere i mezzi per chiamare un professionista. Non ha importanza se i beni e i servizi hanno esattamente lo stesso valore.

Il secondo è interessante da confrontare con l'ultimo, pubblicato esattamente due mesi prima, probabilmente dallo stesso abitante di Tolone. Il proprietario del congelatore a 4 cassetti non sembra aver trovato chi abbia una credenza da stoviglie interessato allo scambio, ma i lavori per la sua cucina sono in corso e pensa che, se la credenza non è disponibile, andrebbe bene ugualmente un po' di vernice.

Passiamo al terzo, che è dello stesso tipo del primo, per arrivare al quarto, per il quale possiamo immaginare che un ortolano più o meno dilettante, sopraffatto da una abbondante produzione ‘stagionale’, per evitare che vada perduta, cerchi di convertirne una parte in un bene di altro genere, qualunque esso sia, ma di valore equivalente.

Al di là degli spaccati di vita che questi annunci rivelano, ciò che emerge dalla loro lettura è la varietà delle ragioni che possono spingere le persone a scambiare beni e servizi, anche in una società in cui il denaro è molto presente nelle più diverse forme. Sono queste le questioni che intendo esaminare in quest’ultima parte della mio intervento, a partire da quelle monetarie che vengono spesso addotte.

### 3.1 Il vincolo delle fluttuazioni monetarie

Sarebbe assurdo far finta che l’assenza (Day (1987) 1994, 51) o l’instabilità<sup>15</sup> o l’insufficienza (Furió e García Marsilla 2014, 513)<sup>16</sup> della moneta non abbiano avuto un effetto sul volume degli scambi in natura. Il baratto può svilupparsi «in risposta alla perdita di fiducia in una moneta» (Sapir 2002, § 1), come è accaduto in Argentina all’inizio degli anni Novanta<sup>17</sup>. Inoltre quando il denaro contante scarseggia, il baratto consente di destinarlo all’acquisto di beni che possono essere pagati solo in contanti, come tasse e affitti. In questo modo, il denaro per pagare gli scambi può essere utilizzato in minore quantità. È il principio dello scambio compensato che, negli Stati Uniti della fine del XVIII secolo, era descritto in questo modo:

È molto sorprendente che, tra i viaggiatori che hanno attraversato gli Stati Uniti, nessuno di loro si sia soffermato su alcuni dettagli del modo di fare scambi di necessità e comodità della vita. Invece di far uscire e rientrare il denaro nelle loro mani, si riforniscono reciprocamente dei loro bisogni in campagna, attraverso scambi diretti; il sarto e il calzolaio vanno a svolgere il lavoro presso il contadino che ne ha bisogno, il quale il più delle volte fornisce il materiale e paga il lavoro in merci. Questo

<sup>15</sup> È quanto suggerisce, ad esempio, Marc Bompaire nella sua recensione del libro di John Day del 1989, quando scrive: «La réunion en faisceau convergent de certains de ces ‘petits faits vrais’ paraît parfois un peu forcée, comme la liaison entre manque de monnaie et retour à une forme de troc à Toulouse alors que le phénomène est plutôt contemporain de la grande crise monétaire de 1415-1425 et vise surtout à répondre à l’instabilité» (Bompaire 1989).

<sup>16</sup> Questi autori scrivono che «Ce décalage entre la masse monétaire et l’ampleur des transactions demandait qu’on ait recours à d’autres formes de paiement et, particulièrement, aux créances contre un tiers, utilisées comme monnaies [...]». Tuttavia, la loro argomentazione è più sfumata di quanto suggerisca questa citazione e ritornano sulla proposta qualche pagina dopo, notando che «le crédit n’est pas, comme on l’affirme souvent, un substitut ou une alternative au manque de monnaie, mais plutôt l’inverse. Si le crédit est très répandu et s’il est partout, c’est parce que la monnaie est abondante, circule avec fluidité et génère une confiance suffisante dans la stabilité et la sûreté du système» (520). Prima di notare che il credito «avait, comme aussi la monnaie, en plus de la dimension économique, une fonction sociale, créatrice de liens et de dépendances» (521).

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.courrierinternational.com/article/2002/08/01/le-troc-dernier-rempart-contre-l-exclusion> (2024-01-30).

tipo di scambi si estende a molti oggetti; entrambe le parti annotano quello che danno e quello che ricevono e alla fine dell'anno. Con una quantità molto ridotta di denaro contante, si riesce a effettuare una grande varietà di transazioni che in Europa si potrebbero fare solo con molto denaro (Brissot de Warville e Claviere 1787, 24-25 n. 1).<sup>18</sup>

Tuttavia, il baratto non serve solo a compensare gli eccessi del denaro (iperliquidità o scarsità). Si sviluppa anche «in economie che non sperimentano un'inflazione dilagante, né una crisi generalizzata del sistema istituzionale o un brusco cambiamento nella scala dei prezzi relativi» (Sapir 2002, § 34).

Il pagamento in natura presenta anche un elemento di scelta che spiega perché le persone non vi ricorrono sempre sistematicamente o allo stesso modo.

### 3.2 Strategia di sopravvivenza e modalità di dominazione

Le motivazioni di una transazione sono raramente indicate nelle nostre fonti ed è molto difficile stabilire da dove provenga l'iniziativa di scambio. Inoltre, gli interessi delle parti non sono sempre gli stessi, soprattutto quando lo scambio è ineguale, per cui ha poco senso cercare un'unica ragione del baratto.

La scelta del baratto può, in parte, rispondere a una strategia di sopravvivenza, spesso connessa alla poliattività (Fontaine 2008b, 23). Combinare più attività è un modo per aumentare le opportunità di accesso a mercati diversi. Per chi non ha che la forza delle proprie braccia, coltivare un pezzo di terra, lavorare occasionalmente per un padrone e, nel contempo, praticare una piccola attività artigianale significa ampliare i contatti e la gamma di beni e servizi da scambiare. Ciò è tanto più vero perché lo scambio in natura può consentire un accesso privilegiato a certi beni grazie agli sconti concessi, come abbiamo visto, sul valore di quei beni quando offerti a titolo di salario.

Il baratto offre anche la possibilità di accedere a una forma di «credito di sussistenza» che assume la forma di prestiti di piccole quantità di cereali durante annate povere. Queste operazioni consentono l'acquisto di sementi, ma riducono il raccolto futuro dell'importo del debito, spesso maggiorato degli interessi o rimborsato in giornate di lavoro, ma sulla base del valore del bene al momento della sua cessione (Furió e García Marsilla 2014, 507; Lambrecht 2003, 245).

Anche lo scambio reciproco, alla stregua dei debiti in denaro, può generare forme di dipendenza che si acquiscono nel *putting-out system*, che non è privo di vantaggi per il prestatore o per il commerciante in grado di disporre di forza lavoro stabile, disponibile e flessibile (Lambrecht 2003, 248).

Si ricorre al baratto perché è molto utilizzato dai poveri o perché serve a mantenere certe persone in condizione di precarietà? È molto difficile distinguere la causa dalla conseguenza e possiamo solo constatare che, in certe forme, il baratto è un indicatore sociale. Lo dimostra uno studio dettagliato della contabilità di Rouen, da cui emerge che le persone che si stavano formando o che lavoravano solo

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<sup>18</sup> Vedi anche Fontaine 2008a, 103, o Muldrew 2001, 84.

occasionalmente erano pagate in natura più sistematicamente di altre (Kucab 2021, 477-78).

Più prosaicamente, accettare un pagamento in natura era talvolta l'unico modo per recuperare un debito. Il caso di Jean-Louis de Rodolp, un «gentiluomo di campagna» degli inizi del XVIII secolo, ci offre un buon esempio. Per essere rimborsato «dagli aratori e dai mezzadri di cui è signore» e «dagli artigiani che dipendono da lui per l'acquisto dei loro mezzi di lavoro», «intraprende lavori di miglioramento delle sue case per utilizzare la loro manodopera, poiché non c'è altro modo per compensare i suoi debiti» (Fontaine 2008a, p. 91). E non è escluso che nella questione sia coinvolta la carità.

Collegare troppo sistematicamente lo scambio in natura alla povertà, al credito di sussistenza, alle relazioni ineguali e ai beni di prima necessità sarebbe tuttavia un errore, come dimostrano i riferimenti a questa pratica in molti testi dei mercanti.

### 3.3 Baratto e ricerca del profitto

L'uso del baratto da parte dei mercanti sembra rispondere ad altre logiche, più commerciali. L'antropologo Jacques Sapir stila una tabella di «vincoli e incentivi al cambiamento delle modalità di baratto» (2002, § 37) che non si realizza puntualmente nella «regola del baratto».

Tab. 1. **Vincoli e incentivi al cambiamento delle modalità di baratto, secondo J. Sapir (2002, § 37)**

	Agente di vendita	Agente di acquisto
Incentivo	Trovare nuovi clienti. Facilitare il destoccaggio, accettando riduzioni di prezzo. Valorizzare un prodotto innovativo poco conosciuto dai clienti o un'offerta di servizio legata a un prodotto.	Risparmiare denaro o 'quasi' denaro e preservare gli introiti. Trovare prodotti a prezzi inferiori rispetto a quelli applicati nel mercato 'normale'.
Vincolo	Trovare uno sbocco o un utilizzo per i prodotti ottenuti in pagamento.	Trovare partner disposti ad accettare un compenso in beni nelle transazioni differite.

La forte enfasi sulla riduzione dei prezzi non corrisponde all'uso della sopravvendita, ma si può immaginare che il prezzo di acquisto menzionato corrisponda a un prezzo all'ingrosso e che i prezzi 'bassi' siano da confrontare con il prezzo di vendita al minuto. Vincoli e incentivi dovrebbero essere considerati in modo più dettagliato di quanto io sia in grado di fare con le fonti e il tempo a disposizione. Mi limiterò a notare che il mercato, per la sua diversità e le sue dimensioni, può permettere di trovare qualcosa senza doverlo cercare; il

commerciante, come il privato, si accontenta di cogliere un'opportunità e di risparmiare sui costi di ricerca sul mercato (*market search costs*) (Kranton 1996, 832).<sup>19</sup>

Una delle conclusioni a cui giunge la mia rapida panoramica è che coesistono diversi sistemi di barattoche dovrebbero essere meglio caratterizzati. Caricato di valori positivi per i risparmi e i profitti che consente, lo scambio in natura si basa sulla conoscenza e richiede un minimo di fiducia tra le parti, il che lo pone al centro di relazioni sociali in cui vari fattori personali possono influenzare la valutazione di un bene al momento dello scambio (Muldrew 2001, 81). Paradossalmente, il baratto è anche il dominio del dubbio e della diffidenza, dove regna la paura di «essere imbrogliati» (Swetz 1987, 152). Di fronte all'estraneo, il ricorso a un contratto scritto è essenziale come garanzia, mentre è indubbiamente meno necessario negli ambienti più ristretti dove sono in gioco la reputazione e il credito degli individui (Verna 2017, 264; Kranton 1996, 830; Dyer 1995, 655).

La pratica, quindi, emerge solo nelle nostre fonti. La si può cogliere solo ai margini: nel rapporto con l'estraneo, nei compensi finali o nelle controversie che può suscitare. In questa breve relazione, ho cercato di evidenziare la diversità dei campi in cui si manifesta lo scambio in natura, nonché di sottolineare i contributi delle opere che vi sono state dedicate e alcuni dei loro limiti. Resta da esplorare una parte importante dell'economia dell'ancien régime, quella in cui si intersecano le relazioni sociali, il mercato e la produzione. Anche se qui l'ho solo sfiorata, non ho dubbi che il lavoro della settimana aiuterà a definirne meglio i contorni e contribuirà a farne un vero e proprio soggetto di Storia.

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<sup>19</sup> «Whether or not reciprocity is enforceable depends on the market size and agents' preferences. When the market is small, if agents place a sufficiently high value on future utility, they are willing to provide goods for their partner today in anticipation of receiving goods in the future. When agents require many different goods, however, a reciprocal-exchange arrangement has fewer benefits. In this case, if the market is thick enough, the market is an attractive alternative and reciprocity cannot be enforced».

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*Meccanismi per l'utilizzo di mezzi di scambio non monetari*

*Mechanisms for using alternative currencies*



Thomas Max Safley

*Money and its alternatives in early modern extractive industry:  
The many media of exchange in mercury mining*

## 1. Introduction

There's an old song of uncertain provenance, first recorded in the 1940s, that contains the following lyric:

You load sixteen tons and what do you get?  
Another day older and deeper in debt.  
St. Peter don't you call me, 'cause I can't go.  
I owe my soul to the company store (Travis 1946).

The artist who first recorded the song, Merle Travis, explained that the lines, «You load sixteen tons and what do you get? Another day older and deeper in debt», came from a letter written by his brother John, who was a coal miner in Appalachia (Wikipedia, “Sixteen Tons”). Another line came from their father, also a coal miner, who would say: «I can't afford to die; I owe my soul to the company store.» They refer to the scrip system and to the debt bondage it created, which were commonplaces of American extractive industry. Miners received their wages not in cash but in non-transferable credit vouchers – a rudimentary form of fiat money – that could be exchanged only for goods sold at the company store, making cash savings impossible. Many of them also lived in company-owned dormitories or houses, the rent for which was automatically deducted from their pay. The resort by mining companies to scrip and other «alternatives to money» became illegal in the United States under the Federal Minimum Wage Act of 1961.

The scrip system appears to be a linear descendant of the much older truck – or tommy – system, whereby workers received their wages not in the form of a voucher but in a combination of cash and commodities (Aspin 1995; Hilton 1958; Ruegg 1901; Valentinitsch 1981, 226-35). The values assessed for those commodities were often manipulated and could rise so high that many workers received no payment in cash but ended a pay period in debt to their employers. The use of commodity and/or convertible moneys was a customary feature of British industry, including mining, from the mid-15<sup>th</sup> to the early-19<sup>th</sup> century, when its use was gradually prohibited by act of Parliament.

As these examples suggest, alternatives to money take various forms and have a long history in mining. This paper takes up their use in the mines of central and

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eastern Alpine Europe from the mid-15<sup>th</sup> to the late-17<sup>th</sup> centuries – especially the mercury mines at Idrija in the former Habsburg Duchy of Carniola, present-day Slovenia – to examine how alternatives to money emerged and functioned in public and private manufacturing.

Alternatives of all sorts were ubiquitous there, present even in its political economy. The regents considered the mineral riches of their realm to be regalian rights. To exploit them, they granted mining privileges in the form of shares (*Kuxen*) to loyal supporters, merchant entrepreneurs and aristocratic landlords, who became mine stakeholders and operators (*Gewerke*). In return for the opportunity to profit from the mineral trade, they rendered taxes on their production in cash and kind, the so-called *Fron und Wexel*. Commercial mining at Idrija required more than privilege and interest, however. It required international connections and commercial savvy to bring the minerals to market. Foreign merchant-financiers could provide both, but they needed the protection of the state in the form of considerations and regulations that lowered transaction costs, prevented competition and limited uncertainty. In return for monopoly rights and tax exemptions that increased profits from the sale of mercury, they advanced credit, shared intelligence and performed services for the state. Local agents or factors (*Vermeser*) represented the interests of capital, whether the operators or the merchants, and saw to the running of the mines. Like factors in all branches of premodern commerce and finance, their salaries took the form not only of money but also of opportunities to seize whatever gainful enterprise came their way. Mining also required highly skilled, experienced labor. Recruited from established mining regions and proudly self-conscious, the miners extracted and refined the saleable commodities, laboring for wages of various sorts, but exercised little control over production or remuneration. At Idrija, therefore, alternatives to money took many forms at all levels: financial instruments and commercial commodities, economic opportunity and social status, legal privilege and political preferment, cash and commodities.

Taking the extraction, production and sale of mercury as a test case, with particular attention to the miners and their wages, this paper seeks to demonstrate that «alternatives» in whatever form they may take – tangible or intangible, fixed or moveable – have less to do with shortages of hard cash or the inhumanity of hard hearts, though these can and often do play a role, than with what I have elsewhere referred to as the «ecology of work» (Safley 2019a, 2). The phrase attempts to suggest how the interaction of physical environments, regulatory systems, market forces, social relations or economic institutions, to name but a few possibilities, shape production in workshops and factories. In the particular context of mercury mining at Idrija, the ecology of work determined the broad reliance on ‘alternatives to money’: their use and abuse, their persistence and intractability.

## **2. *Pfennwert*: its use, abuse and regulation**

As early as the 1530s, alternatives to money had become a source of contention and conflict at the mercury mines of Idrija. In 1536, the council of state for the

Archduchy of Inner Austria, which included the territory around Idrija, assigned a commission to examine the operation of the mines there. Its report, issued in 1537, noted among other things irregularities in the miners' wages:

... the workers complain about the *Pfennwert*; the administrator doesn't pay the workers in cash but instead gives them *Pfennwert* from horseback so that what they might more easily acquire for cash they must accept from the administrator or others at higher cost. Moreover, the administrator offers more or less to the workers without the knowledge of the court, according to his liking, so that the workers cannot purchase goods freely in the marketplaces of Bischoflack or other communities, all of which contributes to the decline and disadvantage of the entire mine.<sup>1</sup>

*Pfennwert*, of which the miners complained so bitterly, involved all the goods required to maintain and operate the mine, including tools, materials and, in this case especially, foodstuffs, clothing and other provisions.

The *Deutsches Rechtswörterbuch* defines *Pfennwert*, or *Pfennigwert*, as a «prescribed quantity of any commodity that is usually sold in small amounts; foodstuffs sold at fixed prices and, accordingly, permitted to use in place of a monetary payment; as replacement for or part of a wage» (*Deutsches Rechtswörterbuch*, “*Pfennwert*”). In specific relationship to wages and as an alternative to cash, *Pfennwert* finds early use in legal documents from the 14<sup>th</sup> century: «a penny-worth of a moveable good should be paid to a man for a penny» (Scendes 1986, 120). It appears with increasing frequency in mine ordinances (*Bergordnungen*) from the beginning of the mining boom in late medieval Europe, that is, from the 15<sup>th</sup> century. (Chmel 1845). The Schwaz Mining Ordinance (*Schwazer Bergordnung*) of 1449 used more specific language:

When the lords and operators pay the workers, which is set at the beginning [of this ordinance, tms], that is, every 14 days, although when the workers agree, the operators pay at the longest every four weeks and immediately with cash, so that they can obtain their food; no operator should oppress the workers with *Pfennwert*, but rather only when the workers want it should they offer it for an honest penny and not overcharge (Jaschik, “*Bergordnung für Schwaz*”).

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<sup>1</sup> Österreichisches Staatsarchiv Wien (OeStA), Finanz- und Hofkammerarchiv, Innerösterreichische Miscelle und Briefe, 134/1. Bericht der Kommission zu Idria vom 25. April 1536 zum 2. Februar 1537. «... die Arbaitter hiemit den Pfenwarten nicht wenig beshwerdt, die Verweser den Arbaittern nicht Pare bezallung, sonnder jnen die Pfenwarten auf die Rosh geben, also was sy sonsten umb Pargellt leichtlicher erzeugten, dz muessen sy also von den Verwesern oder anndern auf die Rosh teurer annemen, auch die Verweser die Arbaitter jrs Gefallen ausserhalb Willen und Wissen des Gerichts ab unnd an ablegen, sambt dem so will man die gemellten Arbaitter auf den Margkhten noch bey alls zu Bischoflack unnd anndern Orten nicht frey khauffen lassen, des dann dem ganntzen Bergkwerch wie wir Bericht zu Hinderslag und Nachtaill raicht.»

A 1553 mining ordinance, issued by Emperor Ferdinand I for all mines in Lower Austria (*Niederösterreich*), used almost the same language to admonish mine operators and administrators to honest application of *Pfennwert*: «In our ... lands, lordships and regions, where mining occurs or in the future will occur, an orderly accounting should be undertaken seven times a year – namely at Lent, Easter, Pentecost, St. Jacobs Day, St. Michaels Day, St. Martins Day and Christmas – by the *Bergrichter* and the foremen of all the mines in the presence of the operators or their representatives, and each worker should receive notice of the wages he has earned within 14 days thereafter and payment in a month's time in cash and not encouraged or forced to accept *Pfennwert* against his will ...» (Entzelt, Kirchmaier 1698, 182). The 1580 Mining Ordinance, promulgated specifically for the mercury mine at Idrija, repeated this regulation verbatim (Valentinitsch 1981, 360). In every instance, these directives sought to protect miners from disadvantage and damage, as Angelika Westermann put it, «because fair wages and punctual payment secured the existence of the workers, kept them in the mines and preserved social peace» (Westermann 2009, 149). The dissemination of similar ordinances suggests that the practice became commonplace in extractive industry across the Holy Roman Empire (Westermann 1993, 49-66).

*Pfennwert* was not universal in early modern mining, however. Westermann argues that the provisioning of mines and miners «appears ... to have been of marginal interest» to mine operators in the Vosges Mountains and Black Forest regions (Westermann 2009, 169). The 'free market' would provide such necessities, meaning that miners had to seek their own supplies in the marketplaces of surrounding communities. This changed during the crises of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when mine operators began to pay miners in kind, that is, in *Pfennwert*, providing them necessities they could no longer acquire or afford on their own (Westermann 2009, 188-89). It was also advantageous for the operators, because they could purchase goods in large quantities below-market prices and profitably resell them to their employees, a form of speculation widely practiced and condemned as *Fürkauf*, the purchase of mass quantities of goods to create artificial scarcity and higher prices. For this reason, it offered limited comfort to the miners, who had no control over the price, quantity or quality of the goods they received as payment.

Under private entrepreneurship, manipulation of the *Pfennwert* trade provided mine operators or merchant-entrepreneurs with an additional, and irresistible, source of income. Scholars have reckoned it as high as 10,000 to 15,000 *rheinische Gulden* per annum at Schwaz (Isser-Gaudenthurm 1905, 96). As early as 1485, this led to worker unrest, «because the operators and mine lords pressed them hard and cheated them of their pay» (Isser-Gaudenthurm 1905, 301). In an attempt to pacify them, the Tyrolean State Council in Innsbruck ordered not that *Pfennwert* wages be discontinued but that they henceforth be offered to miners at values comparable to those found at local marketplaces.

This appears to have been the problem in Idrija as well. The *Verweser* arbitrarily withheld cash wages from the miners, replacing them with food and clothing, which he valued at far higher rates than those for similar goods at local marketplaces. It is not yet possible to calculate the profits from the *Pfennwert* trade at Idrija, but the miners there complained regularly, beginning in the 1530s, as we have seen

(Valentinitsch 1981, 30). In 1575, the Inner Austrian State Council bought out the *Genwerke* and assumed direct operation of the mines in an effort to generate a more consistent source of revenue from the sale of mercury.<sup>2</sup> Like his predecessors in the private sector, the state-appointed *Verweser* controlled the *Pfennwert* trade himself and exploited the workers ceaselessly. They responded with more direct action: work-stoppages occurred in 1579, 1580, 1601-02, 1607, 1615-18, 1630-31 and 1636. The intensified pace reflects the crisis conditions of that time. Yet, the complaints remained the same, centering on corruption in the value of *Pfennwert* and the award of subcontracting work, known as *Lebenschaft*, of which more later. Remedies usually took the form of short-term responses, such as forgiveness of miners' debts or provision of cheaper foodstuffs, not fundamental changes in wage or work regimes. The continued resistance of workers, who received substandard goods at above-market prices, when they received anything at all, led to continued efforts to regulate this trade. These efforts had no effect; officials and merchants on site simply ignored them.

The question is why. If fair wages and regular payment assured a stable workforce, regular production and social peace, to paraphrase Westermann, then regents and operators – state and capital – had a common interest in avoiding the use of *Pfennwert* or, at the very least, not misusing it. Regulations suggest that the state recognized this logic but, as complaints and strikes indicate, could not follow it. Capital, it seems, saw things otherwise. In the eyes of merchants, operators and their representatives, control of the *Pfennwert* trade was a perquisite of the privilege granted by the regent, an «alternative to money». Miners accepted it as an essential alternative to monetary wages, though they clearly preferred cash for the freedom it offered, rejecting only the practices that kept them at the level of subsistence.

### 3. The ecology of work at Idrija

The «ecology of work» in the mines at Idrija helps explain the multiplicity and intricacy of «alternatives to money» and appears prominently in the legend of its origins. A local peasant placed a barrel in a spring, located near the present site of the town's Church of the Holy Trinity (Ferbbers 1774, 63). When the peasant returned to collect it, he found mercury pearled at the bottom. The color and weight of the mineral were such that he traveled six hours to the nearest town to sell it. A teamster with the Germanic name of Cazian Aenderlein tricked the peasant into revealing the mineral's source. Together they formed the first mining company to dig for mercury. Lacking both the capital and the labor to make their venture a commercial success, they sold their rights to entrepreneurs, who established the region's extraction industry.

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<sup>2</sup> OeStA, Finanz- und Hofkammerarchiv. Innerösterreichische Miscelle und Briefe, 135, fol 557f. At that time, 43 operators at Idrija held 144 shares (*Kuxe*) for which the state negotiated a purchase price of 170,000 *Gulden* to be paid in three annual installments. Attempts to operate the mine quickly revealed, however, that the state possessed neither the capital nor the organization to do so profitably. In consequence, it contracted with private companies (*appaltatore*) to advance funding for the mines in exchange for exclusive concessions to receive the mercury it produced. Cf. Valentinitsch 1981, 34-5.



All of this supposedly transpired in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. At that time, Idrija was nothing more than a remote corner of Europe. Located in the Kars, a spur of low, wooded mountains extending southeast from the Dinaric Alps, the area is marked by limestone ridges with numerous caves and underground rivers that separate dry valleys. Surface water is scarce, though the town of Idrija stands at the junction of the Idrijca and Nikova Rivers. The rugged topography had several effects. First, it limited agriculture to herding and forestry. Local peasants could produce very little grain, so that it and other foodstuffs had to be imported from outside the region, initially from the Ljubljana Basin to the northeast just below the Julian Alps and eventually from the Pannonian Plain that extends further northeast from Carniola into Styria and Hungary (Valentinitch 1981, 236). Second, in combination with a lack of local agricultural productivity, it constrained population density. This meant that settlements and, more importantly, marketplaces did not exist in the immediate vicinity of Idrija. The community of Bischoflack/ Škofja Loka, mentioned by miners in 1536, lies 42 kilometers away across rugged countryside. Third and last, the topography constrained local access. There were two trade routes linking Idrija to the rest of Europe: one led north via Villach to Salzburg, the Holy Roman Empire and the Low Countries; one led south via Loitsch/Logatec to the road from Laibach/Ljubljana to Trieste and from there to Venice, the Mediterranean, the Levant and Iberia (Hassinger 1976; Tremel 1954). These routes were so rudimentary that wagons and oxcarts could not travel on them.<sup>3</sup> All goods had to be carried in and out by pack animals or porters, a situation that would not begin to change until the 18<sup>th</sup> century due to the fiscal conservatism of the neighboring estates.<sup>4</sup> The legend suggests as much through its reference to impecunious peasants and distant marketplaces.

The discovery of mercury in its pure form – Idrija is the only location in Europe where the mineral seeps from the ground as a liquid – collided with these circumstances, creating both opportunity and opposition. Many local peasants were drawn away from agriculture, as the legend implies, by employment in the mines. Others supplemented their incomes by offering occasional services as teamsters, hauling supplies in and products out of Idrija. Yet, mining is an expert craft, and the need for skilled, experienced hands soon drew an immigrant population to Idrija as it did to most other mining centers in Europe and the New World. Only rough estimates of the size of the mining community exist before the 17<sup>th</sup> century and none for the local population. The commission report of 1537 recorded 60 miners, not counting other workers employed at the time. By the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, those numbers had risen to around 150 and to around 400 workers in total by the 1630s.<sup>5</sup> Extrapolating crudely to entire families, this might suggest a total mining community

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<sup>3</sup> To this day, only two routes connect Idrija to Ljubljana. Though both are now paved for automobile and truck traffic, travel time remains high, 60-90 minutes on average to cover 60 kilometers.

<sup>4</sup> Steiermärkisches Landesarchiv, Graz (SLA), Hofkammer-Registraturbücher und Kammer- und Exemptbücher (1570-1690), 1580, fol. 47. Cf. Valentinitsch 1981, 217-18.

<sup>5</sup> SLA, Repertorien und Akten der IÖ Hofkammer, chronologische Reihe (1570-1690), 1633, VII, 125. Cf. Valentinitsch 1981, 157-61.

that grew from 240 to 1600 souls, creating social tensions that increased miner dependence on *Pfennwert*.

The indigenous population of Idrija was Slavic; the immigrant community that directed mining operations and drew larger salaries were Germanic for the most part. These groups stood on opposing sides of a divide that was economic and legal as well as cultural. Drawn to isolated regions by the promise of employment and compensation, miners existed in a legal vacuum until they swore an oath of obedience to the regent and his mining ordinance, which gave them not only the right to work underground in a given region but also privileged access to the region's markets and resources (Westermann 2009, 171). At that point, they went from being distrusted outsiders to hated competitors (Preisner 1982, 34-38; Westermann 2009, 177-78). Moreover, the state penalized local communities for hindering or exploiting the newcomers: wrack-renting for housing; price-gouging for food; obstruction of mining operations; refusal to serve, trade or even associate (Hensche 1974, 161). Decades after settlement, strange languages and cultures, social discrimination and exclusion all hindered the miners' efforts to obtain basic goods and services from local farms or settlements.

Their predicament resulted not only from the difficulties posed by topography and culture but also from those arising from the wage and work regimes that characterized extraction before the emergence of what E. A. Wrigley once called a «mineral-based energy economy» (Wrigley 1988; Levine, Wrightson 1991, viii). As at other Central- and East-Alpine mining centers, miners at Idrija earned their wages under three distinct regimes: *Herren-* or *Zeitlohnarbeit*, *Gedinge-* or *Akkordarbeit* and *Lebenschaftsarbeit* (Valentinitsch 1981, 358-64; Mitterauer 1974, 234-315; Westermann 2009, 63-99). The sources refer to the majority of wageworkers as *Knechtslöhner*, or as *Herren-* or *Zeitlohnarbeiter*, who engaged in a variety of tasks for a basic, weekly remuneration. The *Gedinge-* or *Akkordarbeit* resembled a piece-rate rather than a time-rate of payment. This wage regime appears to have applied to the more essential tasks, such as hewer (*Häuer*), lumberman (*Holz-knechte*) or smeltery-worker (*Brandstättarbeiter*), and it tended to pay them more than 50 percent better than their colleagues involved in *Zeitlohnarbeit* (Valentinitsch 1981, 191).<sup>6</sup> In both categories, nominal wages proved remarkably 'sticky' (Safley 2019a). Between 1495 and 1660, nominal wages for workers were increased only twice, despite the continually rising cost of living: in 1575, when the state assumed direct control of the mines; and in 1627, when it instituted a temporary wage reform (Valentinitsch 1981, 185). In consequence, workers seldom earned enough to cover the price they were charged for *Pfennwert*, forcing them to assume debt or to seek by-employment.

The *Lebenschaft* offered exactly that. It took the form of a subcontracting arrangement usually applied to those processes that were particularly labor-intensive, less skilled and poorly paid (Valentinitsch 1981, 177). A miner would collect a group of workers, often family members or disabled colleagues, and pay a fee to the *Verweser* for the privilege of extracting mercury and cinnabar from a specific slag heap or mine shaft for a specific period of time. The *Lebenschaft* provided the tools and labor and

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<sup>6</sup> A *Gedingbauer*, for example, earned more per week than a *Lohnbauer*, 1 fl 33 kr 3 d per week, as opposed to 1 fl or 52 kr respectively.

committed to sell whatever it produced exclusively to the *Verweser* for a contractually fixed price. This arrangement thus allowed the *Verweser* to expand the mine's production and enabled underpaid miners and their families to supplement their incomes.<sup>7</sup> For that reason, miners complained bitterly about the corrupt assignment and high price or *Lebenschaften*, another «alternative to money» that should have been available to all.

Inconsistent – not to say unjust – earnings had to do with work- as well as wage-regimes. Miners at Idrija labored irregularly, moving from task to task, according to the length of their shift, their resistance to toxicity, the time of year, and the batch to be produced. The 1580 Mine Ordinance established maximum work periods of 8 hours per day and 44 hours per week, a limit that rose to 48 hours in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century without a corresponding increase in pay (Čar, Pelihan, Dzdarevič 2014, 161-68; Valentinitich 1981, 360). By contrast, the number of the miners' legal holidays decreased from more than 100 holidays per year in the 16<sup>th</sup> century to six in 1609 (Valentinitich 1981, 195-99). Yet, not the law of the land but the toxicity of mercury set the real limit at Idrija. According to a report submitted to the State Council in 1561, the mine could be operated «no more than 18 work-weeks out of the year, and a miner could not work underground for more than 14 days but had regularly to be shifted from one form of labor to another».<sup>8</sup> Moreover, «... the deeper a shaft or the farther a gallery travels, in which the evil weather the more accumulates, the more workers will weaken and sicken, so that many of them can tolerate little more than a week or two and do not last the period».<sup>9</sup> Hence, miners could not work at a single task for a long period of time but had to shift regularly to avoid the permanent effects of mercury toxicity. The seasonality and marketability of production also influenced the type and period of work performed. Because refining was done in the open air, where wet weather could affect the distillation process, and because mining occurred in enclosed spaces, where the sun could not provide light, miners changed between work aboveground in summer to belowground in winter, the specific tasks of which were remunerated at their own rates and in their own forms, over time, by piece or at risk and could alter earnings as much as 30 percent per week (Valentinitich 1981,

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<sup>7</sup> OeStA, Finanz- und Hofkammerarchiv, Innerösterreichische Miscelle und Briefe, 136, fol. 1500, 137, fol. 167. Indeed, the State Council repeatedly insisted that *Lebenschaften* be awarded exclusively to «arme, erlebte» miners, an order the *Verweser* obeyed only in the breach, it being far more productive – and, therefore, profitable – to set before able miners the prospect of a premium earned at piece-rates. Cf. Valentinitich 1981, 182.

<sup>8</sup> OeStA, Finanz- und Hofkammerarchiv, Innerösterreichische Miscelle und Briefe, 134/2. Bericht der Jdrianischen Amtsleut, 20. Augusti 1561. «Verer das die herrn Gwerckchen melden, das sy pessers und geferliches Wetters halben auf dem Artzt ein ganzes Jar nit uber 18 Wochenarbaitten mugen und wie ain Arbaiter uber 14 Tag jn der Teuff am Artzt nit bleiben sunder dieselbigen abswechseln und anndere an die Stat legen und doch die ersten nichts minder unnterhalten, damit man am Volgkch nit Mangle hab.» This resulted in a far less extensive period of uninterrupted extraction than was common for colliers, tanners or miners of base or precious metals.

<sup>9</sup> OeStA, Finanz- und Hofkammerarchiv, Innerösterreichische Miscelle und Briefe, 134/2. Bericht der Jdrianischen Amtsleut, 20. Augusti 1561. «Darauff sagen wir das gleich woll, die Schacht vill tieffer ferth und Stollen weiter verfahren sein, darinen sych das posse Wetter hefftig entthelt die Arbaitter fast schwecht und krengekht, das jr vill manicher Kaumb ein Wochen oder zwo mocht und jr wenig ein Raittung ubersten mugen».

166). Regardless of the season, they worked more intensely when the *Vernwaser* had orders to produce specific amounts of mercury and cinnabar for sale and delivery at a specific time. The result was batch production, which could impose periods without any pay whatsoever.

Miners did not work according to the regular rhythm of a fixed number of hours per day and days per week but according to the season of the year, the state of their health and the demand for their product. This irregularity did not help them to attend weekly retail markets that occurred at fixed times on fixed days, such as the one at Bischoflack, regardless of the distances to be traveled. Indeed, they could afford none of the “leisure preference” Hatcher noted among Lothian colliers (Hatcher 1993, 386-90). How were they to know what they earned, apart from what the administrators and foremen told them? Unless they kept detailed accounts of their own work – how long at which tasks – miners were completely in the dark. So, their dependence on the *Pfennwert* trade – and the opportunities for chicanery – grew.

#### 4. Futility of reform

That those opportunities were seized frequently does not, however, prove that predatory capitalists and indifferent officials were free agents. They, too, were caught up in an ecology of work over which they had only partial control.

They could not completely rely on laborers who were not completely dependent. Apart from the difficulties posed by topography, those peasants who volunteered their services as teamsters occasionally proved unwilling to work. They soon learned that the volume of *Pfennwert* they transported to Idrija far exceeded the volume of mercury they transported away, but the rates they received for *Pfennwert* were far lower. In 1602, the tariff for a *Saum*, roughly 160 kg, of grain from Triest to Idrija was 18 *Kreutzzer*, while that of a *Saum* of mercury from Idrija to Triest was 1 *Gulden* 33½ *Kreutzzer*, more than five times as much.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, those earnings proved ‘sticky’, like the wages paid to workers at Idrija (Valentinitsch 1981, 218-19). The peasant-teamsters responded by demanding increases and, when these were not forthcoming, by refusing to work and withholding their pack animals. All attempts by local landlords, merchant capitalists or state agents to compel them, whether by defining haulage as *corvée* labor or setting a minimum number of days or animals to be committed to the service of the mines, yielded no permanent solution. Indeed, landlords often connived in this resistance. Hans Georg Ainkhürn, for example, the son of an infamous Idrijan *Vernwaser* Urban Ainkhürn ordered the peasants on his estates to refuse this service, refuse shipments bound to Idrija from Trieste and to load his goods instead.<sup>11</sup> The peasants hid or consumed cargoes, delaying deliveries for weeks at a time or falsified weights by wetting grain with water (Valentinitsch 1981, 221). This resulted in frequent food shortages in Idrija and sharpened conflicts surrounding the *Pfennwert* that owners and operators provided.

<sup>10</sup> SLA, Repertorien und Akten der IÖ Hofkammer, chronologische Reihe (1570-1690), 1604, II, 37.

<sup>11</sup> SLA, Sachabteilung der IÖ Hofkammerakten, Karton 85, Heft 14.

That capital and state proved unable either to cajole or to compel consistent compliance on the part of local peasants signals in turn the limitations of their powers and ambiguities of their interests with regard to mining at Idrija. Until the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, mining attracted taverners, butchers and shopkeepers to Idrija, but the settlement had no local marketplace of its own and, therefore, no merchant engaged in wholesale commerce. Various proposals to create a weekly commodity market for the provisioning of miners and other wage-earners fell on deaf ears for a number of reasons. The state council decided that a regular market would not sustain itself, given the geographic isolation of Idrija, and supply issues would be better addressed by reducing transportation costs.<sup>12</sup> It suggested lowering customs duties in and out of Idrija, but it refused funds to improve the routes leading to and from it. It also encouraged the creation of a dedicated supply zone for the mine, such as had existed to support other mines in other parts of Austria since the 15<sup>th</sup> century, but it proved unable fully to execute the plan (Dimitz 1875, 234). The regent had mortgaged the right to collect taxes – and therewith a portion of the harvest in those regions – to private interests, often the same interests that operated the mines. What is more, he feared that a regular market would create unwanted competition and threaten his revenue; those private individuals or companies that offered credit for the right to operate the mine or sell its mercury were often the same companies that profited from their sole control of the *Pfennwert* trade.<sup>13</sup> In every instance, the state demonstrated greater concern for the profits generated by mercury mining than for the long-term well-being of its miners and therewith the economic development and social stability of the region. Throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the mine and its miners received their supplies not on the open market but through the *Pfennwert* monopoly (Koch 1942; Menzel 1891; Mitterauer 1974, 256).

Not that the regent and his government gave no thought to the stable provisioning of its miners. When the state assumed direct control of production in 1575, it took the trade in *Pfennwert* out of the hands of the mine operators and their *Verweser*. Up to that point, their corruption had led to repeated protests by the miners, such as that of 1536, and to regulatory interventions by the state, such as the 1557 decree of Emperor and Archduke Ferdinand I that miners at Idrija be paid in cash not kind.<sup>14</sup> The operators and their *Verweser* had simply ignored all such admonitions and regulations. The seat of government in Graz was too distant from Idrija for effective regulatory enforcement, resulting in relative impunity for violators. Moreover, many of them were themselves substantial landowners, political favorites or high officials, enabling them to defeat or deflect state initiatives with regard to Idrija. The situation did not improve under state control. The governing council merely re-appointed the operators' long-term *Verweser*, Urban Ainkhürn, who continued decades of predation by raising the value of *Pfennwert* so high that the miners were driven finally to stop work in 1579.

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<sup>12</sup> OeStA, Innerösterreichische Miscelle und Briefe, 135, fol. 584. Bericht des Verwesers 1575. Cf. Valentinitich, *Das landesfürstliche Quecksilbergwerk Idria*, 226.

<sup>13</sup> SLA, Repertorien und Akten der IÖ Hofkammer, chronologische Reihe (1570-1690), 1625 May, 45, 1633 July, 78.

<sup>14</sup> OeStA, Innerösterreichische Miscelle und Briefe, 134, fol. 703. Cf. Valentinitich 1981, 227.

Ainkhürn illustrates the difficulties posed to capital and state by «alternatives to money», given the ecology of work at Idrija (Valentinič 1981, 369-71). Descended from a lineage of servants to the Duchy of Bavaria and the Wittelsbach dynasty, his father appears as a *Gewerke* at Idrija as early as 1510 and may have received a title of nobility in 1540 (Von Frank 1967, 9). Urban grew up in Carniola and assumed the role of *Verweser* at Idrija in 1549, a role he would hold uninterrupted, first on behalf of the *Gewerke* and from 1575 for the regent, until his retirement in 1586. His knowledge of mining operations made him invaluable to both, enabling him to work seamlessly with capital and the state, executing tasks and currying favor with both. His responsibilities as private employee and state official did not, however, prevent him from pursuing his own business interests. He was himself a *Gewerke* at Idrija, having inherited shares from his father, and sought opportunities to buy out other stakeholders (Valentinič 1981, 369). Yet, his profit from the *Pfennwert* trade overshadowed his earnings from mercury. He regularly engaged in *Fürkauf*, buying large quantities of provisions well below market rates only to offer them to miners at artificially inflated values. In consequence, many fell into debt bondage. He purchased shares in the ironworks near Idrija, where mining tools were produced and repaired, and received the privilege of transporting these goods tollfree.<sup>15</sup> To his increasingly diversified holdings, he added a number of landed estates, including Loitsch/Logatec at the intersection of the main transit route to Idrija and the route connecting Laibach/Ljubljana with Trieste, which he received in 1578 in exchange for assuming nearly 20,000 *rheinische Gulden* in debt on behalf of the regent.<sup>16</sup> He came thus to control not only the purchase and sale of provisions but also the transportation of goods to and from Idrija. Multiple accusations of corruption had no effect on his career, his wealth or his reputation. The ability of individuals, of which Ainkhürn is a signal but not singular example, to hold multiple offices and pursue individual opportunities without apparent conflict of interest indicates the social, political and economic conditions that influence «alternatives to money».

The work-stoppage of 1579 did not end Ainkhürn's career, but it prompted the state finally to undertake structural changes, creating a separate office for the purposes of supplying the mine and its miners and by issuing a *Reformations-Nottl* on 7 April 1580.<sup>17</sup> The reform limited the influence of the *Verweser* over the traffic in *Pfennwert*, and prescribed the keeping of exact accounts, but it failed to end corrupt practices. Though no longer involved in the purchase of supplies, he remained responsible for the value assessed miners for them. Thus, Ainkhürn continued to profit and provoke to the end of his career in 1586.

The records of the first, official trader in *Pfennwert*, Hans Ebner, a former customs official, confirm the impression. Although his term of office left few traces, he appears to have been no less willing to exploit his opportunity and the miners'

<sup>15</sup> SLA, Repertorien und Akten der IÖ Hofkammer, chronologische Reihe (1570-1690), 1573, II, 18.

<sup>16</sup> SLA, Repertorien und Akten der IÖ Hofkammer, chronologische Reihe (1570-1690), 1578, I 72; 1580, V, 31.

<sup>17</sup> SLA, Hofkammer-Registraturbücher und Kammer- und Exemptbücher (1570-1626), Reg. 1580, fol. 134f.

situation. When he died in 1585, his accounts revealed that the miners at Idrija had become indebted by virtue of over-valued *Pfennwert* to the amount of 6,367 *rheinische Gulden*. His successors were no more competent or less corrupt (Valentinitsch 1981, 228-30). Miner complaints continued; miner indebtedness increased. Finally in 1610, the state disbanded the 'independent' *Pfennwerthandel* and again prescribed cash wages only.

Yet, even cash did not entirely protect miners from the predations of merchants and officials, often one and the same person. Rather than leave the provisioning of the mine to the operators or place it in the hands of one of its own agents, the state turned to yet another commercial operator. Beginning in 1610, it placed the *Pfennwert* trade in the hands of a series of Venetian merchant companies to which it had offered monopoly concessions (*Appalt*) to sell Idrijan mercury in exchange for loans of investment and operating capital, a practice that began when it first assumed control in 1575. At the time, this seemed the only means to obtain the funds necessary to maintain and improve the mine as a state enterprise as well as arrange the sale of its product on international markets (Tremel 1954, 67; Valentinitsch 1981, 35-6). The so-called *appaltatore* soon came to resemble the directors of a *Verlag* or putting-out system, in which they controlled operations by providing essential supplies and capital to the mine and its miners and received in return exclusive rights to take and sell their products. Not only did the *appaltatore* charge inflated prices for the supplies, forcing the miners who paid cash further into debt, but they also advanced money to the state's *Verweser* against the value of further deliveries of mercury (Valentinitsch 1981, 230-33). The *Verweser* then misappropriated the funds, purchasing foodstuffs and other supplies, which they then provided to miners in lieu of cash wages. The pattern of misuse and malversation continued until 1629, when the bankruptcy of the current *appaltatore* provided the state with another opportunity to reorganize the *Pfennwert* trade. It excluded the next *appaltatore* from trafficking in foodstuffs and placed responsibility for supplies once again in the hands of its *Verweser*. As happened in the past, however, it turned a blind eye to the corruption that ensued. The *Verweser* undertook the purchase of the most essential foodstuffs but provided these to the miners at inflated prices in lieu of cash wages. Worse still, in the eyes of the miners, what cash they received took the form of worthless Venetian copper coins. The *appaltatore* limited himself to the delivery of mining supplies but in less quantity and higher prices than had his predecessors. Only when the time came to renew his contract, in 1648, did the state finally refuse his request to place the entire trade in *Pfennwert* under his control (Von Srbik 1907, 4). This enabled the few local retailers who had settled in Idrija to provide cloth and tools to miners. A local market in foodstuffs and other necessities began gradually to emerge in Idrija in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, breaking the long-term monopoly provided by the state to single suppliers and ending the use of *Pfennwert* as an alternative to monetary wages. Henceforth the miners paid cash for their necessities and become indebted to local retailers rather than a foreign capitalist or mine administrator.

Reliance on the *Pfennwert* trade, whether operated by private or public enterprise, arose from the necessity of supplying miners who worked in isolated, impoverished regions. The resulting exploitation was intrinsic to the situation and not easily avoided. As organized and controlled by the state or by capital, the *Pfennwert* trade

robbed the miners of control over the value they were charged or the quantity and quality they were given. Yet, in nearly two centuries of frequent protest, some of it violent, they never called for an end to the trade but only for its fair application, because they were utterly dependent on it. The state offered temporary remedies but never effectively prevented abuses. It suffered fiscal limitations, arising from internal as well as external factors, that prevented the creation of an adequate system of supply. Internalities, such as the chronic insolvency that forced the state to function from one loan to another, combined with conflicts of interest, in which the creditors were also major landlords and state councilors, to prevent funds from being raised or reapportioned for the purpose of improving routes and fostering markets. Externalities in the form of the disruptions caused by border warfare, crop failure and epidemic disease frequently redirected the attention of the state away from the problems at Idrija and further limited the resources at their disposal. Beyond such constraints, the state proved unable to contend with principal-agent problems. Lacking expertise in mining and marketing, it had to rely on foreign capital and its representatives. These local managers, Urban Ainkhürn being but one example among many, could defy both workers and authorities as either too dependent or too distant to intervene effectively in their manipulations of work or wage regimes. Even capital, intent on extracting maximum profits with maximum efficiency, confronted constraints that it could not easily overcome. Peasant teamsters refused haulage. Inadequate infrastructure increased costs and uncertainty. Product markets experienced extreme volatility. Even monopoly contracts were fixed-term. Under these circumstances, a take-what-you-can-get mentality seems understandable if not excusable.

None of the parties involved in mercury extraction at Idrija – the state, capitalists, agents, miners, peasants – wished to see the use of *Pfennwert* as an «alternative to money» abandoned. It relieved miners of the arduous, sometimes impossible task of provisioning at marketplaces that were too distant, occasionally hostile and frequently untimely. It stabilized the workforce and fostered a degree of order that generated revenue and lowered enforcement costs to the state. And, of course, it provided capitalists – whether landlord producers, merchant middlemen or state agents – with opportunities for profit. From the early-16<sup>th</sup> to the late-17<sup>th</sup> century, whoever controlled the *Pfennwert* trade consistently sought to maximize profit through *Fürkauf* and price gouging, instrumentalizing it as an alternative to money wages. As ruthless and self-interested as this practice appears, however, it was also a rational consequence of the local ecology of work that had certain advantages for all.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper has concentrated attention on *Pfennwert* – foodstuffs, textiles, tools and other supplies—offered in lieu of cash wages. In an age of commodity money, it makes sense that any «alternative to money» would likewise take the form of commodities. As prominently as such tangibles figured at Idrija and most other mining centers in central and eastern Alpine regions, however, they were not the only



alternatives in use. Mining involved different forms of interlocking and interacting alternatives that functioned at all levels of the political economy.

Almost as frequently as miners complained about the corrupt distribution of *Pfennwert*, they objected to the misuse of *Lebenschaften*. These were part of the complex wage- and work-regimes of preindustrial mining. *Lebenschaft* (or *Lebnschaft*) refers to «a contractual relationship, according to which the person who possess a mine, transfers to another person the right to extract minerals from it or a part of it; it also applies to a group (*Genossenschaft*) of miners that assumes [operation of] a mine in this manner; it can be applied to the mine itself, the operation of which is transferred in this manner, finally it includes the group of people to whom the right to operate a mine in this manner is transferred» (Veith 1871, 232). In the case of Idrija, as noted, it resembled a subcontracting or *Verlag*-style labor relationship, in which the *Verneser* assigned working rights to a portions of the mine, usually one deemed to be less productive and therefore unlikely to yield the quantities of finished product that would cover the costs of extraction and refinement. In essence, he and the operators he represented paid only for that which the *Lebenschaft* produced. The members of the *Lebenschaft* bore all the costs of production and, therefore, all the uncertainty of work that might yield little or no profit.

The miners of Idrija and elsewhere valued it nonetheless, because it provided a form of by-employment, a means of increasing earnings in times of stagnant wages or full unemployment. Those earnings were by no means guaranteed, so that the *Lebenschaft* offered opportunity as an «alternative to money». More, in so far as the holder of a *Lebenschaft* became an entrepreneur and foreman in his own right, working part of a mine to which he had exclusive, contractual rights and providing employment for whomever joined him, he gained status as well as opportunity. Accordingly, even in an age of commodity money, intangibles as well as tangibles, fixed as well as variable capital, served as alternatives.

As this paper has tried to suggest, the use of alternatives to money penetrated all levels of the political economy of mercury extraction at Idrija. A cash-strapped state offered alternatives as an inducement to service. It provided secure tenure to peasants in return for their agricultural productivity and labor services. It offered gainful employment and financial inducements to miners in return for their skilled artisanship. It offered political autonomy to landlords in return for their political and military services. It offered legal privilege and economic advantage to merchant capitalists in return for the financial and commercial services. All of these inducements functioned as «alternatives to money» in situations where cash might otherwise have changed hands, and all of these inducements, whether in the form of privileges or opportunities, status or authority, incomes or interests, generated monetary value for the parties involved. At Idrija, an entire exchange economy can be said to have functioned on the basis of alternatives to money.

Indeed, they made that economy possible. Abused, they could serve as an instrument of exploitation and a cause of inequality, but, used, they enabled transactions that could not otherwise have occurred. As the name implies, alternatives find use in those moments when different media of exchange and different metrics of value become essential, because money will not serve. To return to *Pfennwert* for a moment, no evidence exists to suggest a shortage of cash in Idrija.

Rather, the miners lacked opportunities to spend it. Capitalists lacked adequate assurance of profit from minerals alone. The state lacked other means to provide it. None of these parties demanded that it or any other alternative to money be abandoned, because they all drew advantage from them, albeit in different ways and to different extents. The existence of alternatives indicates that, even in a monetized economy, money is neither the only nor the best medium of exchange in all circumstances.

Nor is that fact limited to extraction or manufacturing alone. If one looks beyond preindustrial manufacturing, the range of «alternatives to money» broadens further still. Bankruptcy resolutions could involve large quantities of fiat and future money (Safley 2000; Safley 2013; Safley 2019b). It was not unusual for creditors to accept book transfers of accounts payable or goods receivable in lieu of cash payments from their debtor. Nor were title transfers of fixed and variable capital, even equity stakes, anything less than commonplace as payment in default.

Have all these various forms of payment anything in common apart from the replacement of cash? Striking, in my opinion, is their resemblance to a spot market.<sup>18</sup> In all cases, payment and delivery occur immediately, on the spot. They usually involve a face-to-face transaction between buyer and seller, whether in the form of miner and *Verweser*, employee and employer and creditor and debtor. Interestingly, in the absence of institutions that established uniform, fixed and enforceable rules for such transactions, asymmetries develop that affect the perceptions and values attached to it. One of the parties, be it a capitalist, an official or a creditor enjoys greater power and authority and dictates the monetary value attached to the «alternative». Not surprisingly, the disadvantaged party, be it miner or debtor, often finds the valuation unacceptable but lacks the power to alter it. The possibility that «alternatives to money» could take multiple forms and multiple values even within a single transaction suggests that their use transcends the commonly assumed functions of money as medium of exchange, measure of value and repository of wealth. They introduce into economic behaviors factors that are seldom part of economic calculation.

Interestingly, perhaps paradoxically, this range of alternatives not only created long-term problems for the mine at Idrija but also enabled its long-term success. When the state assumed control of production in 1575, it embarked upon a program of technological improvements that increased productivity and production by more than 300 percent through an extraordinary period of crisis in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Valentinitsch 1981, 65-88). This despite the constraints of environment, lack of infrastructure, underdevelopment of institutions and stickiness of wages. Capital for these investments came from the *appaltatore*, whose monopoly concessions to supply *Pfennwert* and sell mercury enabled the mine's products to find ready markets, despite trade embargoes on mercury in the old world and the new. Labor came from miners who continued to work almost without interruption, despite the new

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<sup>18</sup> A spot market, also known as a cash market, is one in which financial instruments or commodities are traded for immediate delivery with settlement, that is payment and transfer occurring immediately or within a mutually agreed, fixed period of time. In modern economies with appropriate infrastructure, they can operate through intermediary individuals or institutions, such as brokers and exchange, but they can also occur over-the-counter, that is, between the trading parties face-to-face.

technology and the intensification of their labor. They did so without a corresponding increase in their earnings, of which the much-exploited *Pfennwert* continued to be a substantial part, in what appears to be flagrant disregard for both their agency and their advantage. The brutality of their work – stone that crushed or poisoned at intervals, depths that threatened drowning or suffocation in an instant, shifts that yielded a subsistence but not a sufficiency – continued at least to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century raising the question of modernization and persistence in the face of under-development. «Alternatives to money» suggest how both occurred but not why.

That alternatives have become the stuff of song and legend and are widely prohibited by law suggests that they are archaic, have no place in modern wage systems. That alternatives seem inextricably bound to the exploitation of labor by capital suggests that they are also undesirable, have no place in modern, liberal society. Yet, nothing could be further from the truth. Corporate employers regularly offer – and their employees absolutely expect – various fringe benefits, all of which the employer regularly and dutifully lists in monetary terms as ‘total compensation’ and the state assiduously accounts as taxable income. A brief consideration of preindustrial mining – or any other form of premodern manufacturing – reveals both a resort to and a range of «alternatives to money» that is no more or less present in the workplace but demonstrates every bit as much ingenuity as its modern counterpart. They were and remain a means to suffering as well as survival, to persistence as well as profit. They are not archaic but timeless.

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Giulio Ongaro, Luca Mocarelli

*In kind wages between city and countryside:  
Northern Italy in the eighteenth century*

## 1. Introduction

The paper aims at clarifying the characterisation and the role played by in-kind payments in wages' composition both in the cities and in the countryside in eighteenth century Northern Italy. This is a crucial issue, given that wages' level has been widely used in order to support relevant theories, such as the debated explanation proposed by Allen of the English industrial revolution exactly because of being an «high-wage economy» (Allen 2009; 2015), or the related thesis of the Little Divergence between Mediterranean and Northern Europe in the Early Modern period (Allen 2001; Malanima 2013). Clearly, a different consideration of the in-kind part of the wages can lead to a reconsideration of the wage levels themselves and, therefore, entail a revision of these theories. In order to contribute to the problematization of these hypothesis, we will move from Northern Italy, using case studies mainly from Bologna, Padua, and Milan, and their countryside. The choice to focus on Northern Italy and on these specific areas lays on two main points, besides the availability of sources: first, Northern Italian wages (including the Milanese ones) have already been used as a term of comparison with the English ones in order to propose a chronology of the Little Divergence (Malanima 2013; Rota and Weisdorf 2021). Therefore, our contribution places itself in a well-established debate. Second, as we will state in the following pages, the choice of these case studies allows at observing the relevance and the composition of the in-kind part of the wages in different demographic and economic contexts. This is clearly important not just for the comparative potential of the paper, but mainly because by that way our findings become representative of the various contexts that were included in the Early Modern Northern Italy.

At least since the eighties of the last century historians have abandoned the idea that non-monetary transactions should be considered as the heritage of 'backward' societies, within a teleological process of market growth in which money would prevail (Ciriaco 1985); in the Italian area, the essays included in the volume 6 (*Economia naturale, economia monetaria*) of the annals of the *Storia d'Italia*, edited in 1983 by Ruggero Romano and Ugo Tucci, clearly summarize this important historiographical step in the interpretation of the ways in which people – in the pre-industrial period, but also later – exchanged goods and services. About wages, exactly the introduction by the editors underlined the relevant lacks in the Italian historiography, charged of «forgiving, obliterating, *escamoter* every trace of natural

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economy, as it were a poor relative, or a family member affected by a shameful sickness»<sup>1</sup> (Romano and Tucci 1983, XXIV). The consciousness of the importance of the so-called ‘natural economy’ even in societies in which monetary transactions were predominant, and its not being maidservant of the more developed ‘monetary economy’ but playing just a different – and often intertwined – role was clearly a great step forward in the interpretation of historical economies. However, unfortunately, at least from our point of view it has been scarcely adopted in practice in the researches that focused on wages, especially in the ones that aimed at the creation of long-run datasets of nominal and real wages. In brief, in the collection of the archival data – a operation that, using Marc Bloch’s words, is not just a photograph of a society, but already an interpretation (Bloch 2019, 75) – and in their analysis the in-kind part of the payments remained a ‘poor relative’ almost always forgiven. Recently, Hatcher and Stephenson (2018, 4; Hatcher 2018, 17, 19, 40, 47; Muldrew 2018, 167; Mocarelli and Ongaro 2019, 81) underlined that one of the main biases in the reconstruction of wage series is exactly the absence of the in-kind part of the payments. This quite generic definition includes various elements that are usually left out from the estimations: the real in-kind component of the wages, that together with the in-cash part built up the daily or yearly sum due to the worker for the accomplishment of a specific task; the non-monetary rewards and supplements; the food, drink, clothes, and lodging that often the employers supplied to the workers. In summary, a very variegated and variable spectrum of products that is frequently difficult to trace in the archival documents and to quantify – and therefore many scholars have been in a certain way ‘forced’ to left it out from quantitative reconstructions. However, the scarce traces left behind do not mean that the products (foodstuffs, clothes, and so on) that the workers received were irrelevant in the definition of their incomes, as we will demonstrate in the following pages. Certainly, however, it means that it is very difficult to supply precise figures of the total wages. Indeed, in this paper we will provide some approximate estimations of the in-kind and total amounts that the workers received in various contexts, periods, and for different tasks; therefore these information can be useful just for adjusting existing wage series, for re-evaluating the trends of remunerations in specific areas and historical periods, and especially for the understanding of the negotiation between employers and employees, the purchasing power of the population and, broadly, the living standards. Indeed, as we will demonstrate, not only a more correct evaluation of the in-kind part of the wages leads to a (relevant) redefinition of the wages’ level in the Italian cities and countryside, but it also shows how, together with other elements (such as the presence of the public victualling institutions), the supply of foodstuff and wood to the workers strongly affected not only the *level* of the purchasing power, but also its *stability* across time. We think that these are very relevant achievements, especially considering that for the Italian areas such evaluations are almost entirely lacking; if we look to the existing historiography, urban wage series – both nominal and real – include exclusively in cash wages

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<sup>1</sup> Original sentence: «Si trattava dunque di dimenticare, obliterare, *escamoter* ogni e qualsiasi traccia di economia naturale, quasi si fosse trattato di un parente povero o di un membro della famiglia affetto da una malattia vergognosa».

(Malanima 2013; Federico and Malanima 2004, 441; Rota and Weisdorf 2020), even not specifying if the in-kind part lacks because of its irrelevance or, more practically, because it was not possible to estimate it. Moving from the cities to the countryside the picture is less desolate, but still, in our opinion, unsatisfying: the real wages proposed by Federico and Malanima (2004, 441-442) for Central-Northern Italy, besides supplying just one level of wages for the entire rural population, refer just to 'money wages' (441), therefore completely ignoring the in-kind part of the payments that especially in the countryside was quite significant. More recently Mauro Rota and Jacob Weisdorf (2021, 456-458) directly tackled the problem, admitting that «the sampled wages [presented below] are far from perfect. The sample size is relatively modest, and the sources are occasionally lacking when it comes to revealing workers' ages, managerial responsibilities, and payments in kind» (456). At the same time, they recognized that «a central problem is that both stable and casual workers often received food and drink as part of their payments in kind [...]. Regardless, and as in tradition, payments in kind need to be monetized added to the workers' cash payments in order to determine their overall remuneration» (458). The way that the two authors found to solve this gap was, basically, the calculation of the difference between the cost of Malanima's 'respectability' consumption basket (that, in addition, is an *urban* and not a *rural* consumption basket) and the level of in-cash wages, identifying in the resulting sum the in-kind payment (458-459). The attempt is certainly praiseworthy, at least because Rota and Weisdorf did not sweep under the carpet the problem, and they tried to solve it, and the results they obtained in the evaluation of the share of in-kind and in-cash payments in the total wages are for a large part confirmed by this paper. However, how can we assume that the in-kind part of the rural wages allowed at reaching the cost of the 'respectability' consumption basket? On the one hand, in this way we would appoint to the wage an effectiveness in terms of purchasing power that has to be proven, especially considering the very relevant role that self-production and self-consumption that almost certainly characterized the rural environment. On the other hand, conversely, we would predetermine that wages allowed *just* to cover the cost of a 'respectability' consumption basket for an adult male, without considering the possibility that wages would allow at obtaining extra earnings beyond the level of subsistence. This would, therefore, impede also to observe potentially relevant changes in wages level and consumption patterns across time. Conversely, implying no changes in monetary wages level, and the in-kind part aimed just to reach the subsistence level, we would obviously assume that changes in consumption patterns, according for example with de Vries' 'industrious revolution' (de Vries 2008), would be based just on the increase in working time (Allen and Weisdorf 2011) and not, maybe, on an increase of the in-kind part of the salary that could have 'freed' cash for other market products. More, this approach completely neglects the fact that a single worker's wage could be built up not just for his own nourishment, but maybe also for the sustenance of his family, or for having products to be sold on the market. In short, more precise estimations are needed, and this is exactly what we are going to propose in the following pages. The first part of the paper, after a description of the case studies and of the sources, will propose some figures to understand which was (approximately) the level and the

percentage of the in-kind part of adult male wages<sup>2</sup> in Northern Italy's cities and countryside, also observing how these figures changed according to the various tasks to be accomplished. We will also analyse possible changes of the values across time and in different areas. Clearly, even if the sources we found allow at more precise estimations compare, for example, to Rota and Weisdorf ones, we share the same problems linked to the faultiness of the archival documents; therefore, we will specify in our estimations where it has been possible to include all the payments in kinds (the completing part of the monetary wage, the rewards and supplements, the food and lodging) or just some of them.

We will also characterize the in-kind part of the payments, observing which products and in which amounts the various workers received; we include in our analysis both the stable and the casual workers, to supply an as exhaustive as possible overview. The quantification of the amounts of products received will allow as also to propose some considerations on the aim of the in-kind part of the wages: was just directed to the satisfaction of the basic food needs of the labourer or did it allow also at supplying with wood and foodstuff his family, or to sell the exceeding part on the market? Finally, the characterisation of the in-kind part of the payments means also to understand if it was a fixed amount of products or of their value (i.e., varying amounts according to prices), or if it varied according to the needs of the worker.

This last element will introduce us to the second part of the paper, the more 'qualitative' one. Basically, we will observe more in depth the variability of the goods that the workers received, even if at a first look the amounts and their value could seem static across time: on the contrary, we will demonstrate that, for example, even if the workers should receive daily a fixed unit of bread (one loaf, in the case of Bologna) for a fixed cost, the weight of the loaf changed, and so its caloric supply. More, even if we are used to think that daily workers received their salary just in the days of effective work, they could receive not only the monetary wage, but also the foodstuffs also in the days they did not work for religious or climatic reasons. Finally, another clarification refers to the quality of the products (and, therefore, their economic value) that the employers supplied to their workers. This is very important especially if we consider the abovementioned sentence by Rota and Weisdorf: payments in kind need to be monetarized, and the easiest way to do this, if we know the amount of products supplied, is to use the current market prices in order to estimate their value. However, we will show that often workers – especially the casual ones – received very low-quality products, if not overtly spoiled ones. This means, besides a probably lower nutritional intake, a lower market value, that clearly affected the general level of wages.

In the conclusions we will summarize the achievements of the paper and their contribution for the methodology to be used in the construction of long-run wage series. Besides the 'quantitative' element, we will also recap how the above-mentioned analysis helps in understanding the processes of wage formation, the negotiations between employers and employees, up to our comprehension of the pre-

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<sup>2</sup> We also found some interesting data on female and child employment, showing the differences in monetary wages, but unfortunately without any reference to potential difference in the foodstuffs supplied. Therefore, we did not include in this paper the above-mentioned data.

industrial living standards. Specifically, we think that one of the main contributions is the re-evaluation of the way people achieved the foodstuffs and the products they need to survive, especially in terms of the role played by the in-kind wages – together with the presence of the public victualling institutions – in lowering the strong fluctuations in the purchasing power of the population. Indeed, if the *Annone* helped in stabilising the prices, lowering their volatility (i.e., affecting the supply side), the fact that up to half of the salary was in kind meant a parallel stabilising of the wages' fluctuations (i.e., the demand side).

## 2. The case studies and the sources

The data and the information that will be presented in the following pages are the results of extensive research in mainly three areas of Northern Italy: the cities of Padua, Bologna, and Milan, and their countryside. Therefore, different environments first in terms of demographic size of the two cities: the *Anagrafi Venete* describe between 1766 and 1775 around 30.000 inhabitants (pp. 317-318) in Padua, while Bologna maintained during the eighteenth century a population between around 64.000 and 70.000 inhabitants (Dal Pane 1999, 20; Bellettini 1985, 14). Finally, Milan was one of the 15 most populous European cities during the entire Early Modern period, and specifically its population was 124.000 inhabitants at the beginning of the eighteenth century and 135.000 in 1800 (Alfani and Percoco 2019). Other differences refer to the countryside, especially in terms of agrarian structures. The leasing of lands characterized the Paduan countryside: the three families analysed in this paper rented out plots of average dimensions between 1 and 9 acres that, therefore, allowed just the survival of a family of farmers (and even not too numerous). The landowners collected their rents in cash and in kinds (almost entirely wheat) and cultivated directly just a very small part of their lands – that, however, could be cultivated also with lucrative market products, such as rice (Ongaro 2023). On the contrary, the countryside of Bologna was organized according to the 'classic' sharecropping (Poni 1963; 1982). Plots were suitable for the cultivation by a large family of farmers, being usually of around 37-50 acres (Cazzola 2002, 246; Cattini 1978, 868), and the production was diversified in order to assure also the covering of the needs of the sharecroppers' families: in short, grapes, wheat and hemp were the main products harvested and they were equally (at least theoretically) divided between the landowners and the sharecroppers, such as the expenses for the seeds, the livestock and, broadly, the maintenance of plots. Finally, the agrarian landscape of the Milanese area was characterized by proto-capitalistic farms, leased by large tenant farmers, with capital-intensive and market-oriented cultivations (rice, wheat), at least in the southern part of the Lombard region (Zaninelli 1964; 1986; Coppola 1978; 1983; Aiello, Bascapè and Reborà 2013). These information are important because, clearly, different demographic dynamics and economic structures could have affected in different ways the process of wage formation, also in terms of amount and characterization of the in-kind part of the salary.

The research that will be presented in the following pages relies on an extensive collection of data from the private archives of noble families and of charitable

institutions. About Milan, documents have been produced also by public officials and foremen in public building sites.<sup>3</sup> In the State Archives of Padua, we went through the accounting books of three families: the Selvatico family for the period 1700-1716 and 1739-1787, the Obizzi family (1711-1713, 1720-1758, and 1777-1781), and, even if for a very short period, to the Frigimelica family (1770-1777).<sup>4</sup> All these families owned large estates especially in the southern part of the provinces of Padua and Vicenza and in the northern part of the province of Ferrara. As anticipated, they mainly rented out small plots to peasants, but they also cultivated directly part of their landed properties (even if very small plots) with market-oriented productions, such as wheat and rice. Given that we used both the domestic accounting books and the rural ones, it has been possible to collect information on wages' level and composition of both urban and rural workers. Referring to the formers, we have been able to put together wages' series the keeper of the Obizzi's theatre, the secretary, the gardener and deputy-gardener, the assistant chef, and in the case of the Selvatico the entire *famiglia di casa* (i.e., the domestic servants). Moving to the countryside, analogous series have been built up for the daily workers, the rural stewards and deputy-stewards (*gastaldo* and *sotto gastaldo*), farmers (*fattori*), herdsmen and herdsmen-in-chief (*bovaro* and *primo bovaro*), stable hand (*canallaro*), and the shepherd. Data are sometimes incomplete or aggregated (such as in the case of the Selvatico's domestic servants), so they are only partially useful in order to create long-run wage series, indicating the exact salary collected by each category of worker; however, they allow at estimating (at least under-estimating, where lodging and food are not included) the role played by the in-kind part in the process of wage formation. Given that we argue that in the existing historiography there is a strong underrate of the in-kind payments in the calculation of nominal wages, the fact that the series that we will present in some cases clearly underestimate these payments is not a limit but even a confirmation of our assertion.

Similar observations refer also to the data collected in the Bolognese case study. In this case too we went through the urban and rural accounting books of noble families: the Bianchetti-Monti (1759-1790), the Salina-Amorini-Bolognini (1734-1745, 1770-1786), the Scappi-Ariosti (1701-1702, 1720-1769), the Pepoli (1714), and the Boschi (1738-1795).<sup>5</sup> Differently from Padua, however, in the case of Bologna we collected data also from the accounting books of the hospital Santa Maria della Vita (for the period 1745-1762), the girls' school of San Giuseppe (1714-1718), the orphanage of San Bartolomeo (1746-1772), the pilgrims' lodging of San Francesco (1703-1716, 1777-1789), and from the *Fabbriceria di San Petronio* (1700-1799), i.e. the

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<sup>3</sup> Historical Archives of the Municipality of Milan (ASCMI), *Località milanesi, Acque*.

<sup>4</sup> Ledgers are preserved in the State Archives of Padua (ASPD), archival collection Selvatico, sub-collection Frigimelica, folder 436; archival collection Obizzi, folders 515-516, 527-535, 542-545, 548-554, 562-563; archival collection Selvatico, sub-collection Selvatico, folders 1185-1186, 1243-1245, 1264-1265. The data has been collected thanks to the important work by Rachele Scuro.

<sup>5</sup> Accounting books are in the State Archives of Bologna (ASBo), archival collection Bianchetti-Monti, folders 75-101; archival collection Salina-Amorini-Bolognini, folders 397, 399, 401, 403, 405, 407, 409, 411, 413, 415, 417, 419; archival collection Scappi-Ariosti, folders 212, 214, 216, 218, 220, 222, 224, 298; archival collection Pepoli, folders 12, 1386-1387, 4000-4015; archival collection Boschi, folders 485, 487, 489, 491-492, 495-496, 499, 501.

institution that managed the construction and the maintenance of the Bologna's cathedral.<sup>6</sup> The extension of the archives included in the analysis means a similar increase in the categories of workers taken into consideration: besides rural day labourers and *fattori*, we have been able to trace the payments to the construction workers (bricklayers and unskilled workers) in the countryside, while in Bologna we collected data on domestic workers (storekeepers – *canevari*, secretaries, servants, chef) and bricklayers, together with the employees in the charitable institutions, such as the church's guardian, nurse and nurse-in-chief, and of the pilgrims' lodging keeper. The enlargement of the number and of the types of workers included in the analysis is crucial in order to understand how different wage levels and tasks' responsibilities affected the amount and the characterisation of the in-kind part of the payments. More, while almost the entire historiographical production on wages – especially when producing long-run wage series – refers to urban bricklayers (at best skilled and unskilled ones), the occupational structures in the cities and countryside were far more articulated. Just to make some examples referred to the case studies included in this paper, in Bologna between 1806 and 1815 (so, chronologically close to our research) 3.11% of the population were «Landowners without any profitable business», 48.43% «Artisans and manual workers», 10.99% «Shopkeepers», 13.02% «Professionals» and 24.45% «Servants, governesses, Hofmeister, coachmen, stable hands, and so on» (Dal Pane 1999, 22). Therefore, our data help to cover, at least partially, especially this last category of workers. In Padua, according to the *Anagrafi Venete* (Schiaffino 1980), between 1766 and 1775 on average around 8.5% of the working population were nobles, 3.8 were «Citizens who live just of earnings», 3% professionals, 7.9% «Professors of liberal arts», 3.5% merchants, 13.2% shopkeepers, 46% «Artisans, manufacturers, workers and shop boys», and 14% «Butlers, chefs, grooms, and lackeys», demonstrating, again, that the skilled and unskilled bricklayers were just one part of the variegated labour market.

In the following pages especially servants' wages will be extensively analysed: besides Padua and Bologna, in Milan too servants were particularly numerous (Sarti 1997, pp. 159-184). Some surveys on Milanese workers produced between 1784 and 1795 confirm this assertion: more than 4.000 people among the 29.778 (in 1784) and 34.239 (in 1795) workers listed.<sup>7</sup> The number of servants changed according to the socio-professional characterization of each parish: in 1795, in the popular neighbourhood of *San Lorenzo* servants were just 3.4% of the workers listed, while in 1770 in the parish of the cathedral they reached 11% and almost 9% in the central *Santo Stefano maggiore*. More, in the noble neighbourhood of the eastern gate in 1787

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<sup>6</sup> Accounting books are in ASBo, archival collection *Amministrazione degli Ospedali*, sub-collection *Arciconfraternita e ospedale di S. Maria della vita (1200 - 1839)*, *Libri mastri e giornali (1687 - 1805)*, folders 38, 40, 42, 44, 46, 48, 50; *Conservatorio di S. Giuseppe (1532 - 1817)*, *Libri contabili (1628 - 1808)*, folder 33; *Compagnia e orfanotrofio di S. Bartolomeo, poi Orfanotrofio di S. Bartolomeo e S. Maria Maddalena uniti*, folders 147-153; *Confraternita e ospedale di S. Maria delle laudi poi S. Francesco (1271 - 1805)*, *Libri mastri, giornali, amministrazione (1586 - 1805)*, folders 12, 14, 18; Archives of the *Fabbriceria di San Petronio*, archival collection *Liste e ricevute*, folders 580-595. We sincerely thank Dr. Patrizia Busi, who made possible the consultation of the archive of the *Fabbriceria*. On the hospitals, orphanages, girls' schools and pilgrims' lodgings, their accounting books and the data that can be collected from them see Ongaro 2021.

<sup>7</sup> The two censuses are in the State Archives of Milan (ASMI), *Popolazione*, p.a., folders 11 and 15.

servants were almost 14%, while in 1797 in the central districts they were even more than 22% (Mocarelli 2001, pp. 219-24).

Moving to the countryside, as stressed in the introduction, almost the only extensive quantitative research on wages is the one by Rota and Weisdorf (2021), based on data referred to «stable farm workers and domestic servants»; again, data referred to Padua included in the *Anagrafi Venete* show that the domestic servants were a very small part of the rural labourers (around 0.02% on average between 1766 and 1775), while almost the entire working population (87.5%) were «Country workers». Beyond the reliability of these data, that do not consider the so-called «Integrated peasant economy» (Panjek, Larsson, and Mocarelli 2017) and, therefore, the fact that almost certainly the so-called «Country workers» were employed in different fields (literally, but also economic fields) simultaneously, the figure deserves a specification. Certainly, in this 87.5% we can include the «stable farm workers», used in Rota-Weisdorf contribution, but the analysis of the archival documents – at least for Padua and Bologna – shows, basically, that dependent farm workers were not the majority of the population, given the few names bumped into in the accounting books in areas where sharecropping and, mainly, small rents to peasant families were the prevailing agrarian structures. Therefore, self-sufficiency together with *occasional*, and not *stable*, working in farms or within the ruralised manufacturing system was the most common occupational structure. According to this, even if we include too in our analysis some stable workers (rural stewards, *fattori*, herdsmen, stable hand and shepherd), we will also look to the composition of the daily workers' wages. This is not to quantify their earnings – in such a complex environment, were strong self-production went along with pluri-activity – but to suggest how and how much the in-kind part of their daily wages could contribute to their personal and family economy.

### 3. In-kind payments and wages level

The data collected in public, families', and charitable institutions' archives allow at proposing some figures on the percentage of wage that was paid in kinds; as anticipated, the following figures are an underestimation of this part of the salary, especially the ones referred to the urban and rural permanent workers (such as domestic servants, farmers, and so on), who besides the monetary and in-kind wages also received the lodging and the board. While it has been possible in almost all the case study to trace out the food and wood that these workers received, and therefore it has been included in the estimates, we have no information about the cost of the lodging and of another relevant part of the goods supplied by the employers (especially in the case of the servants), i.e. the clothes.<sup>8</sup> It is useful to reiterate that the underestimation of the in-kind part of the wages does not undermine the achievements of this research: on the contrary, given that we will demonstrate that existing wage series – at least the ones referred to the Italian urban and rural contexts – suggest a too low level of salaries, that should be increased substantially taking into

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<sup>8</sup> Archival documents sporadically refer to the purchase of clothes for the servants, but the figures are too few to propose an estimation of the role in the overall purchases of the workers.

account the importance of in-kind payments, our underestimation makes the assumption even more valid.

We will first propose (Tab. 1) a static and general overview of the value of the in-kind payments in relation to the total amounts received by the workers. It should be specified that the values used refer, when possible, to the market value,<sup>9</sup> and not to the value that the employers assigned to the products they gave to the workers. The only exception is the case of Padua where, except for wheat (that, however, was the main part of in-kind payments) for which we have a reliable long-run series of the fixed price, the other products such as wine, eggs, minor cereals, and wood, are evaluated according to the value recorded in the accounting books, because of the absence of the related published price series. The reason why we choose to use this approach – i.e., using market prices and not the values assigned by the employers – is that it seems the most suitable looking to the wages' value and not to the cost of labour, as we will explain more in depth in the final part of this paper, when we will deal with the value of the products included in the in-kind part of the salary. In general, we assumed that rural day labourers received pure wine, while historians suggest that half-wine (the so-called *vinello*) was far more widespread in the countryside (Malanima 1990, 138; Federico and Martinelli 2018, 138-139). Therefore, in Tab. 1 we propose for the day labourers in the Bologna countryside also a percentage including in the in-kind part of the wage half wine (so, for half value, being almost equally composed by wine and water). However, the resulting difference between the urban and rural wages, and the comparison of the results with Padua's countryside, together with the fact that in the sources the employers refer to 'wine' and not to 'half wine' or '*vinello*' suggest that in the countryside too workers were supplied with pure wine – even if, as we will see in the following pages, maybe with a low quality one. This overview does not consider the varieties of tasks accomplished and the potential differences in the level and composition of the wages, such as the changes of these elements across time. It just divides the wages between urban and rural workers in Padua, Milan, and Bologna and between stable and day labourers. The stable urban workers include both skilled and unskilled workers (from the Governors of the hospitals to the domestic servants), such as the stable rural ones (from the farmers to the stable keepers). On the contrary, both urban and rural day labourers include just the unskilled ones (unskilled construction workers in the cities and farm laborers in the countryside).

The figures clearly show the importance of the in-kind payments in the overall definition of the wages; more, both in Bologna and in Padua they clearly demonstrate that the level of these payments was higher in the countryside than in the city and for the stable workers compared to the day labourers, as happened in other areas of the Italian Peninsula (Doria 1968, 153). The figures on Padua are closer to the ones proposed by Spaggiari for the area of Parma, where «the position of the *salariati* [stable workers] was certainly better than the one of the *giornalieri* [day labourers], given that the in-kind part of their wage was higher, never less than 65% of the entire wage» (Spaggiari 1966, 135). Similarly, in the Lombard countryside, before 1784 the agents for the maintenance of the channels (*camparo*) in the properties of the

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<sup>9</sup> For the sources see Mocarelli, Ongaro, and Prospero (2023).



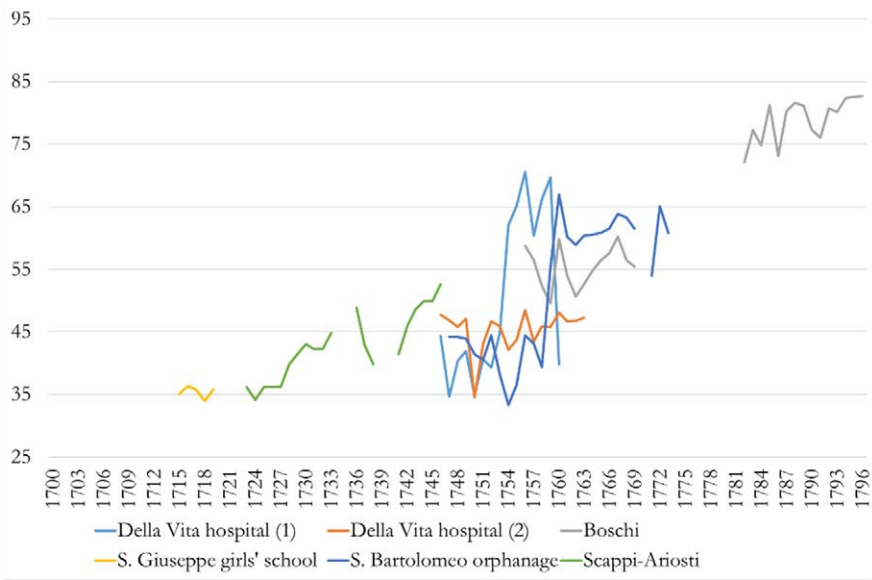
Consorzio della Misericordia Maggiore of Bergamo received around 67% of their wages in kind (363 of 543 *lire*) (Moioli 1983, 650). More, the figures in Tab. 1 show that the percentage difference between the in-kind payments to the stable and daily workers was higher in the city than in the countryside in both the provinces. Finally, the ones referred to rural stable workers are in line enough (even if a little lower, 50-60%) with the ones proposed by Rota and Weisdorf (2021, 460), who suggest that the in-kind part was around 60 and 80% of the total wage. Similar figures (between 50 and 75%) are suggested also by Giorgio Doria (1968, 153), regarding the mountain village of Montaldeo, in the Liguria region. However, the ones referred to the urban workers clearly call into question the figures proposed by the existing historiography for the urban nominal wages, that completely neglect the existence of in-kind payments.

**Tab. 1. Percentage of the in-kind part of the remunerations received by urban and rural workers in eighteenth century Milan, Padua and Bologna and their countryside (averages)**

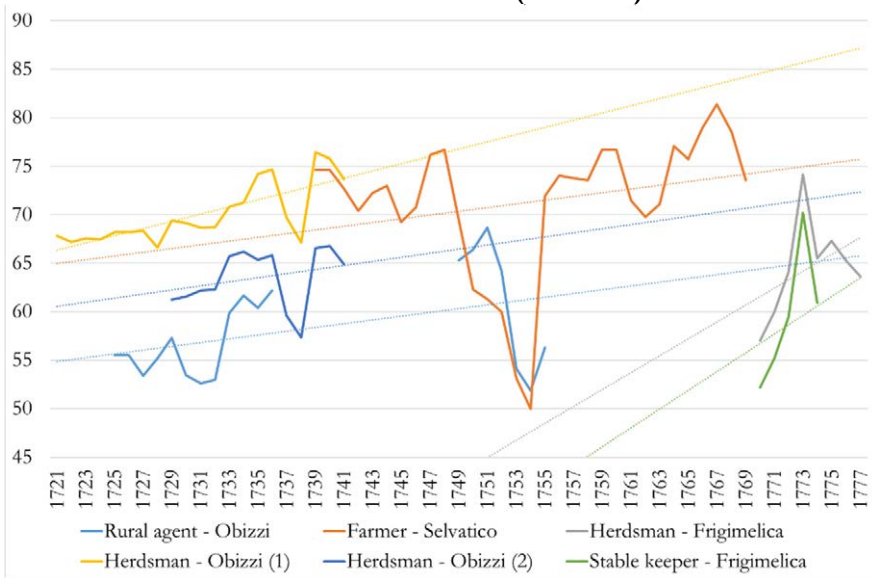
	Bologna - city	Bologna-countryside	Padua - city	Padua-countryside	Milan - city
<b>Stable workers</b>	36%	49%	45%	61%	
<b>Day labourers (wine)</b>	8,5-9%	28%	22%	48%	6-8%
<b>% difference (wine)</b>	-76,5%/-74,7%	-43%	-51%	-21%	
<b>Day labourers (half wine)</b>		19%			
<b>% difference (half-wine)</b>		-61%			

If Tab. 1 provides a very general overview, the following figures will show how the role of in-kind payments changed across time and according to the different tasks and wage levels in Padua and Bologna. Starting from the diachronic analysis, while the stable labourers in the urban context experienced both in Padua and Bologna a significant stability in the percentage of the wage they received in kinds, in the rural areas the situation was quite different (Fig. 1; Fig. 2).

**Fig. 1. Percentage of the in-kind part of the wages on the total farmers' wages in Bologna (1714-1795)**



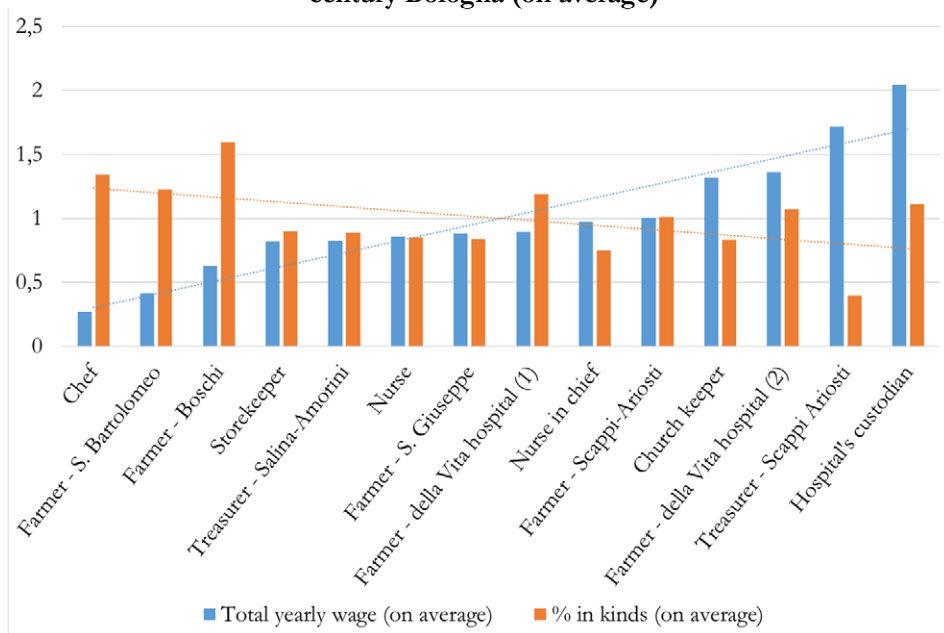
**Fig. 2. Percentage of the in-kind part of the wages on the total wages of stable rural workers in Padua (1721-1777)**



Looking to the farmers of the Bolognese noble families and charitable institutions, or to the ones and to the other stable workers employed by the Paduan families, it clearly appears that there is a tendency in increasing the value of the in-kind payments across time.<sup>10</sup> This is clearly linked to the increase in prices that affected the Italian economy especially during the second half of the eighteenth century, more than an increase in the amounts of products assigned to the workers. Similarly, short-run differences are obviously attributable to the variations in products' prices.

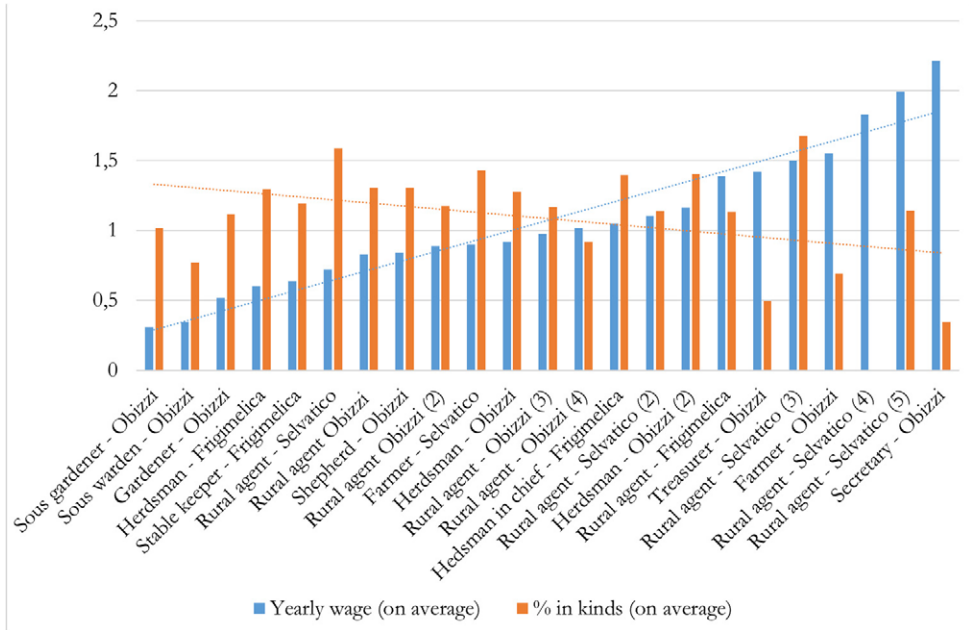
Moving from the chronological analysis to the observation of how proportion of in-kind payments in the total wage changed according to the different tasks accomplished and, mainly, to the overall level of the wages, Fig. 3 and Fig. 4 clearly show that there was an inverse relationship: higher the level of the remuneration, lower its in-kind part.

Fig. 3. Total yearly wage and in-kinds percentage for various tasks in Eighteenth century Bologna (on average)



<sup>10</sup> This was not due, however, to a decrease of the monetary part of the wage, as happened in eighteenth century Piedmont (Romano and Tucci 1983, XXVIII; Dal Pane 1958, 202-203). On the contrary, it seems that the situation in Padua and Bologna was similar to the Lombard one, where «the payment in cash remained stable during the first three quarters of the eighteenth century, then increasing at the end of the century» (Zaninelli 1964, 126). Therefore, the increase of the value of the in-kind part acquires even more relevance.

Fig. 4. Total yearly wage and in-kinds percentage for various tasks in Eighteenth century Padua (on average)



If the two figures summarize the data collected in the Paduan and Bolognese archives, the archival documents in Milan confirm that the situation was similar: looking, for example, to the local *Pie Case d'Industria* and the *Pia Casa degli Incurabili* in Abbiategrosso, the in-kind part of the Directors' wages were around 14% (211 *lire* on 1.500 *lire* of yearly wage), while the porters received 118 *lire* of in-kind wages among 360 *lire* of yearly wage (33%) (Various Authors 1993, 177).

More, it is interesting to observe that both the level of the wage and its in-kind part varied (even relevantly) not only according to the different tasks – obviously, a Treasurer's wage was higher than a sous chef's one – but between labourers with the same responsibility (Hatcher 2018, 19, 40; Mocarelli 2018, 99-104). The great variety of the remunerations assigned, for example, to the rural agents and to the farmers is a clear indicator of the strong 'personal' character of the wages. Indeed, they were the result of a negotiation between the employers and the employees, influenced not only by the task to be accomplished,<sup>11</sup> but also by social, relational, and personal elements (Caracausi 2018, 116-21; 2008, 71-72; Mocarelli and Ongaro 2019, 76); the in-kind part of the salary and its variations were clearly not exempt from this (Caracausi 2018, 110).

<sup>11</sup> On the variations of the wages' level according to the work to be performed in the countryside see Dallaglio 2005, 22; Bonelli Conenna 1978, 915; Cormio 1972, 957; Zaninelli 1964, 126; Belloni 1983, 57; Spaggiari 1966, 134; Pugliese 1908, 10-55; Palumbo 1979, 70-77. On similar variations in the building sites in Milan see Mocarelli 2008, 211-215, and for the textile manufacturing in Padua Caracausi 2008, 72.

#### 4. Characterize in-kind wages: what and how much?

In the previous pages we suggested some estimations of the relevance of in-kind payments in the total wage level, concluding that (on average) in the eighteenth century around 35-45% of the earnings of the urban stable workers were in-kind, while in the countryside the percentage was quite much higher, around at least 50-60%. More, this is probably an underestimation of the real figures, given that in many cases it has not been possible to trace the cost of lodging and clothing – indeed, estimations proposed by Rota and Weisdorf for the Tuscan countryside confirm this assertion, increasing the percentage to 60 and 80%. The situation of the day labourers was different, given that the in-cash part of their wage was more relevant, but in this case too existing historiography probably underestimates the role of in-kinds payments, that were around 9-22% and 28-48% respectively in the city and in the countryside. Finally, we observed the variations in the wage composition across time (with an increasing importance of in-kind payments in the countryside) and the differences between different tasks; basically, we noticed a sort of inverted relationship, more evident in the Bolognese case study, between wage's level and percentage of the in-kind part.

Differences between stable and day labourers were not limited to the role played by the in-cash and in-kinds parts of the wage, but they were related also to the type of goods they received. Very briefly, while skilled and unskilled bricklayers or fieldworkers, who were employed on daily basis, usually received just the basic foodstuffs that were at the basis of the contemporary diet (wine and, sometimes, bread), domestic servants, farmers, treasurers, governors, and so on, were supplied with a far more variegated sample of products. About urban daylabourers, in the case of Milan the importance of wine in the remuneration of the bricklayers is demonstrated by the economic strategies of the most important building contractors: for example, the Ticino family Fè in 1758 took over the Bettinelli and Piazza wine shop exactly in order to reduce the purchasing costs of the precious beverage, and when they participated in the construction of the Paderno canal they asked to be allowed to open «some sorts of inns in order to serve food and wine to the workers ... without any rise of costs due to the duties».<sup>12</sup>

Moving to the domestic servants and, broadly, workers employed for longer periods, besides lodging, clothes, and the yearly gifts that almost all these workers received at Easter and Christmas (usually capons and sweets), tables two and three summarize the average of products that the various urban and rural stable workers in Padua (Tab. 2) and Bologna (Tab. 3) received. Wheat and wine were still the main products; wheat was then transformed autonomously by the workers in bread, thanks to specific bakers that performed exactly this task. According to Guenzi (1982, 26-27), the *fornari da impastaria* (literally, 'kneading bakers') aimed specifically at transforming in bread the flour they received from their costumers; they covered around half of the bread market in Bologna and they were paid withholding part of the flour they received. More, Guenzi (1982, 27) specifies that not only the noble families resorted on these bakers (when they did not have their private ones), but «all

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<sup>12</sup> ASMI, *Acque*, document dated 20th April 1773.

the people who were employed by the great landowners [...] such as servants, butlers, and so on, [who] received part of their wage in kinds». However, besides wheat and wine also other products, aimed at completing the daily consumption basket, were supplied to the stable workers: legumes, minor cereals, eggs, and wood. Similarly, in the countryside of the State of Milan the workers of the *fittavoli* received food, wood, and sometimes lodging and the right to collect the products that remained in the fields after the harvest (Zaninelli 1964, 125-27).

Tab. 2. Amounts of products received yearly by Paduan workers (1700-1787)

	Wheat (kg)	Wine (liters)	Maize (kg)	Other minor cereals (kg)	Legumes (kg)	Eggs (n.)	Wood (cubic meters)	Faggots (n.)
Treasurer	762							
Secretary	254	570	268		25	200		
Gardener	339	According to the needs			25		According to the needs	
Sous gardener	222				19			
Rural agent (Frigimelica)	508		536		49			
Rural agent (Obizzi)	635	According to the needs					According to the needs	
Rural agent (Obizzi)	381	570	268		25	300	11	200
Rural agent (Obizzi)	254	According to the needs	268	261	25		According to the needs	
Rural agent (Obizzi)	317	500	268	261	25		According to the needs	
Rural agent (Selvatico)	508	713	134	134	50		9	200
Rural agent (Selvatico)	1016	855					9	200
Rural agent (Selvatico)	635	1426	268	261			4 <i>zocche</i> (stumps)	500
Rural agent (Selvatico)	127	Half-wine according to the needs	491	130				600
Sous rural- agent (Obizzi)	64		268	197	25			

Farmer (Obizzi)	508		268	According to the needs	25		According to the needs	
Farmer (Selvatico)	1016							
Herdsmen in chief	64	500	335	132	25			
Herdsmen (Frigimelica)	64	214	335	132				
Herdsmen (Obizzi)	254	428	670	395	100			1200
Herdsmen (Obizzi)	180	642	402	470	123			
Stable keeper	64	214	335	132	25			
Shepherd	169	642	536	391				

If the data in the accounting books allow at estimate (at least approximately) the products and the amounts that the stable urban and rural workers received in Padua and Bologna, it is more difficult to do the same regarding the day labourers. In the case of the payments by the *Fabbriceria di San Petronio* to the foreman, the archival documents clearly state that the list of expenses he presented yearly should be increased (“as agreed”) between 8 and 12% exactly “for the wine for the bricklayers”. So, it seems that they just received wine, even if we do not know the daily amount. We can just infer that *at least* (because the list of expenses included clearly also the foreman’s earning<sup>13</sup>) between 7 and 10% of their wage was composed by wine. Similarly, as anticipated, in Milan too wine was the main product supplied to the bricklayers<sup>14</sup>, not just as the usual part of the daily wage, but also as a sort of reward because of particularly dangerous tasks: in 1749 for example Domenico Berra and Giovanni Battista Bonola, who prepared the scaffolding for the construction of the dome of the cathedral, asked to the *Fabbrica del Duomo* an increase of their payment because, given the dangerousness of the task they had to grant to their workers «an increased daily wage, and also to give them some wine in order to incite their working».<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> On the criticalities in using the payments to the foremen in order to infer the real wage of the workers see Mocarelli 2018, 97-98; Stephenson 2018.

<sup>14</sup> ASCMI, *Località milanesi*, fos 212, 271, 273; ASMI, *Acque, p.a.*, f. 967.

<sup>15</sup> *Archivio della Veneranda Fabbrica del Duomo di Milano* (from now onward Avfdmi), f. 430, *Deliberazioni dei deputati 1745-1749*.

Tab. 3. Amounts of products received yearly by Bolognese workers (1701-1795)

	Bread (kg)	Wheat (kg)	Bran (kg)	Legumes (kg)	Spelt (kg)	Wine (liters)	Grapes (kg)	Wood	Large faggots (n.)	Small faggots (n.)
Church keeper <sup>16</sup>	250							4 <i>quart</i> <sup>17</sup>	1000	500
Nurse	250									
Nurse in chief	250									
Chef	250									
Hospital's custodian		574					1750			
Treasurer (Salina- Amorini)		287					875			
Treasurer (Scappi- Ariosti)	219 (until 1728)	287 (from 1728)					875			
Store keeper	264 (until 1735)	287 (from 1735)				943 (until 1746)	875 (from 1746)			
Farmer (Della Vita hospital)		287	6,5	167			1750			
Farmer (Della Vita hospital)		287	6,5	167	197		875			
Farmer (Boschi)		287					875		650	
Farmer (San Giuseppe girls' school)		287					875		500	
Farmer (San Bartolomeo horphanage)		172-230					437,5- 875		250	

<sup>16</sup> The amount of bread supplied to the church keeper, the nurses, the nurse in chief, and the two chefs is unified in the documents; therefore, we divided it equally among the three types of workers, even if this is clearly just an estimation.

<sup>17</sup> We have been not able to trace the real value in kgs or cubic meters of the *quarto*, that is not included in the existing literature on the ancient units of measurement in Bologna.



Moving to the countryside of Bologna, in the case of the Bianchetti-Monti family, daily wages until 1781 included on average a in-cash payment of 0.3 *lire* (i.e. 1,61385 silver grams) and one *tiere* (loaf) of bread<sup>18</sup> and around 0.06-0.1 *corbe* (around 5-8 liters) of wine. No need to say that the amount of wine is quite surprising, but we will come back on this later. From 1784 it seems that wine remained the only in-kind part of the payment (with the same amount), while in-cash wage was increased to 0.5-0.6 *lire* (i.e. 2.7-3.2 silver grams) including the bread ration. A similar increase happened in the countryside of the State of Milan, as stated by Sergio Zaninelli (1964, 126). At a first look it could seem a worsening of the labour conditions, according to the fact that usually in-kind payments are considered more ‘resilient’ to inflation (Romano and Tucci 1983, XXVIII), but this is not the case: actually, even before 1784 the day labourers did not receive a fixed amount (kg) of bread, but one loaf. According to the established researches on the Bolognese victualling system, as almost elsewhere in the Italian peninsula the cost of the loaf was fixed (in Bologna, 2 *bolognini*, i.e. 0.1 *lire*), while its weight changed according to the variations in wheat’s prices (Guenzi 1982; Mocarelli, Ongaro, and Prosperi 2023). Therefore, in practice nothing changed, or even the wage increased given that it moved from 0.3 *lire* to 0.5-0.6, while the cost of one loaf in the city was 0.1 *lire* (and in the countryside probably even less). The data referring to the Salina-Amorini family refer to the period 1775-1799 and confirm the figures proposed for the Bianchetti-Monti’s ones. The monetary part of the wage moved from being around 0.5 *lire* in the period 1775-1777, 0.6 *lire* between 1778-1788, and 0.75 *lire* from 1789 and 1799, and it was flanked by the supply of, on average 0.05 *corbe* (around 4 liters) of wine daily. Sometimes sources refer to ‘bread for the *opere*’, so probably, as in the Bianchetti-Monti’s case, it could be supplied in kinds even if this happened quite rarely and usually its cost was included in the monetary part of the wage. Finally, the data included in the *libri fattoriali* (farm accounting books) of the Scappi-Ariosti family for the period 1720-1767 helps in understanding the way rural day labourers accessed their daily bread ration. Indeed, also in these documents there is quite often a reference to the ‘bread for the *opere*’, but its amount and cost is recorder in the part of the debits of the sharecroppers, who were also day labourers, and of the day labourers tout court. This means that bread was supplied by the employer, but it was paid by the worker. Finally, as in the case of the Bianchetti-Monti the amount of bread was recorded in *tiere* (loafs), and not with its weight: i.e., in the same way bread was sold in the city. Besides bread, day labourers received by the Scappi-Ariosti around 0.5-0.6 *lire* in cash and, on average, around 0.08 *corbe* of wine (around 6.4 liters). In summary, we can affirm that usually day workers in the Bolognese countryside received an abundant ration of wine (between 4 and 8 liters) besides the in-cash salary. As anticipated, we cannot be sure that it was wine or half wine, but the fact that the documents refer to it just as ‘wine’ (otherwise, when it is half-wine it is specified), such as the percentages of in-cash and in-kind parts of the wages, suggests that it was probably pure wine (Dal Pane 1999, 147; Belloni 1983, 57). What about Padua? Actually, the data referred to the rural day labourers report just the monetary value of the *vituarìa* (board) for the

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<sup>18</sup> The supply of one or one and a half *tiere* of bread to the rural day labourers in the plots of the Bolognese family Pepoli in the eighteenth century is recalled in Dallaglio 2005, 22.

day labourers that were hired for the processing of the wheat harvested, without any reference to the types and amounts of products that were supplied. Conversely, we have more clear information, even if just for the period 1741-1753, of what bricklayers and the day labourers for the building sites (both in the city and in the countryside) received from the Selvatico family: besides 2 Paduan *lire* (around 5 silver grams) for the bricklayers and 0.8 *lire* (around 2 silver grams) for the unskilled day labourers, they received, such as their Bolognese counterparts, wine. In two occasions (1741 and 1745) there is the total amount supplied to the bricklayers and day labourers, so dividing it to the number of days they worked it results that they received 0.07 *mastelli* per day (5 liters).

The relevance of wine in the products supplied, and its – at a first look – abundant daily ration, introduces us to another important reflection, related to the role that the in-kind part of the wages played in the family economy of pre-industrial societies. As we recalled in the introduction, in the existing literature when the in-kind part is accounted in order to estimate wages' level (such as in the case of Rota-Weisdorf's rural wages), it is approximated as the lacking part in order to cover the basic daily food need of a person. Given that the data we collected allow a quite truthful estimation of the amounts supplied both to urban and rural workers, we can help in clarifying a point: was the in-kind part of the wages adequate for covering the food needs of a person? Or was it scarce or, conversely, overabundant?

To answer the first question, we estimated the daily supply of bread and wine (were available) to the stable and daily urban and rural workers both in Padua and Bologna, according to the amounts we used for the calculation of the value of the in-kind part of the wages in the first part of this paper. Where wheat and grapes are supplied (and not bread and wine), we calculated the amounts of bread and wine that could be produced.<sup>19</sup> The results, in a certain way, both confirm and confute Rota-Weisdorf's approach. Indeed, both the urban and rural stable workers received, basically, around 0.8-1 kg of bread per day. The daily workers, as we observed, when received bread, they received one loaf. The existing consumption baskets for the Italian area suggest a daily consumption between around 0.6 kg (Malanima 2013, 50) and 0.7 kg (Rota and Weisdorf 2020, 948), so amounts that are generally not so far from the ones supplied to the Bolognese and Paduan workers, even if in some cases they could receive even between 1 and 2 kilograms of bread daily: in this case, however, we can assume (as the archival documents suggest) that these amounts were aimed not just to the sustenance of the church's guardian, of the Treasurer, of the rural agent, or of the farmer, but also of the respective families. Similarly, in the countryside of the State of Milan the stable labourers received around 0.8 kg of maize (sometimes mixed with rye and millet) bread per day, besides wine and soup (Zaninelli 1964, 141). On the contrary, sometimes rations could be inferior to the average: this happened in the case of many rural stable workers (herdsmen and the stable keeper) in Padua, who received 0.5-0.6 kg of wheat, or even less, but this was

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<sup>19</sup> The bread produced from a specific amount of wheat is inferred from the *scandagli* (baking tests) made yearly in Ferrara, a province exactly between Padua and Bologna, from 1710 to 1794 (Ongaro and Prospero 2023). The yield in wine of the grapes has been inferred by the farms' accounting books of the Bolognese families, that record exactly how much wine was produced from the grapes processed. In both cases the ratio is almost equal: 1/1.01 in the case wheat/bread and 1/0.99 in the case grapes/wine.

compensated with relevant amounts of minor cereals, such as maize (mainly), or a mixture of wheat and maize, sorghum, or millet. About rural day labourers, we know that in Bologna during the Eighteenth century – at least in the city – the weight of the loafs varied, but on average they weighted a little less than 0.6 kg; therefore, perfectly in line with the figures recalled above. About wine, existing consumption baskets suggest a very low consumption – around 0.2 liters per day – but with a high alcoholic content – around 12.5-15.5 degrees. Actually, archival sources indicate that wine consumption in pre-industrial cities and countryside was far more relevant – not less than 1 liter per day, up to 2 liters – given the low alcoholic content of the product, that was not more than 10 degrees (Mocarelli, Ongaro, and Prospero 2023). The figures recalled above confirms these estimations and suggest that workers received the wine not just for their personal consumption, but almost certainly also for their families. More, this is not true just in the Bolognese or Paduan case: from mid-seventeenth century the farmer of the Borromeo farm of Comairano, in the area of Pavia, received as yearly wage, besides the in-cash payment and various foodstuffs, around 572 liters of wine (i.e., more than one liter and a half per day) and around seven hectolitres of wheat, that would have allowed the production of around one kg and a half of bread per day (Belloni 1983, 57). More, Fanfani suggests that almost in the same period in Piedmont the day labourers received around one liter and a half of wine daily if men, and 0.7 liters the women (Fanfani 1959, 331), and the importance of the in-kind payments to urban and rural stable workers during the entire Early Modern period is confirmed also for the area of Vercelli, in the same region, by Pugliese (1908, 11-22), for Parma by Spaggiari (1966, 134-135), and for Venice, where Davis suggest a daily consumption of around 1.4 litres per day (on average) by the workers of the *Arsenale* in the second half of the seventeenth century (Davis 1997, 78). Moving to Tuscany, Lucia Bonelli Conenna (1978, 914-915) wrote that in the Eighteenth century in the area of Grosseto the rural stable and day labourers received around one liter and a half of wine and more than one kg of bread per day. Finally, Vergani referring to the miners in the area of Belluno, in the Republic of Venice, asserts that the maize they received as in-kinds part of their wage «corresponded [...] for the yearly needs of two-four people» (Vergani 1983, 644).

So, in-kind payments did not just *help in obtaining* the daily consumption basket of a person, but for its most important parts (bread and wine, but also eggs, wood, and so on, in the case of the stable workers) they *completely cover* the daily ration, and sometimes even help in covering not just the consumption needs of a worker, but also of his/her relatives. Therefore, if percentages of in-kind and in-cash payments confirm the ones suggested by Rota and Weisdorf for rural areas (between 20 and 40% in cash, as in Rota-Weisdorf 2021, 460), the approach should be probably overturn: it was not the in-cash payments that were insufficient for survive (Ibid., 458), but the in-kind ones that were exactly calculated (and negotiated) with this aim. This is also confirmed by the fact that day labourers could also negotiate the payment of the in-cash part also during the holidays and in the days they did not work because of adverse weather conditions: numerous examples indeed testify that the rural day labourers of the Bianchetti-Monti family, who were employed continuously in the maintenance of the buildings of the Crocetta farm, received the daily ration of wine

also in the holidays and ‘in rainy days’.<sup>20</sup> This was not a peculiarity of the Bolognese area, given that in the Paduan textiles manufactures too the payment of the salary even in days in which the worker did not work was a way to consolidate the relationship between employer and employee and to maintain the exclusivity of the service of the latter (Caracausi 2008, 68-69).

## 5. Characterize in-kind wages: what quality and value?

In the previous pages we proposed estimations referring, very briefly, to ‘bread’, ‘wheat’, and ‘wine’, as standardized products. However, we do not know the *quality* of the products the workers received and, therefore, their *real* value. It is well established that quality variations in agricultural products (especially wheat and wine, given their role in the contemporary diet) affected relevantly their price (Ronsijn, Ongaro, and Prosperi 2022; Ongaro and Prosperi 2023); consequently, if they contributed to the definition of the wages, changes in their quality could affect the resulting figures, especially if we observe these dynamics from the point of view of the employers. It is certainly a difficult problem to tackle, given that often sources do not refer to the specific quality of the bushels of wheat, or mugs of wine the workers received. Additionally, for bread the situation is even more complicated, given that the composition of the loafs could not only include high- or low-quality wheat, but the dough could be produced with various cereals (alone or mixed) of various quality. Clearly, this changed the economic value – besides the nutritional one – of the final product.

Besides the difference between *vino piccolo* (half-wine) and *vino puro* (pure wine), the dilution of the wine with water before supplying it to the workers was common practice: in 1759 for example the Treasurer of the Scappi-Ariosti family registered an unexpected increase in the family earnings from the wine management because the amount of wine in the cellar «increased because of the water mixed to the wine aimed at the *operos*».<sup>21</sup> More, in the documents there are several references to low-quality wine supplied to the workers. For example, in 1765 the farmer of the Crocetta farm of the Bianchetti-Monti did not use the wine produced with the family’s grapes for the day labourers, but he purchased expressly *vini vecchi* (‘old wines’, in other words, almost-vinegar ones) to be used «for the hay makers, coal makers, in country works and other tasks».<sup>22</sup>

About bread, Lucia Bonnelly Conenna (1978, 914) wrote that in the Eighteenth century Maremma the stable rural workers received bread «certainly mixed with legumes or bran»; this clearly open the question of the quality of the bread that the workers – not just the stable ones, but, to a greater extent, the day labourers – received. Our sources show that both in the cities and in the countryside, however, both in Padua and Bologna, the stable workers usually received wheat as in-kind part of their salary, not bread, despite few exceptions. This means that the amounts of

<sup>20</sup> See ASBo, archival collection Bianchetti-Monti, folder 83, fo. 32; folder 84, fo. 33; b. 86, fo. 33.

<sup>21</sup> ASBo, archival collection Scappi-Ariosti, folder 222, fo. 70.

<sup>22</sup> ASBo, archival collection Bianchetti-Monti, folder 76, fo. 31.

bread we proposed as the daily supply they received is supposed to be entirely wheat bread. The situation changes moving from the stable to the day labourers: while in the city they just received wine, and then they probably purchased the daily ration of bread from the bakers, in the countryside they actually were supplied with bread by their employers. As anticipated, rarely archival documents specify the quality of the bread itself, but we can make some guesses. According to existing historiography, the Eighteenth century is when maize definitively replaced the other minor cereals in the peasants' diet in Central-Northern Italy (Ongaro 2020; Finzi and Baiada 1985); basically, it seems that while wheat was a 'urban' cereal, wheat bread was almost completely irrelevant in the countryside. According to this statement, it would be natural to suppose that day labourers received maize (or maize and legumes, or maize and other minor cereals) bread. However, sources point in another direction: first, looking to the inventories of the farms and domestic granaries of the Bolognese and Paduan families, it clearly appears that certainly maize production never entered the urban walls and was almost completely distributed to sharecroppers and day labourers, but it was sold or given on credit to them, or as payment in-kind of the in-cash part of their wages. In other words, certainly peasants consumed maize, but they did not receive it as in-kind part of the salaries – neither in grains, grounded or baked. On the contrary, we have some evidence that the bread distributed to the rural day labourers was wheat bread, or at least bread produced with a mixture of flours, in which wheat played a role. From 1734 to 1745, for example, the Treasurer of the Boschi family specified that every year the wheat flour stored in Bologna was used «for the payment of the domestic servants, and for the production of the bread for the family, the servants, and the peasants».<sup>23</sup> Similarly, in 1733 the farmer of the Scappi-Ariosti's farm in Viadagola ground more than two hectolitres of wheat that was then mixed with around 40 liters of ground fava beans for the production of the «bread for the *operi*».<sup>24</sup> As anticipated, in the case of Scappi-Ariosti bread was not included directly in the daily wage, but the monetary part of the salary was higher exactly in order to include the cost of the bread supplied by the employer. Another example refers to the Paduan countryside: the accounting books of the Obizzi's farm in Giarabassa record in 1712 around 60 liters of wheat «made in bread for the two herdsmen who stayed one month in Giarabassa, and for the men who ploughed in Campo San Martino».<sup>25</sup> In the same year they refer also to more than two hectolitres «made in bread for the men who harvested wheat», besides the amounts supplied to the farmer and the herdsmen as in-kind part of their wage.<sup>26</sup>

A final remark: the fact that wheat was used to produce the bread supplied to the rural day labourers, besides the urban and rural stable ones, does not automatically mean that they received high-quality (and, therefore, high value) bread. The quality of the cereals was quite variable, according to the weather conditions during their growth, harvest, transport, and storage. More, quality changed across time also because of the loss of the humidity of the newly harvested grains, that means an

<sup>23</sup> ASBo, archival collection Boschi, folder 485, fo. 139.

<sup>24</sup> ASBo, archival collection Scappi-Ariosti, folder 290, fo. 11.

<sup>25</sup> ASPd, archival collection Obizzi, folder 562, fo. 38.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

improvement in their yield in flour, and in the quality of the flour itself (Ongaro and Prospero 2023; Ronsijn, Ongaro, and Prospero 2022). Clearly, the monetary value of wheat varied according to these changes in quality, such as the nutritional value of the bread produced with it. Therefore, when assigning a monetary value to the in-kind (and, specifically, in-wheat/bread) payments to the workers we should rely to the value that was assigned to the specific stock supplied, and not to the general market value, also because it is easy to assume that, when possible, the employers tried to use the low-quality cereals for their workers, aiming the high-quality ones to the market. Just to make an example, remaining in the Giarabassa's farm owned by the Obizzi, still in 1712 the farmer reports that he mixed around 130 liters of *frumentello* (a mixture of maize and wheat in a one-to-one ratio) to wheat to produce the bread for the herdsmen and the ploughers explicitly «because of being of bad quality».<sup>27</sup>

Besides the abovementioned examples, we suggest another way to assess the value of the products supplied to the workers, that is the comparison of their value as reported in the accounting books, comparing it to the market price; in our case, this can be done observing the value of wheat supplied to the urban and rural workers in Bologna, given that there are published data of the *calmiere del formento* (i.e., the price fixed by the municipal authorities for the selling of wheat) and that the accounting books of the various families record the value of the cereals supplied to the stable workers. The results of the comparisons are remarkably similar (Tab. 4), even if the chronology is more limited compared to the previous elaborations, given some gaps in the two series. In the case of the Church keeper, nurses, and chefs of the Della Vita hospital – who received bread and not wheat – we evaluated the cost per kg of bread and the corresponding price per kg according to the fixed weight at the same timespan for the tow-*bolognini* loaf.

Basically, from the point of view of the employer, the value of the wheat supplied to the workers was between 6 and 10% lower than the market price; this data can be interpreted in various way. First, it could mean that the quality of the product was low, and therefore its price compared to the standard quality to which the fixed price referred to. Another interpretation, related to the fact that the value recorder is the value assigned by the employer, could be that being self-produced wheat, it was not charged with transport and selling costs (that included, for example, the payment of the brokers). If we consider, as quoted by Guenzi from a contemporary source, that «workers 'were obliged by the noblemen to receive as payment wheat *al calmiere* [i.e., at the fixed price]» (Guenzi 1982, 27), it is easy to infer that also the value of the product itself was not a certain figure, but it was different for the employer and the employee, and it was the result of a complex mechanism. In summary, most likely the difference of value derived from the difference itself for the employer and the employee. This is why, in evaluation of the monetary value of the wheat (or bread) and of the other products supplied to the workers it is more correct to consider the market value, as we did when possible in this paper, and not the value recorded in the accounting books of the employers. This is true if we want to catch the real value

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<sup>27</sup> Ivi, fo. 60.

of the wage while, clearly, the perspective should be completely overturned if we want to analyse the cost of work.

Tab. 4. Value recorded of the wheat supplied to the workers and fixed wheat price in Bologna and its countryside (average, silver grams per liter)

	Recorder value	Fixed price	Difference fixed price
Church keeper/nurses/chefs (1745-1762)	0.97 (bread, kg)	1 (bread, kg)	+4%
Hospital's custodian (1710-1720)	5.43	5.91	+10%
Treasurer Salina-Amorini (1714-1786)	5.89	6.15	+6.4%
Treasurer Scappi-Ariosti (1728-1765)	5.93	6.13	+5.95%
Store keeper (1735-1765)	5.97	6.24	+7.7%
Farmer Della Vita hospital (1745-1750)	5.87	6.49	+10.7%
Farmer Boschi (1755-1766)	6.22	6.58	+8.7%
Farmer S. Bartolomeo orphanage (1746-1772)	6.24	6.65	+9.47%

## 6. Conclusions: in-kind payments and living standards

In the previous pages we showed that in-kind payments played a crucial role in the wage formation in Eighteenth century Northern Italy, contributing for more than a half of the wage level of the stable workers in the countryside and almost half of the urban stable workers' one. Looking to the day labourers the figures are certainly lower, both in the city and in the countryside, but they remain relevant. The analysis of the products supplied by the employers reveals that the types and the amounts received allowed the covering of the basic food needs of the workers – and sometimes also of their families – overturing the approach according to which in-kinds payments covered the costs of the consumption basket that the monetary part of the wage did not cover: actually, we can affirm that the in-kind payments almost completely cover the costs themselves, especially in the countryside, while the in-cash ones could be a surplus for the purchasing of other products. So, in this context, which was the effect of this wage's characterization in the living standard of the urban and rural population, especially in terms of purchasing power?

Existing historiography stresses the role played by the in-kinds payments in guaranteeing a higher resilience of the purchasing power of the workers in front of the variations of prices (Dal Pane 1958, 203, 206, 208; Doria 1968, 153; Spaggiari 1966, 134-35; Romano and Tucci 1983, XXVIII): basically, this relies on the fact that the workers should have received always the same amount of products, beyond changes in prices. If the case studies analyzed previously broadly confirm this assertion, given that, for example, the hospital's keeper of the Della Vita hospital received around 690 *libbre* of bread per year, or the Scappi-Ariosti's Treasurer 20 *once* per day (around 0.75 kg), and the store keeper even 24 (0.9 kg), and also the wine and wood, such as the other minor cereals were supplied in fixed amounts. Flexibility in the amounts supplied too could be, at a first look, advantageous for the worker, as the Paduan case demonstrates, given that many workers received wine, minor cereals, and wood 'according to their needs' (Tab. 2). However, we must also be cautious in assigning to the in-kind payments this unquestionable and universal role of 'anti-inflation'; as we observed, the quality of the products supplied could vary, and so their economic and nutritional value, and these variations were, briefly, almost entirely up to the employers and it is arguable that in periods of high prices and/or bad harvests, the dilution of wine for the labourers or the quality of the bread supplied have been affected. More, the flexibility in the amounts supplied, that in some cases could advantage the worker could be also a way for the employer to adapt the quantity of goods for the workers, according to their cost: we already mentioned the case of the bread supplied by *tiera* (loaf) and not by weight in the Bolognese countryside, as confirmed also by Dallaglio (2005, 22). In other words, we should be cautious in the evaluation of the role played by in-kind wages in affecting the living standards and the purchasing power of the workers, given that we should first evaluate, on a case by case basis, the characterization of the wages themselves, resulting from the negotiation between the workers and the employers.

Beyond these clarifications, certainly the fact that workers could count on the in-kind payments for covering almost entirely their food needs, and maybe also part of their families' ones, relevantly affected their resilience to prices' increases. Clearly, stable workers highly benefitted from this, compared to day labourers, but, broadly, the entire society was more or less involved in these dynamics. Therefore, this element should be taken into account in the historical evaluation of the market functioning and, broadly, in the analysis of living standards. When looking to the periods of prices' increase we should consider that the contemporary free/monetary market was not the environment in which transactions took place – or at least, not entirely. On the one hand, in-kind wages contributed to assuring the supply of the basic foodstuffs to the working people even in periods of increasing prices, both in the city and in the countryside; on the other hand, the presence of the victualling institutions faced the problem from another perspective, i.e. artificially controlling prices fluctuations when people had to resort on market transactions. We recently observed (Mocarelli, Ongaro, and Prosperi 2023) that this means a lowering of up to 30% of the coefficient of variation of the cost of the consumption basket. This could also contribute to explain the fact that in the cities – where victualling institutions were at play – the in-kind payments were lower than in the countryside, were public institutions had a more limited control of market functioning. Obviously, this was



also due to the different market conditions and labour environments, considering the greater immediate availability of products in the countryside, the widespread self-production and self-consumption of a great variety of goods (from foodstuffs to textiles) and maybe a less developed market, even if this point has been strongly confuted by historians.<sup>28</sup>

In conclusion, the importance of in-kind payments in the evaluation of living standards means not only a change in perspective in the analysis of the process of wage formation, of the way people accessed foodstuffs and the other products they needed in their everyday life; it also means that the attempts to quantify wages and real wages should find a way to take this into account, increasing nominal (monetary) wages according to the estimated presence of in-kind payments – not just to reach the cost of the subsistence consumption basket, but maybe exceeding it – or, using a different approach, calculating the real wages deflating the nominal ones with the cost of the consumption basket *without* the products that were included as in-kind part in the salary. In other words, our findings can strongly affect relevant historiographical debates (such as the Little Divergence one and the correlation high-wage economy/industrial revolution) in two ways. First, they stress the importance of recalculate real wages including the in-kind part: our indications can be useful for doing so for the Italian area, but clearly a similar re-examination should be done for the other European countries, such as England. Second, and partially in contrast to what has been said previously, our conclusions strongly undermine the rationality of the calculation of the real wages, even including the value of the in-kind payments: if Italian citizens and peasants (or at least part of them) covered their basic food and heating needs with the in-kind part of their wages, how can a series of real wages (indicating monetary values) be representative of the evolution of the living standards? How can explain the evolution of the purchasing power of the population, the changes in wages' level, and the relationship between the consumers and the market? Looking to what it has been stated in the previous pages, we can assume that for the Italian area the answer to these questions is: very very little. At this stage in the research we do not know if the same answer can be valid also for other countries: if yes, this means that the debate on the causes of the industrial revolution and on the supposed Little Divergence should be reconsidered from new bases. If not, it should be investigated how the dissimilar structures of the remuneration and the differences in the relationship consumers-market in various European areas could have produced different economic paths, in terms of both characteristics and chronology.

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<sup>28</sup> Just think, for example, to the well known 'industrious revolution' theory and the subsequent debate (de Vries 2008).

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Michela Barbot

*Cedere dei beni al posto del denaro dovuto.*

*La datio in solutum in Francia e Italia fra XVII e XVIII secolo*

## 1. Introduzione<sup>1</sup>

La presente ricerca ha per oggetto una modalità di pagamento le cui origini risalgono al diritto romano, e che è ancora oggi prevista da molte codificazioni europee. Si tratta della cessione di uno o più beni a saldo di un debito, versione principale della cosiddetta *datio in solutum* o dazione in pagamento, che verrà qui analizzata a partire da un confronto fra la Francia e l'Italia del Sei e Settecento.

Occorre precisare fin da ora che la maggiore abbondanza di fonti italiane rispetto a quelle francesi renderà la comparazione fra i due casi fortemente asimmetrica. Se nella Francia contemporanea, complici gli effetti della cosiddetta *Loi Malraux* del 1962, la dazione in pagamento è divenuta un mezzo ricorrente per estinguere debiti fiscali di una certa importanza<sup>2</sup> (nonché un significativo strumento di accrescimento delle collezioni museali<sup>3</sup>), non così nei secoli precedenti, durante i quali quest'istituto ha suscitato un'applicazione e una trattazione più sommarie e circoscritte (Bicheron 2006). Il contrario vale per il contesto italiano, ove l'utilizzo della dazione in pagamento, molto intenso nei secoli dell'Antico Regime, è andato via via riducendosi (Rodotà 1962; Zafarana 2011), benché l'attuale Codice Civile, non diversamente dal suo omologo francese, continui a prevederla e a disciplinarla entro la categoria più ampia delle «prestazioni in luogo dell'adempimento» (Allara 1927; Grassetti 1960; Rodotà 1962).

Nel corso di queste pagine, una volta evocati rapidamente i tratti essenziali della *datio in solutum*, presenterò le principali interpretazioni e riflessioni teoriche che quest'istituto ha suscitato nella letteratura civilistica sei e settecentesca, mi soffermerò sulla sua ricezione e sulla sua regolamentazione negli antichi statuti italiani e nel diritto *coutumier* francese, e mi addenterò, infine, nei risvolti pratici della sua applicazione,

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<sup>1</sup> Ai fini della redazione di questo testo, saranno indicati per esteso, ed in nota, unicamente i manoscritti e i testi antichi utilizzati come fonti storico-archivistiche.

<sup>2</sup> Sui risvolti fiscali di questa disposizione legislativa, in particolare in materia artistica, si vedano Byrne-Sutton, Mariéthoz e Renold 1996; Chambaud 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Questa formula contrattuale è stata utilizzata in seno alle successioni di Matisse, Picasso, Cézanne e Chagall, ed ha permesso al museo del Louvre di acquisire opere importanti come il ritratto di Hélène Fourment di Rubens o l'Astronomo di Vermeer: cfr., in proposito, Cornu, Mallet-Poujol 2006; Cornu 2006.

approfondendo nello specifico il caso del Ducato di Milano, dal quale muoverò per formulare una breve conclusione.

## 2. I tratti essenziali della *datio in solutum*

È utile cominciare quest'analisi sottolineando come la nozione di *datio in solutum*, nei suoi tratti principali, sia rimasta sostanzialmente inalterata fin dall'epoca romana (de Berly 1884; Montégu 1894; Saccoccio 2008). Negozio a un tempo solutorio e liberatorio – celebrato ai fini di chiudere, anziché costituire un rapporto contrattuale (Astuti 1962, 728) –, la *datio in solutum* costituisce una delle rare forme giuridicamente ammesse di prestazione di *aliud pro alio*<sup>4</sup>, poiché contravviene apertamente al principio secondo cui, una volta concluso un accordo, ciascun contraente deve onorare esattamente le obbligazioni a cui si era inizialmente vincolato.

Sebbene già in seno alle fonti romanistiche siano enunciate diverse forme di dazione (di cosa contro cosa, di prestazione contro cosa, etc.<sup>5</sup>), la fattispecie di gran lunga più ricorrente è quella del conferimento di una *res pro pecunia*, mediante il quale un debitore viene liberato dalla sua obbligazione cedendo una cosa al posto del denaro dovuto. Oggi come in passato, perché quest'operazione sia giuridicamente valida è indispensabile il concorso di quattro condizioni: che sussista un debito numerario; che il bene sostitutivo appartenga effettivamente al debitore; che questo ceda integralmente la cosa al creditore, e che entrambi siano giuridicamente capaci, condizione, quest'ultima, necessaria al creditore per disporre del suo credito, e al debitore per poter effettuare la cessione (Astuti 1962, 728-29).

Fra Sei e Settecento, gli esperti di diritto civile si interrogano sullo statuto giuridico di questa peculiare forma di pagamento, non mancando di attribuirle una serie di vantaggi, in gran parte riconosciuti ancora oggi (Bicheron 2006). Il primo e più importante beneficio è di natura contrattuale: benché il diritto privato offra svariati strumenti per modificare una convenzione di comune accordo, queste modifiche tendono in genere a prolungare il rapporto obbligatorio, mentre la dazione in pagamento, avendo carattere solutorio, può offrire un'utile via d'uscita a quanti vogliono liberarsi di una relazione contrattuale diventata nociva o problematica. Sotto il profilo economico, poi, i suoi vantaggi sono, se possibile, ancora più consistenti: sopperendo a eventuali penurie di moneta, a lungaggini nei pagamenti e ai rischi d'insolvenza dei debitori, l'opportunità di cedere un bene al posto del denaro permette di evitare paralisi prolungate dei circuiti finanziari e commerciali.<sup>6</sup>

Pur essendo pienamente consapevoli di questi vantaggi, i civilisti d'età moderna non mancano di sottolineare l'esistenza di due maggiori criticità. Provocando

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<sup>4</sup> Sulla centralità della differenza che, ai fini della dazione, deve sussistere fra la *res data* e la *res debita*, cfr. Polacco 1888, 14; Saccoccio 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Astuti 1962.

<sup>6</sup> Si tratta di un vantaggio tanto più apprezzabile, quanto più si pensi all'accentuata tendenza all'indebitamento e ai consistenti problemi di liquidità che si riscontrano in molte economie preindustriali, tanto urbane quanto rurali, come mostrano Cattini 1983; Muldrew 1998; Hoffman, Postel-Vinay, e Rosenthal 2001; Finn 2003; Minard, Woronoff 2003; Fontaine 2008; Arru, De Rosa, e Muldrew 2011; Alonzi 2012.

un'alterazione dei patti iniziali, la dazione in pagamento pone anzitutto cospicui problemi sul piano della giustizia, della fiducia e della stabilità degli accordi contrattuali; agendo sul delicato terreno dei prezzi, essa obbliga inoltre a istituire un'equivalenza, per nulla lineare o scontata, fra l'importo dovuto e il valore della cosa ceduta (Nardi 1970; Barbot 2021).

Per quanto formulati negli stessi termini, questi nodi critici sono affrontati e risolti in modo parzialmente diverso, e questa differenza, come vedremo, è rivelatrice di due diverse attitudini politico-istituzionali riguardo ai processi di indebitamento, alle responsabilità che essi generano e alle conseguenze socio-economiche che da loro scaturiscono.

### 3. Uno sguardo alla trattatistica giuridica sei e settecentesca

Cosa dice, anzitutto, la letteratura giuridica riguardo alla dazione in pagamento?

La posizione dei civilisti transalpini è piuttosto compatta e omogenea, e trae ampiamente ispirazione dalla teoria del diritto naturale e dai due elementi fondativi che essa pone alla base del diritto contrattuale: il principio del consensualismo e quello dell'equivalenza o simmetria fra le prestazioni a cui contraenti sono vincolati.<sup>7</sup> Muovendo da questi due principi, gli autori francesi manifestano una forte tendenza a enfatizzare i punti in comune fra la dazione in pagamento e il modello per eccellenza di contratto perfettamente equilibrato, simmetrico e corrispettivo: la vendita (Fiori 2012).

Basti citare, al riguardo, Jean Domat e Robert-Joseph Pothier, padri fondatori della teoria del diritto naturale nonché da molti considerati fra i principali precursori del Codice napoleonico (Batiza 1973; Gazzaniga 1990; Ghestin 1994; Gojoso 2008), le cui considerazioni in materia di dazione si rivelano perfettamente convergenti: laddove Domat, ne *Les lois civiles dans leur ordre naturel* (1689-1694) sottolinea che «*si un créancier d'une somme consentait de recevoir en paiement un fonds ou autre chose, ce serait une vente dont la somme due serait le prix*»<sup>8</sup>, Pothier nel *Traité des retraits* (1762) gli fa ampiamente eco, rimarcando come

parmi les contrats équipollents à la vente, le premier est celui qu'on appelle *datio in solutum*, lorsqu'un débiteur donne à son créancier un héritage en paiement d'une somme d'argent qu'il lui doit, ou en paiement de choses mobilières qu'il doit; car *dare in solutum, est vendere*.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Sul consensualismo, si vedano, in generale, Atiyah 1991 e, riguardo all'evoluzione specifica del diritto contrattuale francese, Barmann 1961, Ranouil 1980, Gazzaniga 1992, Deroussin 2007. Sul principio di equivalenza delle prestazioni e sulla nozione, ad esso correlata, di sinallagma, cfr. Despotopoulos 1968; Villey 1968; Birocchi 1990, 1997; Petronio 1990; Gallo 1992.

<sup>8</sup> Jean Domat, "Les lois civiles dans leur ordre naturel", in *Œuvres de J. Domat. Tomes de 1 à 9. Première édition in-octavo*, a cura di M. Carré, à Paris, chez Louis Tenré libraire, 1821-1825, libro IV, titolo I, sezione II, n. 12.

<sup>9</sup> Robert-Joseph Pothier, "Traité des retraits: pour servir d'appendice au traité du contrat de vente." In *Œuvres de Pothier, annotées et mises en corrélation avec le Code Civil et la législation actuelle par M. Bugnet*, Paris, Imprimeur Henri Plon, 1861 [prima ed. 1762], vol. I, capitolo V, p. 83.



Ripetuta come un mantra in molti altri trattati dottrinali (Zafarana 2011), l'analogia o «equipollenza» fra la dazione e la vendita è puntualmente ribadita dai numerosi dizionari e repertori di giurisprudenza che circolano nella Francia moderna.<sup>10</sup> Nel complesso, gli autori di queste opere, tutte fortemente orientate alla prassi<sup>11</sup>, paiono piuttosto laconici e stringati in tema di dazione, rivelando come quest'istituto non susciti ricadute pratiche o giurisprudenziali avvertite come particolarmente rilevanti o degne di nota. Se, a titolo d'esempio, le diverse edizioni del dizionario di diritto civile dei fratelli Ferrière<sup>12</sup> non dedicano alcuna voce specifica alla *dation en paiement*, il *Répertoire universel et raisonné de jurisprudence* di Joseph-Nicolas Guyot, per parte sua, si limita a confermarne l'equivalenza rispetto al contratto di vendita, sottolineando come «*tout ce qui est essentiel à une vente s'y rencontre: le consentement, la chose & le prix*».<sup>13</sup>

Quale diretta conseguenza di questa postura dottrinale, la totalità dei giuristi francesi riconosce la possibilità legale di una sola forma di dazione, quella «volontaria» o consensuale, declassando la versione coattiva o «necessaria» a fattispecie puramente eccezionale e residuale.

L'origine della distinzione fra queste due tipologie si ritrova ancora una volta nel diritto romano, e precisamente in una novella di Giustiniano<sup>14</sup> che istituisce un vero e proprio beneficio a favore del debitore («*beneficium dationis in solutum*»), rendendo la dazione in pagamento una forma di soddisfazione imponibile per via giudiziale ai fini di soccorrere quanti non riescano né a far fronte alle loro obbligazioni pecuniarie, né a vendere i propri beni senza incorrere nel rischio di vederli fortemente deprezzati. La stessa novella attribuisce al creditore la facoltà di poter scegliere le terre migliori, facoltà che gli è invece negata in presenza di chiese o istituzioni pie, dalle quali è tenuto ad accettare «*secundum aequitatem aliud quidem fructiferarum aliud vero et sterilium possessionum*» (Astuti 1962, 729).

Sebbene conoscano e talora citino apertamente questo frammento documentario, i giuristi francesi scartano con intransigenza l'ammissibilità di un'alterazione dei patti contrattuali che prescindano dal consenso delle parti, rimandando come la dazione coattiva, oltre ad essere troppo sbilanciata a favore del debitore, risulti del tutto estranea al principio della libertà negoziale. Contravvenendo alle fonti giustiniane, questi autori difendono a spada tratta il principio per cui un creditore non possa in alcun modo essere obbligato a ricevere in cambio del denaro promesso un bene mobile o immobile, quantunque di valore uguale o superiore

<sup>10</sup> Sulla grande diffusione di queste opere, cfr. Bardy 1954; Dauchy 1997; Dauchy, Demars-Sion 2005; Barenot 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Il forte orientamento pragmatico che attraversa questi saggi è peraltro un tratto comune a gran parte della cultura civilistica di età moderna, come evidenziano Savelli 1995 e Birocchi 2002.

<sup>12</sup> Claude-Joseph de Ferrière, *Dictionnaire de droit et de pratique... contenant l'explication des termes de droit, d'ordonnances, de coutumes & de pratique. Avec les juridictions de France*, Paris, Brunet, 1749 [prima ed. 1740; ripubblicato in diverse edizioni successive].

<sup>13</sup> Joseph-Nicolas Guyot, "Dation." In *Répertoire universel et raisonné de jurisprudence civile, criminelle, canonique et bénéficiale*, Paris, Visse, 1775-1785, t. 5, p. 246.

<sup>14</sup> Si tratta, in particolare, della Novella 4, c. 3, della quale ampi frammenti si trovano in Astuti 1962.

all'importo che gli è dovuto,<sup>15</sup> a meno che questa cessione non sia il frutto di un'accettazione spontanea dell'*aliud pro alio*, motivata dalla volontà del creditore di andare in soccorso del proprio debitore.

Quanto alle modalità di stimare le cose cedute in pagamento, nulla viene detto in proposito dai giuristi transalpini: poiché la dazione in pagamento è annoverata fra gli accordi consuetudinari, ne consegue che la determinazione del valore dei beni da trasferire debba essere lasciata alla libera negoziazione delle parti, negoziazione nella quale il diritto civile non ha alcuna ragione o necessità di immischiarsi.<sup>16</sup>

Una situazione significativamente diversa traspare, invece, nella penisola italiana, ove la *datio in solutum*, dal Cinquecento in poi, dà luogo a una serie corposa di monografie e pubblicazioni specialistiche che offrono una ricchissima rassegna casistica e giurisprudenziale,<sup>17</sup> testimoniando della grande diffusione e rilevanza di quest'istituto nella prassi del tempo. Se è vero che anche i giuristi italiani rinvergono chiare analogie fra la dazione e il contratto di vendita, questo nesso, in verità, appare molto meno granitico di quanto accade presso gli autori francesi.<sup>18</sup> Ma quel che è ancora più interessante, è che i giuristi della penisola non faticano in alcun modo ad ammettere la *datio in solutum* nella sua versione coattiva, aderendo all'idea romanistica dell'opportunità di concedere ai debitori uno strumento alternativo che permetta loro di evitare l'insolvenza, la confisca o il fallimento.<sup>19</sup>

#### 4. Il disciplinamento legislativo della *datio in solutum*

Le diverse impostazioni dogmatiche appena presentate, a loro volta, hanno echi significativi sul piano legislativo.

Le *coutumes* territoriali francesi risultano pienamente allineate alla posizione dei civilisti transalpini. In maniera molto laconica e sbrigativa, questi corpus normativi si limitano a far ricadere la dazione in pagamento sotto il regime giuridico e fiscale della

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<sup>15</sup> Così, ad esempio, Robert-Joseph Pothier, *Traité du contrat de vente selon les règles tant du for de la conscience que du for extérieur*, Orléans, chez J. Rouzeau-Montaut, 1772.

<sup>16</sup> Sulla tendenza dei giuristi francesi a non occuparsi, se non in minima parte, di prezzi e di stime dei beni, mi permetto di rinviare a Barbot 2021, 2023.

<sup>17</sup> Fra le numerose opere italiane *de datione in solutum, de bonis in solutum dandis, de in solutum bonorum datione, de solutionibus et liberationibus*, vanno menzionate le monografie di Giovanni Battista Asinio, *De executionibus tractatus*, in Venetiis, 1589, Giovanni Maria Novario, *Tractatus de insoluto bonorum datione iuxta mentem Authent. Hoc nisi debitor C. de solut. c. 1.* ..., Neapoli, 1636, di Giulio Cesare Giussani, di cui dirò tra breve, nonché una serie di altri trattati citati da Melillo 1970, 92, nota 2.

<sup>18</sup> Il giurista Sabelli, ad esempio, afferma che «*datio in solutum non est vere ac proprie emptio et venditio, sed similis illi, et ex iuris interpretatione includit in se tacitum contractum emptionis et venditionis*»: Marco Antonio Sabelli, *Summa diversorum tractatumum*, Venetiis, 1697, II, citato da Astuti 1962, 732. Uno dei principali nodi dibattuti dagli esperti di diritto civile è quello della possibilità estendere alla *datio in solutum* le regole in materia di evizione in caso di vendita: su quest'aspetto si vedano, in particolare, De Francisci 1915, Saccoccio 2006.

<sup>19</sup> Su fallimenti e confische, rimando ai casi di studio e ai riferimenti bibliografici presentati da Monti 2012, Cecchini 2018.

vendita,<sup>20</sup> riconoscendo soltanto la fattispecie volontaria e ammettendo – come fa, ad esempio, la *coutume* d'Anjou – la versione coattiva quale rimedio transitorio da adottare a fronte di eventi traumatici e straordinari come una guerra, una pandemia o una grave crisi di sussistenza.<sup>21</sup>

Un panorama molto diverso si profila, invece, nella penisola italiana, dove gli statuti regionali e municipali affrontano il tema in maniera decisamente più ricorrente e sistematica.

Una questione spesso richiamata dagli statuti è quella della liceità della dazione di una cosa a compensazione di obbligazioni contratte da mercanti e banchieri nell'esercizio delle loro attività commerciali. Che si tratti di debitori o di fideiussori, la maggior parte degli apparati normativi italiani impone a questi operatori di pagare le somme dovute «*in pecunia numerata*» (Astuti 1962, 733), incitandoli a iniettare quanto più denaro possibile nei circuiti economici.

Rigetata anche da molte rote mercantili (Astuti 1962, 732), la possibilità di cedere un bene a saldo di un debito commerciale sembra tuttavia trovare dei riscontri nella prassi: è quanto documento, ad esempio, nella Roma seicentesca studiata da Renata Ago (1998, 198-203), dove la cessione *in solutum* di censi o di compagnie di ufficio costituisce la maniera principale, per i mercanti, di effettuare pagamenti di una certa consistenza.

La questione del livello d'indebitamento è in effetti centrale: a partire da quale soglia è legalmente possibile effettuare una dazione in pagamento? Tutte le leggi statutarie della penisola escludono il suo utilizzo per la copertura di piccoli debiti, anche se la somma minima richiesta risulta altamente variabile in funzione dei contesti locali: «*cinquanta lire a Verona, tre lire a Peglio e Bagnacavallo, cento soldi ad Argenta [...], soltanto dodici denari a Gradara*» (Schupfer 1921, 243).

Un altro aspetto ampiamente dibattuto è quello della natura dei beni passibili di essere ceduti. Se la regola di gran lunga più diffusa impone al debitore di trasferire anzitutto la sua ricchezza mobiliare, e di cedere gli immobili solo qualora il valore dei mobili non fosse in grado di coprire la somma dovuta (Crivellari 1899), alcuni statuti non esitano a interpretare questa norma in senso ancora più restrittivo, imponendo, come accade nel ducato estense, che la cessione di immobili possa avere luogo soltanto su espressa autorizzazione del principe (Astuti 1962).

Se la maggior protezione accordata ai beni immobili si spiega principalmente sulla base della loro funzione di fattori di produzione e di beni di prima necessità (Alfani, Barbot 2009), essa trova una sua ragione d'essere anche nel nesso stringente che lega la proprietà immobiliare ai diritti di cittadinanza: poiché nella totalità degli antichi Stati italiani la residenza è una condizione indispensabile per acquisire la condizione

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<sup>20</sup> Si vedano, a titolo d'esempio, la *Coutume d'Orléans commentée par Delalande*, Orléans, chez Jean Borde, 1704-1705, t. II, art. 397, p. 223; le “*Coutumes d'Amiens*”, in *Le coutumier de Picardie: contenant les commentaires de Hen, de Dufresne & de Ricard*, à Paris, aux dépens de la société, 1726, t. X, art. CLXVII, n. 12 e 13, p. 462-463; le *Nouveau commentaire sur la coutume de la prévôté et vicomté de Paris*, a cura di Claude de Ferrière, Paris, chez Saugrain, t. I, 1751, p. 285, o ancora *Le droit commun de la France et la coutume de Paris*, a cura di F. Bourjon, Paris, Grangé, Cellot, 1770, t. I, p. 1019.

<sup>21</sup> “*Arrets célèbres pour la province d'Anjou*”, in *Coutume du pays et du duché d'Anjou par Dupineau, De Moulín et Poquet de Livonnière*, t. II, Paris, chez Charles Osmont, 1725, p. 1351.

di *cives* (Barbot 2013), ogni transazione che implichi un trasferimento totale o parziale di un diritto immobiliare è sottoposta a una stretta vigilanza e ad attenti controlli da parte delle autorità politiche.<sup>22</sup> Per questa ragione, il beneficio della *datio in solutum* è in genere riservato esclusivamente ai sudditi, mentre ai debitori stranieri non è data alcuna alternativa in grado di allontanare il fallimento o la confisca dei loro patrimoni.<sup>23</sup>

Quanto al problema della potenziale violazione della giustizia contrattuale generata dall'*aliud pro alio*, i legislatori italiani – così come i giuristi dell'epoca – sono ben lontani dal disinteressarsene, ma si cimentano nell'impresa di disciplinarlo proprio nella sua dimensione più critica e delicata: quella della necessaria corrispondenza che dev'essere realizzata fra l'ammontare dei debiti contratti e il valore economico dei beni sostitutivi da cedere in pagamento.

## 5. La *datio in solutum* in azione: il caso del Ducato di Milano

Un caso particolarmente documentato al riguardo è quello dello Stato di Milano, dove la dazione in pagamento, o «dato in paga», è presente soprattutto nella sua versione obbligatoria, utilizzata tanto fra privati quanto per saldare debiti fiscali (Faccini 1988, Monti 2018). L'analisi del mercato immobiliare della capitale lombarda mostra come il ricorso a questa modalità di pagamento, già molto intenso nella seconda metà del Cinquecento, subisca un ulteriore incremento a partire dalla grave crisi finanziaria degli anni Venti del Seicento,<sup>24</sup> fra i cui esiti si riscontra anche un drammatico aumento dei livelli d'indebitamento della popolazione urbana (Barbot 2008). Non è un caso che proprio in questo difficile torno di tempo un autorevole commentatore degli Statuti lombardi, il giureconsulto Giulio Cesare Giussani,<sup>25</sup> pubblichi a breve distanza due opere monografiche, una sulle procedure di stima e l'altra sulla *datio in solutum*,<sup>26</sup> evidenziando non solo la rilevanza pratica, ma anche il filo rosso che unisce questi due temi. Una simile prossimità si ritrova peraltro anche fra le pagine degli Statuti,<sup>27</sup> i quali trattano della stima dei beni in una serie di disposizioni contigue agli articoli dedicati alla *datio in solutum*.<sup>28</sup>

Ma cosa dicono queste norme e l'interpretazione che ne dà il giudice Giussani?

<sup>22</sup> Fra le regole più diffuse, vi sono l'obbligo di pubblicità della vendita e quello del ricorso alla certificazione notarile, come mostrano, per il caso di Milano, Sinatti D'Amico 1979; Liva 1979, 1990; Saita 2003.

<sup>23</sup> Sul trattamento riservato ai beni degli stranieri, si vedano Maifreda 2010, e Cerutti 2012.

<sup>24</sup> Sull'impatto della crisi su Milano, Vigo 1976, e sulla dimensione europea di questa turbolenza finanziaria, Romano 1980.

<sup>25</sup> Sulla figura di Giulio Cesare Giussani e sulla sua attività d'interpretazione e commento delle leggi statutarie milanesi, rimando ai cenni biografici contenuti in Monti 2018.

<sup>26</sup> Giulio Cesare Giussani, *Tractatus de precio et astimatione secundum ius civile*, Mediolani, apud Hieronymum Bordonum, 1615; Idem, *Tractatus de bonis insolutum dandis, et de boni ad hastam vendendis*, Mediolani, apud Benedictum Sommascum, 1620.

<sup>27</sup> Sugli statuti milanesi, o «Nuove Costituzioni», promulgati da Carlo V nel 1541 ed in vigore per tutta l'età moderna, si vedano Lattes 1899; Sinatti d'Amico 1962; Cavanna 2007.

<sup>28</sup> *Statuti di Milano volgarizzati*, in Milano, Galeazzi, 1773, articoli 163-171.

A conferma dell'esistenza di un chiaro favore accordato al debitore, tanto nella procedura coattiva, quanto in quella consensuale, a quest'ultimo è riconosciuta una finestra di un anno per redimere i suoi beni, riacquistandoli allo stesso prezzo a cui li aveva trasferiti al creditore.<sup>29</sup> È inoltre stabilito che il prezzo finale non debba superare i due terzi della «vera stima» dei cespiti da cedere, grandezza, quest'ultima, da determinarsi mediante il ricorso a uno stimatore pubblico, di preferenza appartenente alla corporazione dei rigattieri, nel caso dei mobili, e al collegio degli architetti e periti agrimensori, nel caso degli immobili.<sup>30</sup> Ai fini di garantire la massima trasparenza e imparzialità al processo di valutazione, è necessario che lo stimatore incaricato non abbia alcun rapporto di parentela o prossimità con le parti coinvolte, e che la sua onorabilità e reputazione siano adeguatamente certificate dall'istituzione di appartenenza.<sup>31</sup> Pena la nullità della valutazione compiuta, al perito è inoltre imposto di operare soltanto nelle ore diurne e di far ricorso unicamente alle unità metrologiche e agli strumenti approvati dalle magistrature preposte (Barbot 2009, 2011).

Una volta che la sua nomina è stata debitamente formalizzata, la prima operazione che il perito è chiamato a compiere è la compilazione della descrizione e dell'inventario dei beni del debitore e dei suoi eventuali garanti. La redazione dell'inventario riveste una particolare importanza poiché è attraverso questa enumerazione che viene stabilito l'ordine di cessione dei cespiti da dare *pro soluto*.<sup>32</sup> Anche nel caso milanese, è istituita una netta gerarchia merceologica finalizzata a tutelare la proprietà immobiliare rispetto a quella mobiliare.<sup>33</sup> A ulteriore protezione del debitore, lo stimatore è inoltre tenuto ad escludere dall'inventario tutti gli oggetti che risultino essenziali alla sopravvivenza di quest'ultimo e del suo nucleo familiare. È quanto emerge, ad esempio, dalla lettura di una lista compilata in occasione della cessione dei beni di un debitore della Fabbrica del Duomo di Milano, il sarto Carlo Raffaelli, dalla quale il perito Carlo Riccardi si premura di escludere tutti i materiali, i semilavorati e gli strumenti atti a garantire al Raffaelli la possibilità materiale di proseguire la sua attività professionale (Tab. 1).

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<sup>29</sup> È quanto accade, a titolo d'esempio, nel 1577, quando le eredi di Tommaso Marino devono cedere il Palazzo omonimo, attuale sede del comune di Milano, al regio fisco, di cui Marino era debitore (Forni 2012, 40-44).

<sup>30</sup> Sul Collegio degli architetti, ingegneri e periti agrimensori di Milano e sulle modalità di reclutamento dei suoi membri, si vedano Gatti Perer 1965 e Scotti Tosini 1983. Sull'attività di stima svolta da queste figure professionali, mi permetto di rinviare a Barbot 2012 e 2015.

<sup>31</sup> Regole non molto dissimili sono in vigore in altri Stati italiani, come mostrano gli stralci e gli esempi citati da Siciliano Villanueva 1895-1898.

<sup>32</sup> Sul valore giuridico degli inventari, e sugli accorgimenti da seguire nel redigerli, Olivieri 1902.

<sup>33</sup> Quest'ordine gerarchico è chiaramente espresso da un anonimo commentatore settecentesco degli Statuti lombardi, il quale ricorda come sia «da notarsi che per dichiarazione fatta dal Senato il 22 Settembre 1600, avanti che il Debitore possa dare a' suoi creditori i beni immobili in paga, dee far vendita de' mobili e procurare col ricavo di essi di sanare i debiti; in caso poi che non abbia mobili più di quello che porta l'uso necessario o che non bastino a soddisfare a' Creditori, gli sarà lecito in sussidio dare in paga a' suddetti i beni stabili a norma di quanto prescrivono le Nuove Costituzioni (...): *Statuti di Milano volgarizzati*, cit., p. 75.

**Tab. 1. «Stima delle robbe di Carlo Raffaelli quali sono presso la Veneranda Fabbrica del Duomo in consegna del monitionero e delle robbe lasciate al Raffaelli da me Carlo Riccardi » (17/8/1654): beni da cedere in pagamento (colonna di sinistra) e beni esclusi dalla cessione (colonna di destra)**

Un capotto d'ormesino L. 4, et una cappa di saglia cottonata L. 4	Un pezzo di tela sangallo verde et un pezzo di canepo L. 4
Un parro de calzoni, et gippone nero L. 2, et un gippone d'ormesino nero da donna L. 1	Un paro di maniche di fondo di saglia cremesi L. 2
Due gipponi de veluto a opera da donna L. 4	Un paro di maniche di color d'oliva L. 3
Una robba da donna guarnita di raso L. 4	Un busto da huomo verde L. 4
Un parro di maniche di rassa rossa secha, et altri aldini della sudetta robba L. 1	Un fatto di varie pezze et robbe disfatte L. 8.10
Due tapetti con franza sono di occhiorata di filo, con bombaso L. 3	Mantini et pezzette n. 15 tutti diversi L. 7
Due bustini di canepo, et altro non finito, et varii pezzi di busti pure di canepo L. 2	Serviette anchora da finire n. 8 L. 5
Sugamani diversi n. 6, L. 1.10	Una fodretta picina de strazzi bianchi L. 8
Sottocalzoni di tela para trè, L. 3.10	Una cassa di noce antica L. 13
Undeci tovaglie diverse L. 15	Un telaro L. 10
Una testa di S. Pietro martire con cornice intagliata et profili d'oro L. 24	Una cariola L. 4
Una testa di S. Gioseffo con cornice come sopra L. 24	Cinque sacchi di canepo buoni con maniche L. 6
Un San Carlo incorniciato rotto, un altro San Carlo incorniciato alla romana, un altro S. Carlo senza cornice L. 24	
Due teste, una di nostro Signore, una della madonna ambedue incorniciate di nero L. 18	
Due quadri vecchi longhi dalli 2 sino alli 3 brazza L. 6	

Fonte: Archivio della Veneranda Fabbrica del Duomo di Milano, *Capo XXIV (Case in Milano)*, Cartella 238, Porta Orientale (valori espressi in Lire milanesi).

Una volta effettuati l'inventario e la descrizione dei beni, il perito incaricato deve poi procedere alla quantificazione del loro valore, indicandone gli esiti in una relazione scritta di suo pugno, da consegnare in più copie a tutte le parti interessate (Siciliano Villanueva 1985-1898). Tanto gli Statuti milanesi quanto il giurista Giussani insistono sul fatto che la «vera stima» dei beni debba necessariamente riferirsi al valore che essi avevano nel tempo e nel luogo in cui il debito è stato contratto.<sup>34</sup> Ai fini del calcolo di questa somma, gli stimatori devono astenersi dal considerare il

<sup>34</sup> Questa necessità è già espressa nelle fonti giustiniane, che mostrano come in situazione d'emergenza Giulio Cesare, durante la guerra civile, avesse imposto la soddisfazione coattiva dei debiti pecuniari mediante la dazione di beni da stimarsi secondo il valore prebellico (Astuti 1962).

cosiddetto «prezzo d'affezione», frutto arbitrario di valutazioni personali e singolari,<sup>35</sup> ma sono invece tenuti a basarsi sul valore intrinseco, risultante dell'aggregazione del costo dei materiali e del lavoro necessario a trasformarli, oppure sul valore di scambio, corrispondente al livello medio dei prezzi praticati nelle cessioni di beni analoghi.<sup>36</sup>

La possibilità di prendere in considerazione il valore di scambio è tuttavia esclusa nel caso di *mala tempora*, e segnatamente in presenza di contrazioni o turbolenze tali da indurre a eccessive e incontrollate oscillazioni dei prezzi: in queste circostanze, è infatti stabilito che la stima del perito debba riflettere unicamente il valore intrinseco dei beni, grandezza reputata più oggettiva e più certa,<sup>37</sup> sulla cui stabilità, per dirla col giudice Giussani, «*omnes consentium*».<sup>38</sup>

È utile osservare come questo articolato insieme di regole, anziché testimoniare di un'indebita ingerenza di giuristi e legislatori nei rapporti economici fra privati, rivesta soprattutto una funzione di garanzia, tanto per il debitore quanto per il creditore, poiché nelle sue diverse tappe procedurali offre a entrambi la possibilità di invocare eventuali difformità atte a sospendere, ritardare o addirittura azzerare completamente l'operazione di cessione. È quanto emerge, ad esempio, dal lunghissimo processo di *datio in solutum* coattiva che vede come protagonista il luogotenente ligure Gio. Tomaso Carenzi, condannato nel 1661 a cedere una parte dei suoi beni al fisco milanese, di cui è debitore a causa di una sequela di tasse non pagate (Barbot 2021, 81-83). Come mostrano le diverse stime realizzate sui beni di Gio. Tomaso,<sup>39</sup> i vizi formali evocati da quest'ultimo, dai suoi eredi e dai suoi garanti, uniti all'incertezza giuridica circa la titolarità dei diritti di proprietà insistenti su alcuni dei cespiti da cedere *pro soluto*,<sup>40</sup> avranno l'effetto di dilatare a dismisura i tempi della dazione, facendola chiudere a più di sessant'anni di distanza dal suo avvio e a oltre trenta dalla morte del suo protagonista iniziale.

Per concludere, è possibile rimarcare come l'analisi comparativa della dazione in pagamento permetta di osservare all'opera due distinte politiche di indirizzo e di regolazione dei processi di indebitamento: la prima, quella francese, più propensa a proteggere il creditore in nome dell'autonomia della volontà individuale e della libertà

<sup>35</sup> Il prezzo d'affezione, o prezzo singolare, è infatti considerato da Giulio Cesare Giussani come inadatto ad esprimere oggettivamente il valore di un bene: *Tractatus de precio et aestimatione*, cit., p. 150. Sulle numerose categorie di prezzo elaborate dal giurista lombardo, rinvio a Barbot 2017.

<sup>36</sup> Sulle definizioni e sulle modalità di calcolo di queste due grandezze, protagoniste di un'ampia manualistica estimativa, mi permetto di rinviare a Barbot 2009, 2021. Molto diverso è il caso della Francia moderna, che si caratterizza per una mancanza quasi assoluta di manuali di stima simili a quelli italiani (Barbot, Carvais 2016).

<sup>37</sup> Sull'ampia diffusione di questa convenzione di valutazione nelle pratiche economiche europee, cfr. De Munck, Lyna 2015; Barbot, Cattini, Di Tullio, e Mocarrelli 2018. Sull'aura di oggettività che la circonda, si vedano De Munck 2011, Grenier 2018.

<sup>38</sup> Giulio Cesare Giussani, *Tractatus de precio et aestimatione*, cit., p. 149.

<sup>39</sup> Le stime in questione sono conservate presso l'Archivio di Stato di Milano, *Governo-Parte antica, Finanze-Apprensioni*, Cartelle 131-133 (1661-1738).

<sup>40</sup> Una delle maggiori cause d'incertezza consiste nell'esistenza di diversi diritti enfiteutici (Barbot 2018), la cui stratificazione è tale da rendere l'identificazione dei proprietari dei beni estremamente difficoltosa e complessa (Barbot 2021, 82).

negoziale, e a far ricadere integralmente sulle spalle del debitore la responsabilità dei suoi obblighi e dei suoi inadempimenti;<sup>41</sup> la seconda, quella italiana, più incline a soccorrere il debitore e a circoscrivere i potenziali effetti a catena delle sue *défaillances*, ma al contempo più attenta a mitigare un simile trattamento di favore mediante una serie di vincoli procedurali dalla cui applicazione è fatta dipendere la possibilità stessa di rivedere su nuove basi gli accordi iniziali, senza che quest'alterazione conduca a un'irreparabile lesione della giustizia contrattuale.

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<sup>41</sup> Questa tendenza è confermata dalla pratica diffusa di incarcerare i debitori anche a fronte di debiti di modesta entità, ben ricostruita, per la Parigi tardo-medievale, da Claustre 2007, 2011a. La stessa autrice (2011b, 2013) sottolinea come la responsabilità addossata al debitori rientri in una peculiare idea di bene comune e di buona gestione dell'economia domestica, privata come pubblica.



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Robert Braid\*

*Alternative forms of remuneration at the Holy Spirit Hospital  
of Marseille in the fourteenth century*

## 1. Introduction

Very early on, intellectuals realized that currency was a principal ingredient of economic growth. Aristotle recognized how money made it possible to exchange goods easily and to store wealth, and was a main driver behind the emergence of civilization, but argued that real economic growth was limited to what the natural world could produce.<sup>1</sup> Although medieval theologians looked with suspicion on professionals dealing with money (merchants, money-changers, bankers), none envisioned banning the use of currency. Nicolas Oresme, a fourteenth-century theologian who eventually became Bishop of Lisieux, preceded Jean Bodin, Thomas Gresham and John Maynard Keynes by several centuries in his formulation of the role of monetary policy in fostering economic stability and well-being (Oresme 2020). Building on Aristotle, Adam Smith pointed out that currency facilitated not only exchange but also investment and specialisation of labour, the primary components of economic development (Smith 1776, I, ch. 4). Even Jean-Baptiste Say, though pointing out that cash plays only an intermediary function, since goods are ultimately exchanged for other goods, recognized the fundamental importance of money in transactions and economic growth (Say 1826, I, 249-251). Yet, the monetization of the economy throughout the medieval period was not a linear process and did not strictly follow the same path as economic growth. Many forms of payment in kind, in particular for services, lasted well into the modern era in an otherwise highly monetized economy (Grenier 1996, 255-57).

Labour relations in particular were affected by many considerations other than simple economic efficiency, and the forms of remuneration often reflect social relations more than economic value. Indeed, Marx and Engels underscored how the alienation of the means of production from labourers, who were subsequently remunerated in cash for their efforts, reduced the majority of human beings to mere commodities (Marx and Engels 1848, I, 30). According to Arnold Toynbee,

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<sup>1</sup> Aristotle commenting Solon's quotation «Man can without limit increase his wealth» (*Politics*, Book I, Chapter 3) argues that because greed is unlimited, demand is unlimited, and money allows merchants to store unlimited amounts of wealth. But real, or natural, wealth is that which is actually produced and consumed by people, and is therefore limited by the natural capacity of the earth (Aristotle 1874, 38-42).

nineteenth-century British historian, the essence of the Industrial Revolution was the substitution of competition for medieval forms of production, in particular when money was used to remunerate workers, creating a “cash nexus” which replaced human relations (Toynbee 1884, 85-93, 189; Jones 2002, 62). It is thus important to examine the multiple ways in which services were remunerated to understand how value was perceived in non-monetary terms and how the forms of remuneration reflected social relations between employers and workers.

Of particular interest is how the forms of remuneration evolved over time to determine whether they in some way influenced or were affected by economic growth or decline, and the fourteenth century is an ideal period to observe such trends. It marks a major transition from two centuries of economic growth to a period of stagnation and decline. A series of external shocks (climate change, epidemics, famines and wars) makes it possible to observe how economic agents adapted to a rapidly changing context (Campbell 2016, chap. 4; Aurell 2005, chap. 8). This is also a century which has been associated with changing relations between lords and peasants in the rural economy (Bailey 2014). Moreover, it was at this time that the majority of regions around Europe began intervening in labour affairs by imposing a variety of regulations, many of which outlined the forms of remuneration that were authorized and forbidden (Braid 2003; Cohn 2007; Bennet 2010; Whittle 2023). It has been observed by historians familiar with the English archives that, once cash wages were capped by law, employers resorted to other methods of payment to circumvent the new legislation. (Thorold Rogers 1866, I, 274; Hatcher 1994). Even if non-cash forms of remuneration were often offered prior to the epidemic, their use increased dramatically afterwards but was not clearly entered in the accounts which recorded only the cash portion of the wage, rendering most of the wage data for this period quite misleading (Phelps Brown and Hopkins 1956, 202; Hatcher 2018). The stagnation of real wages due to rapid inflation during the quarter century after the Black Death, observed by many economic historians (Bridbury 1973, 578; Bolton 1980, 61-62; Farmer 1991, 778; Clark 2007, 104), may therefore be a form of money illusion as overall compensation was higher than is apparent thanks to alternative forms of remuneration which were not clearly indicated in the accounts.

Non-monetary forms of remuneration, therefore, represent a type of alternative currency in that they facilitate exchange. Remuneration in kind (clothing, shoes, cloth, grain) can be formally considered an alternative currency in the sense that it was transferable to a third party in exchange for something else (cash or another good or service). Other types of in-kind payments (food, shelter, healthcare) were non-transferable and are therefore not officially an alternative form of currency. Still, both transferable and non-transferable forms of payment fulfilled a primary function of currency in that they enabled an exchange by providing agents with a greater degree of flexibility than money in an otherwise tightly regulated market. Once cash wages were fixed by law, economic agents in certain regions reverted to payment in kind for more leeway in the labour negotiation. Cash was only liquid in the sense that it was transferable, but it lacked flexibility. The imposed rigidity on nominal wages rendered remuneration in kind a more fluid option, as the precise amount of food, clothing, etc. could be easily modified without infringing on institutional constraints.

In addition, in every society, there are a number of individuals who perform very valuable services for the community for which they receive no tangible form of remuneration. Many people organize charitable works, take care of children, the elderly and the sick, help neighbours and even strangers without receiving any direct form of remuneration. Even if they receive some small monetary or material reward for this service, this often takes the form of a token payment and does not represent full compensation for the services rendered to the community. These people perform such services not to increase their financial or material wealth, but to fulfil their civic duties and improve their social standing within the community. The non-tangible payment for their services can be considered a form of ‘social currency’.

The concept of «social capital» was introduced in the early twentieth century, but mostly developed starting in the 1980s by sociologists. (Bourdieu 1986; Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992; Coleman 1988; Putnam 1995; 2000) It has become a key concept driving innovative analysis in fields such as economic inequality (Putnam 2016), social mobility (Corak 2013; Chetty 2022), racial inequality (Manduc 2019), public health (Carrell 2011) and economic development (Fukuyama 2001, Eagle 2010). Scholars have generally focused on how individuals use the social advantages that they have already accumulated or inherited to improve their chances of success and which more generally allow a community to function efficiently. Studies often overlook, however, how such capital is accumulated in the first place. This paper introduces the concept of «social currency» which can be defined as a non-tangible remuneration exchanged for services rendered or goods given by people who hope to improve their social standing. Like any other form of currency, social currency can be accumulated and stored as social capital and cashed in for some financial or material gain in the future. The future reward may even include a more comfortable afterlife. It can be transferred to a third party, since people often benefit from the social capital accumulated by family members and friends. It can even be instantly consumed by providing an agreeable feeling of belonging to a community and fulfilling one’s civic or moral duties. Although it is impossible to measure precisely the relative value of social currency, it will be argued that certain institutions that foster economic and social development are only able to carry out their mission because they can rely on the services rendered and gifts given by a number of individuals who are more interested in acquiring social currency than cash through the exchange, thereby reducing the institutions’ operating costs.

The archives of Marseille have conserved many sources that allow historians to observe the evolution of various forms of remuneration (cash, payments in kind and social currency) during the fourteenth century. Francine Michaud has examined in depth the vast numbers of notarial and judicial records that attest respectively to the agreements and the disagreements between long-term employees or apprentices and their masters during the fourteenth century (Michaud 2016). These employment contracts and disputes indicate in some detail the various forms of remuneration possible and how they evolved in time. The municipal archives of Marseille also house numerous registers of local deliberations of the city council which attempted to regulate the remuneration of workers during these turbulent times, in particular that of day labourers who generally do not appear in either notarial or judicial records. Indeed, despite a relative absence of such regulations in the first half of the fourteenth



century, city officials very closely monitored the wages of workers and other labour practices immediately after the Black Death. These regulations can also be compared with similar measures enacted at the central level by the Senechal and Estates of Provence in 1348 and with the regulations of other municipal authorities in the region.

An even richer source of information comes from the account registers of the Holy Spirit Hospital in Marseille. This hospital was founded in 1188 to receive the sick and the abandoned children of the city. Subsidiary houses under the control of this hospital were subsequently opened in Martigues and Aubagne. By the mid-fourteenth century, the hospital had capacity for roughly 65 men and 25 women. The municipal council nominated two members to oversee the financial decisions of the hospital and control the accounts. Shortly after the plague arrived in Marseille, the municipal council started holding its sessions in one of the rooms of the hospital, and remained there until the end of the Fifteenth century (Fabre 1973, 39-43, 74-78). Registers recording the accounts are housed in the Departmental Archives of the Bouches-du-Rhône in Marseille. Two registers date from as early as 1304 and 1306, and the series becomes relatively regular from 1330. There are at least 8 registers from the two decades preceding the Black Death, one register recording the activities of the hospital during the epidemic, ten registers in the two decades following the plague, and dozens more covering the next three centuries. These registers record all of the expenses of the hospital (food, clothing, shoes, furniture, tools, agricultural labour, repairs to the building, medical services, etc.), lists of its possessions and the revenue that came from rentals as well as the sale of various goods (wine, pigs, grain, etc.). The direct exploitation of the hospital was relatively small, employing at most a dozen or so workers per day during the harvest, in addition to about five to ten servants on long-term contracts, the terms of which are generally recorded at the end of each register for the period before the Black Death. It also employed medical personnel to take care of patients and up to a dozen women a year to nurse abandoned infants. These records are extremely useful for understanding the employment practices of a mid-sized urban estate. They are particularly insightful relative to questions of the evolution not only of the amount of pay but also of various forms of remuneration for different types of services. These records are all the more revealing since the administration of the hospital was monitored by municipal officials. There is no way that the individuals in charge of controlling the accounts would be ignorant of the municipal regulations concerning wages, or even have any interest in trying to avoid them, as it has been suggested by certain historians examining manorial accounts in England, thereby increasing the likelihood of observing reliable data. This direct administration also means that the council members of Marseille were very aware of the concerns of employers of labour, a situation which may have led to a more practical approach to the issue of labour regulation.

Not every service rendered to the hospital, however, was recorded in these registers. Because the main objective of the registers was to keep track of the cash flow, certain transactions in kind may have escaped record-keeping. The wine, grain and pigs produced by the hospital were certainly consumed by the members of the household, including staff, but the consumption of its own produce was not recorded by the hospital in the accounts. Although it is also possible that some payments

indicated in monetary terms may really have been paid in non-monetary forms, these accounts usually indicate rather clearly whether the payment was in cash or kind. Both direct and indirect evidence in these accounts allows one to assess whether the hospital was supplying workers with payments in kind in addition to or as a replacement for cash. Moreover, many services were rendered by various individuals from outside the hospital as well which never appear in these registers because they were not paid for at all. It is thus the absence of certain mentions in these registers that tells us the most about non-monetary forms of retribution for service. Indeed, the hospital's mission of community service allowed it to incentivize people to work for no tangible remuneration, or perhaps for a token payment, but indirect evidence makes it possible to recognize the relative value of such volunteer services.

This paper will therefore attempt to trace the evolution of the forms of remuneration at the Holy Spirit Hospital of Marseille during the mid-fourteenth century, a period marked by recurrent famines, a massive epidemic in 1348 as well as subsequent waves starting in 1361, the introduction of local and central labour legislation and civil strife. It will examine the remuneration of various types of long-term employees (sections 2-4) and that of casual labourers employed for short periods (section 5), as well as the services rendered by volunteers whose remuneration is unrecorded (section 6). It will be argued that the reward for many services was paid in *social currency*. Very valuable services were rendered to the hospital that do not appear to have been remunerated at all in any commercial sense, or at a significantly below-market rate, by individuals seeking to increase their social capital. This form of remuneration could possibly be used to advance one's other commercial interests outside of the hospital or be cashed-in for some spiritual reward in the afterlife, or simply consumed immediately by procuring a feeling of being useful to society. Without such services, which remain practically invisible in the account registers monitoring monetary transactions, but which can be clearly inferred, there would have been no hospital at all to take care of the sick people and orphans, manage the estate and render the very accounts used for this study.

## 2. Qualified professionals

As the primary function of the hospital was to care for the sick, qualified staff was hired to visit the patients. Each year one doctor and one surgeon were employed to care not only for the patients, but also for the permanent members of the household, referred to in the registers as *sains* (the healthy) as opposed to the *malades* (the sick). The barber-surgeon hired in December 1342, Master Johan Bedas, was to receive £5 to come at least once a day to visit, cure and shave the beards and heads of not only the patients but also the brothers and sisters for the entire year.<sup>2</sup> The hospital also hired a doctor that same year, Master Elies, to visit twice a day and to "serve" all the sick, as well as the brothers, sisters, employees and anyone else residing at the hospital, for an annual salary of £5.<sup>3</sup> Although these entries do not include any

<sup>2</sup> Archives Départementales des Bouches-du-Rhône (Arch. dép. BdR) 1 HD E71 f. 66.

<sup>3</sup> Arch. dép. BdR, 1HD E71 f. 66 v.

indication of a payment other than cash to these professionals, they make clear that the long-term agricultural and domestic employees of the hospital also received healthcare services that were not specified in their contract.<sup>4</sup>

The remuneration of the doctors and barbers of the hospital (generally called a *selari*) was paid in cash.<sup>5</sup> Occasionally, a professional could receive a payment in kind in lieu of the cash amount specified in the contract. Master Giraut, barber-surgeon, was hired in November 1338 to cure and shave all of the sick men and women of the hospital for one year and was promised £3 15s for his salary.<sup>6</sup> He received a first instalment (*tes*) in cash worth £1 3s 4d., then he received his second instalment towards the end of his contract, on 19 October, but in kind (4 *eminas*<sup>7</sup> of oats worth £2). The treasurer also reimbursed brother Peire Rollan who had paid Giraut the remaining 6s 8d in cash (*contans*). The same year, the hospital agreed to pay Master Guilhem Louc, physician (*mege fezesian*), £3 15s to come once or twice per day to check up on the patients in all of the houses belonging to the hospital.<sup>8</sup> If he couldn't be present he had to find a competent replacement. He received a first instalment of one-third of the full amount (£1 5s.) mid-December, another third in June, both in cash. The final third he received from another member of the hospital in the form of cloth of the same value. Sometimes, payment in kind was specified in the recorded contract. In 1336, Master Peire Miquollan, barbier, was hired for an annual salary of £2 10s, plus all his expenses (*totas sas mesions*).<sup>9</sup> He received £1 5s in cash (*contans*) in December, and the remaining £1 5s at some point the following year, but it is not clear what form his expenses took and there is no mention of their value. In general, however, the hospital paid their hired healthcare professionals in cash, and the fact that their contracts indicate clearly that they were to come to the hospital to check on the patients suggests that they were not housed by the hospital. Soon after the Black Death, it became almost impossible to hire qualified medical personnel on year-long contracts, so the hospital hired doctors on a casual basis, their fees always paid in cash.

More interesting than the type of remuneration received (cash or kind) is the relative value of the total amount received. The annual fee of doctors and barbers was equivalent to only a few weeks' wages for an average day labourer. (Tab. 1 & 2) In the 1330s, an agricultural labourer would only have to work one or two days per month to receive the same amount as a doctor or surgeon. In the 1340s, they would have to work at most one week per month to earn an equivalent income. These fees hardly seem commensurate with the service rendered by the doctors and surgeons who were to visit the sick usually once or twice a day for an entire year. The cash fees of doctors and barbers may therefore be considered to have been complimented by *social currency*. This is particularly true immediately after the Black Death. In 1348-49,

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<sup>4</sup> The provision of healthcare for workers is sometimes specified in employment and apprenticeship contracts recorded in notarial registers (Michaud 2016).

<sup>5</sup> The word most often used to indicate the salary of long-term domestic servants, even those paid exclusively in cash, was *loguier* (normally 'rent').

<sup>6</sup> Arch. dép. BdR, 1HD E7, f. 22 v.

<sup>7</sup> One *emina* was 32.6 liters (Coulet, 1988, 1067).

<sup>8</sup> Arch. dép. BdR, 1 HD E7, f. 22.

<sup>9</sup> Arch. dép. BdR, 1 HD E68, f. 78 v.

the barber's fees actually declined slightly relative to their level in the early 1340s while wages paid to agricultural workers soared. In 1350-51, the fees paid to doctors only doubled while the wages paid to labourers more than tripled. It is difficult to imagine that during and immediately after an epidemic the services provided by healthcare professionals would have declined in value relative to those of agricultural workers. The ability to rely on social currency, however, did not last long after the Black Death. The hospital encountered great difficulty in hiring medical personnel in the years following the Black Death and resorted to cash payments for occasional medical services rather than an annual contract with qualified personnel. By 1365, the situation became so critical that the municipal authorities had to step in to seek out and remunerate qualified medical professionals.<sup>10</sup> Whether it was because of the epidemic or the civil conflict in the region, qualified medical staff seemed to be increasingly interested in cash relative to social currency.

**Tab. 1. Doctors' annual salaries compared to day wages of male agricultural labourers**

Year	Doctor's salary		Male labourer wage		Equivalent days/month	
	year (£)	month (d.)	min (d.)	max (d.)	max	min
1330-1331	1.5	30	16	24	1.9	1.3
1336-1337	1.5	30	14	20	2.1	1.5
1338-1339	3.75	75	14	30	5.4	2.5
1342-1343	5	100	16	26	6.3	3.8
1350-1351	9.6	192	60	60	3.2	3.2

Source: Arch. dép. BdR, 1 HD E 2, 68, 7, 71, 73.

In 1330-1331, a male agricultural labourer would have to work less than 2 days per month to earn the same salary as the doctor. In 1350-1351, an agricultural labourer would have to work only 3.2 days per month to earn the same salary as a doctor.

<sup>10</sup> Archives Communales (Arch. com.) de Marseille, BB24, f. 180v.

Tab. 2. **Barbers' annual salaries compared to day wages of male agricultural labourers**

Year	Barber's salary		Male labourer wage		Equivalent days/month	
	year (£)	month (s.)	min (d.)	max (d.)	max	min
1330-1331	1	20	16	24	1.3	0.8
1336-1337	2.5	50	14	20	3.6	2.5
1338-1339	3.5	70	14	30	5.0	2.3
1342-1343	5	100	16	26	6.3	3.8
1348-1349	4.8	96	40	80	2.4	1.2

Source: Arch. dép. BdR, 1 HD E 2, 68, 7, 71, 10.

In 1330-1331, a male agricultural labourer would have to work about one day per month to earn the same salary as the barber. In 1342-1343, the lowest paid agricultural labourer would have had to work 6.3 days per month to earn the same salary as a barber.

Occasionally, other types of qualified professionals were hired on a long-term contract. Just after the plague a number of people were hired for jobs that were not normally included in the account registers, probably because the volunteer staff who normally filled that role perished in the epidemic. On 19 October 1348, Peire de la Fargua was hired as the scribe for one year and was promised £10 for his service. After receiving virtually all of it up front (£9 2s), he fled taking his salary with him (*que enportet quant sen fugi*). Troubled times could also require exceptional services. On 19 October 1348, for example, the hospital hired Peire de Freju Gabos to guard the door, offering him £6 per year, though he only served for four months. He received £1 up front, and another £1 one month later, which represents the pro rata for his 4 months of service. In March 1349, the hospital made an agreement (*avem faj covenant*) with Master Guilhem Quastillon, teacher, to tutor Bertrand de San Chamas, son of Thomas de San Chamas, for one year. He was to receive 16s annually, of which half was paid up front. Thomas must have died, leaving young Bertrand orphaned and it would seem that he had left the hospital property that brought it rent in exchange for the care of his son.<sup>11</sup> The register also indicates that Bertrand had been in the custody of Sen. Guilhem Blanc from sometime in 1348 until 20 March 1349, for which he received £1 7s from the hospital.<sup>12</sup> The contract with the teacher was concluded just one week after Bertrand comes back to the hospital. Despite the relatively high level of skill one would need to perform this service during this period, the tutor was only paid an annual sum that was equivalent to less than 4 days wages for an average agricultural labourer. It is perfectly conceivable that the funds were used to purchase supplies for the lessons rather than as any form of compensation for the service; the hospital was simply to «give» Guilhem 16s, without any mention of the words that would indicate that it was a remuneration for service (*selari, lognier*, etc.).

<sup>11</sup> Arch. dép. BdR, 1 HD E10, p. 38.

<sup>12</sup> Arch. dép. BdR, 1 HD E10, p. 39.

One may wonder to what extent qualified professionals agreed to perform services for the public hospital for *social currency*, to fulfil their civic duties and maintain a good reputation, more than as a source of income. The fact that the scribe abandoned his position, taking his entire annual salary, suggests that maintaining the value of social currency may have been challenging after the Black Death. In any case, it is pretty clear that the function performed by the scribe who was paid a healthy salary (double what they paid to the barber that year) was previously carried out for free by volunteer staff who perished during the epidemic. The brothers and sisters of the hospital did not have the skills necessary to perform the services of doctors and surgeons, but as it will be shown, they provided for free a number of other high-skill services which were never remunerated in financial or monetary terms without which the hospital would not have been able to function.

### 3. Wet-nurses

As the other fundamental mission of the hospital was to care for orphans, it employed the services of a number of local women to breastfeed infants, referred to in these registers as *baillas*. Children past the age of infancy were kept at the hospital, though the traces of this activity are only indirect. Payments were made to tailors and shoe-makers to supply clothing and shoes for the children of the hospital. In 1331, for example, the hospital paid a cobbler 10s to repair 12 pairs of shoes for the children of the hospital; these were clearly not for the infants who were sent out to be breastfed. One inventory indicated a room as the one where the children slept, though it only contained 2 wooden beds. At least three contracts were made with women to feed and take care of children in the hospital on an annual rather than monthly contract. Taking care of the children living at the hospital most likely was the responsibility of the sisters. Because these women were volunteers and were not paid, there is hardly a trace of their valuable services. The only clear information about child-care concerns the wet-nurses (another service that the volunteer staff of the hospital could not perform) for whom there are numerous written contracts in the registers.

These contracts provide a great deal of information concerning the women employed, their remuneration and the children they took care of. All of the children entrusted to the wet-nurses are referred to simply as *enfants*, indicating only whether the child was female or male.<sup>13</sup> The sex of the child does not seem to make any difference in terms of the pay. In some years, all wet-nurses received the same set monthly fee whether they were taking care of a boy or a girl. In years where the fees received were different, the difference does not seem to be correlated to the sex of the child. Many contracts indicate the name of the husband, and often payment was made to him rather than to the wet-nurse herself. Even when the name of a husband is not indicated, one should not assume that the woman was unmarried. In September 1339, the hospital hired a servant by the name of Frances, husband of one of the hospital's wet-nurses (*marit de la bailla que ten i enfant dellespittal*) though his name

<sup>13</sup> It is odd that the scribe felt the need to indicate the sex of the child since the name was invariably gender specific. The addition of *masle* and *femell* was thus redundant, but almost systematically indicated.

appears nowhere in any of the women's contracts that year.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, in order to breastfeed an orphaned infant, the woman would have already had to be pregnant with her own child, which is why the volunteer sisters of the hospital could not fulfil this function. Generally, the registers also record the approximate address of these women, perhaps in order to know where to go to inspect on the well-being of the child. A significant proportion of these abandoned infants died while in the care of these women, thereby putting an end to the contract. Though efforts were made to prevent it, in particular by paying substantial fees to wet-nurses to feed abandoned children, infant mortality was quite high. In 1331-1332, for example, the hospital spent over £9 to have nine infants breastfed, six of whom died while in the care of the wet-nurses. The women may receive only a portion of their monthly fee if the child died during that month, but the child's death did not represent a reason never to entrust them with another child. After all, there were a limited number of women who had the ability to breastfeed the foundlings and without their services the infants had no chance of survival at all.

Despite the oligopoly that wet-nurses had on feeding infants thanks to their biological circumstances, their services were not remunerated excessively well, at least not to feed foundlings and not until the 1340s. (Tab. 3) In the 1330s, a woman would have to be employed in agricultural activities between three and nine days to earn as much as a wet-nurse did for a month's service. In the 1340s, it would take between seven and thirteen days to earn the equivalent of a wet-nurse. Immediately after the plague, although wages in all sectors surged, the increase in fees for wet-nurses by far surpassed the gains for workers in other sectors. After the plague, women would have to work between thirteen and twenty days in agricultural labour to make the equivalent of the monthly fee for wet-nurses. Breastmilk was clearly at a premium after the Black Death, and wet-nurses were paid well to provide it, even to orphans. Caley McCarthy argued that that wet-nurses hired by the hospital were performing this service in part to fulfil a moral or civic duty (McCarthy 2019, 63-64). If that is true, the value of this *social currency* declined dramatically relative to cash in the aftermath of the Black Death.

The remuneration of the women hired by the hospital to breastfeed infants was invariably in cash. Though the amount of the fee increased dramatically after the Black Death, the fact that it was settled in cash was not affected. In the central ordinance of September 1348, these women are referred to as *bajule seu puerorum nutrices* and were to receive *pro salario* £6 per year. (Braid 2003, 479) This salary was 2.4 to 3 times more than what was specified for the other kinds of female domestic servants, though it is not clear whether or not these wet-nurses were also to be fed and housed in addition to their salary. The legal salary for wet-nurses was exactly the same as the one indicated in the ordinance for male agricultural servants (oxherd, muleteer, full-time bakers and other annual *mercenarii*). It is therefore likely that the ordinance considered that all the male servants were housed, fed and clothed, as well as the female domestic servants, thereby significantly increasing their net annual income, but not the wet-nurses. Although wet-nurses could live inside the home with the family who hired them (Michaud 2016, 140), it is clear in the case of the foundlings that, unless

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<sup>14</sup> Arch. dép. BdR, 1HD E7, f. 28.

otherwise specified, these women lived outside the hospital. Nor did the hospital offer wet-nurses any other form of remuneration. Indeed, the only payment in kind to a wet-nurse recorded seems to be when the hospital hired a live-in nurse.

Tab. 3. Fees for nursing compared to day wages of female agricultural labourers

Year	Wet-nurse monthly fee (d.)	Female labourer wage		Equivalent days	
		min (d.)	max (d.)	max	min
1330-1331	60	7	20	8.6	3.0
1338-1339	60	7	16	8.6	3.8
1342-1343	100	8	14	12.5	7.1
1349-1350	320	24	24	13.3	13.3
1353-1354	320	20	24	16.0	13.3
1363-1364	400	20	32	20.0	12.5

Source: 1 HD E 2, 7, 11, 13, 71, 78.

In 1330, a woman working in agricultural labour for 7d per day would have to work 8.6 days to earn the equivalent of a wet-nurse's monthly fees that year. In 1349, a woman doing the same task was paid 24d, but would have to work 13.3 days to earn the fees wet-nurses earned. By 1363, the same agricultural task was paid only 20d per day, while wet-nurses' fees continued to increase making it necessary for a female labourer to work up to 20 days per month to earn what wet-nurses were making.

The case of live-in nurses reveals not only certain payments in kind for their services, but also the fact that their services were generally provided by volunteer staff. In March 1349, immediately after the Black Death, Alazas Barbarina was hired to feed the children at the hospital, rather than in her own home. For her services, she was to receive only £12 per year, which, although significantly higher than the fees paid to either the doctor or barber, was 25% less than what the other wet-nurses received that year to work from home, so it would appear that food and housing were deducted from her fees. Alazas received her first instalment of £3 4s after almost two months of service, and another 16s after that. In August, she was paid in clothing (*li paguem en rauba*) worth £1 15s, which was also deducted from her pay. She remained in service for six months and was paid the remaining 5s in cash.<sup>15</sup> This case of payment in kind to a wet-nurse was exceptional. Her replacement, Laura Folquanesa, seems to have been paid only in cash.<sup>16</sup> In addition to her wages in cash and kind, Alazas was also able to procure a job as servant at the hospital for her son, Peiron Farant, that same year. The connection with the hospital which led to her son's employment may have been the real reason she accepted a lower rate of pay than the other wet-nurses working from home. Indeed, in 1339, another nurse, Gaufreza, had been hired to live in the hospital to feed abandoned children (*la qual mesem en l'espital per noiri et sostenir los enfantz gitaž*) at a rate of £5 per year, or 8s 4d per month.

<sup>15</sup> Arch. dép. BdR, 1HD E10, p. 74.

<sup>16</sup> Arch. dép. BdR, 1HD E73, f. 58.



As this amount was significantly more than all of the other nurses working from home that year, food and housing clearly were not deducted from her pay.<sup>17</sup> Alazas's full reward, therefore, may be seen as including a certain component of social currency which cannot be clearly expressed in the accounts. Most years, however, no woman was hired to take care of the children who were housed by the hospital. Live-in nurses were only hired when there were too many orphans relative to the number of sisters. All other years, these valuable services were provided by volunteer staff, rewarded almost exclusively in social currency, thus greatly reducing the operating costs of the hospital. The volunteer staff of the hospital, however, were not physically able to breastfeed the infants so the hospital had to pay external wet-nurses, always in cash.

#### 4. Agricultural and domestic servants

If payment in kind was extremely exceptional for wet-nurses, for male servants it was the norm. In order to provide a steady flow of funds to finance its operations (hiring doctors and wet-nurses, purchasing food and clothing, repairing the building, etc.), the hospital held various properties, some of which it rented out for money, others it exploited directly. To work this land, but also to help out with various chores in the hospital, a team of about ten men were hired on annual contracts each year - no women other than wet-nurses were hired on a long-term contract.<sup>18</sup> Brief summaries of the agreements reached with these men are indicated along with those for the doctor, barber and wet-nurses. One man was specifically in charge of the mules (*mulatier, menar las bestias*), another in charge of the pigs (*porquier*), and another was often in charge of collecting donations (*quistan, far la quista*). One year, one young man was hired to do this and carry water (*far la quista e portar aigua*). Most, however, were hired on very vague terms concerning what they were meant to do (*per far totas las fazenas dins e deforas dellespital, per far tot servize della mazon*). Some were indicated as *obrador* or *fazenador*, with no real precision about the type of service this worker was supposed perform for the hospital. Some were simply hired *per estar sains*, meaning to be a member of the household staff as opposed to one of the patients. The form of their remuneration, on the other hand, was very clear.

There was no specific term used to indicate their salary. The section in which all of these agreements were recorded was always titled *mesions de mesage* (expenses for servants). Like doctors and barbers, the muleteers sometimes received a *selari*, which was generally expressed in cash. For the other servants the accounts simply indicate that the hospital was to give the worker something (*deven li donar*) or that individual was to have it (*deu aver*). Since the exact composition of the remuneration is clearly specified, there is no need to rely on the specific term to understand how a worker was paid.

Contrary to the doctors, barbers and wet-nurses who received cash fees for their services, most long-term male employees were paid some combination of cash, cloth,

<sup>17</sup> Arch. dép. BdR, 1HD E, f. 12.

<sup>18</sup> This finding is consistent with Michaud's observations of notarial records: out of the 103 contracts for agricultural labour, none were for women (Michaud 2016, 110).

clothing and shoes. Although there is no explicit indication in these contracts, one may assume that they were generally housed and fed by the hospital as well. Indeed, when a worker left his service before the end of his contract, it is usually indicated that he fled (*sen fugi*) or left the house (*isi della mazon*), and when a worker was fired the scribe wrote that they threw him from the house (*gitem lo della mazon*). In 1338, the hospital hired Peiron lo Rasquas to serve the hospital inside and out (*dedins e deforas*) for one year. In exchange for this service, he was promised £2 10s and sheets, but it was clearly stipulated in his contract that he must provide his own shoes, clothing, food and drink (*de mangar e de beure*).<sup>19</sup> This type of mention is extremely rare in these accounts, which suggests that it was understood that servants were generally fed by the hospital. The expenses for food (*mesions de boca*) were made for all members of the household (*per sains e mallantes*) and long-term employees were sometimes referred to as *sains*. This term was not a sign of any particular status. Guilhem Guigo, for example, was hired *per estar sains* in 1343 for an annual salary of £8 (significantly more than the doctors), while Hugo was also hired *per estar sains* the same year for only £1 5s, making him one of the lowest paid employees that year. Regardless of the particular function they performed for the hospital, it may be assumed that both were part of the household and were entitled to food, lodging and healthcare services, in addition to whatever payment is stipulated in their contract. Nine out of ten notarial contracts for long-term employees, which are much more explicit than these short transcriptions of labour agreements, generally include the phrase *cum potu et cibo*, and the ones that do not probably assume it is obvious that the worker will be fed (Michaud 2016, 160-61). This is most probably also the case of all the male servants on long-term contracts with the Holy Spirit Hospital.

Virtually all of these employees received some amount of remuneration in cash as well. These wages went from a few shillings in 1330 to a few dozen pounds after the Black Death. The amount paid to employees did not simply adjust to inflation - the salaries offered to workers varied greatly in any given year. In 1342, the annual salaries offered in only cash ranged from £1 to £8. In 1348, although they all increased, they ranged from £3 to £13 12s. By 1350, the hospital was promising servants between £5 and £32. Some employees, however, were paid only in kind. In 1336, Rasquas was employed *per far fazenas della mazon* for one year and the hospital promised him shirts, trousers and shoes, but no cash. The same year, Robin Engels was to receive 2 *canas* of cloth, a shirt, trousers and shoes for his annual salary. The pig-keeper that year received the same payment in kind as Robin plus 15s in cash, while other workers also received such goods and 20s, while still others only cash. Robin was hired regularly, though not every year, over the next decade improving his income and increasing its cash component. In 1338, he received shoes and trousers worth 4s 8d, and £1 4s in cash. By 1348, he received £8, strictly in cash. Robin was probably young in 1336 and his cash wage increased as he matured. For most long-term employees, cash was almost always part of their remuneration.

Payment in kind was also usually, though not always, part of the contract. In general, cloth, clothing and shoes were explicitly stated as part of the annual salary of long-term employees. Since the amount of cloth promised was systematically 2 *canas*,

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<sup>19</sup> Arch. dép. BdR, 1 HD E7, f. 23v.

each *cana* being roughly 2 meters in length, and because they also generally received clothing, one can assume that the cloth was for the sheets of an employee who was to live in the household. Indeed, occasionally an employee may receive a small amount of cash “to make his bed” (*per far sa quama*) in lieu of the cloth. The entries recording the payment of wages, which appear just below each contract, sometimes specify the value of the payment in kind. But such mentions do not appear often enough to be able to compare the relative value of these payments among the employees, and it is dangerous to compare prices from one year to the next. Moreover, shoes and clothing can be of widely different quality and therefore value. In the central ordinance of 1348, the legal rates for shoes range from 2s 3d to 5s a pair, and different types of men’s clothing can range from 6d to 7s 6d. Entries in other parts of these registers also record purchases of shoes for members of the household, not only the employees but also the brothers and sisters living at the hospital. In the general expenses section of the register covering 1364, among purchases for oil, paper, grain, pears and the like, the hospital apparently also purchased a pair of shoes intended for the pig-keeper worth, 6s 9d, and another pair of shoes for the muleteer worth 12s, in addition to their cash wages.<sup>20</sup> In 1330, the hospital promised to pay Andrieu Arsell 15s, 2 *canas* of cloth, shirts, trousers, and shoes, but under his contract it is only indicated that he received 15s in cash.<sup>21</sup> In the same register, in the section specifically dedicated to shoe expenses, it is indicated that the footwear purchased for him was worth a total of 7s 6d. That same year, it is indicated under the contract of Jacmo Laguzat that he received in April shoes worth 4s 4d, but in the shoe section it appears that he also received other footwear worth a total of 12s.<sup>22</sup>

Payment in kind, therefore, was a highly flexible form of payment and not always precisely indicated in the records. Some scholars have observed that, thanks to this fluid and often obscure nature of payment in kind, casual labourers were increasingly remunerated in kind after cash wages were capped by law (Hatcher 1994, 2018). At the Holy Spirit Hospital of Marseille, however, only long-term staff received this form of payment and agricultural day labourers were paid in cash both before and after the Black Death. Contrary to what is observed in England, reliance on cash payment of servants’ wages actually seems to increase after the Black Death. If shoes remain a regular component of servants’ wages, remuneration in cloth and clothing become rare after the epidemic.

The addition of clothing, shoes and sheets in the pay package was often advantageous to the employees, but also to the employer. One may suppose that the clothing and shoes were provided so that the employee would be correctly dressed and presentable while in the service of and living at the hospital. Whereas wet-nurses and day labourers lived separately and did not represent the hospital in any way, long-term live-in servants were members of the household. Doctors and barbers did not live in the hospital and, though the fees paid by the hospital were rather low, one

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<sup>20</sup> Arch. dép. BdR, 1HD E13, ff. 51-51 v.

<sup>21</sup> Arch. dép. BdR, 1HD E2, f. 51v.

<sup>22</sup> Arch. dép. BdR, 1HD E2, ff. 25v-26, 52. Such discrepancies remind historians eager to calculate wages to track living standards over time that the account registers we rely on for such information do not always accurately or clearly record all payments to their workers.

may assume that they had sufficient means to provide for their own clothing. Christopher Dyer observed that English aristocrats supplied servants and other household members with “liveries” which identified them as belonging to a particular household (Dyer 1989, 53). It is not at all certain that the administrators provided clothing to their employees with any particular insignia that clearly identified them with the hospital, but it is not unreasonable to think that they preferred that their full-time staff be correctly fed, clothed and shod. These amenities were an alternative to a purely money wage that, at least before the Black Death, seemed to benefit both the hospital and the servants. Casual laborers belonged to a separate category of employee altogether.

## 5. Casual Labour

In addition to a team of full-time and long-term employees, the hospital had recourse to a vast array of casual labourers, both men and women, and even children. Most were hired by the day, but many were also employed by the week or for piece-work. Some entries simply indicate the type of person, the task and the number of days worked in a given week, making it difficult to determine how many people were employed and over how many days.<sup>23</sup> Some received payment for both their labour and raw materials supplied, making it impossible to estimate the value of the service provided. The labourers who had a particular skill may be indicated by their name, but most of these labourers remained anonymous, so it is difficult to track an individual's total earnings. It seems clear, however, that the vast majority of them were paid strictly in cash.

Throughout the registers, there are payments for various artisans. Tailors and cobblers received payments to repair clothing and shoes, with no indication of the time spent on such tasks. Remuneration for labour calculated in days was generally only paid to construction workers. In 1337, for example, Michael Bermon, master carpenter, received 4s per day for the five days he spent at the hospital making repairs. Another master carpenter received only 3s 6d per day for similar work and one of Michael's relatives, Bernard Bermon, stoneworker, received 3s 6d per day for repairs to the hospital for five days that same week.<sup>24</sup> Many other entries indicate that construction workers were also often paid for piece work, making the daily rate impossible to determine. Historians looking at the accounts of large construction sites in other regions have observed that building wages depended on the length of the day, increasing in summer when the days are longer. Indeed, in 1332, the building wages paid by the hospital were 36d per day between December and April, and 42d per day from May to July.<sup>25</sup> In 1337, however, this does not seem to be the case since master

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<sup>23</sup> For example, an entry such as «per far foyre la vinha xxii homes a v s viii d lome ... vi<sup>l</sup>. 4s 8d» does not mean that 22 men were employed on one day, but rather that a handful of workers were employed that week, several of whom worked a couple days, totalling 22 days of work. Although the amount the hospital paid for a day's work is given, it is possible that there may have been a bit of redistribution among the workers. Arch. dép. BdR, 1 HD E14, f. 43 v.

<sup>24</sup> Arch. dép. BdR, 1 HD E68, f. 32.

<sup>25</sup> Arch. dép. BdR, 1 HD E2.

masons were paid about 42d per day in March, less than 32d in April, and over 50d per day in September. The modifications of the central ordinance of 1348 made by the town council of Brignoles also indicated different rates for workers according to the season, but not relative to the number of hours of sunlight. Rather, the high seasons for builders were generally during the grape-harvest which was closer to the autumn equinox than the summer solstice. For certain agricultural workers in this ordinance, the period when they could receive higher wages was in the months following the winter solstice and the low season was during the months preceding it. It was thus an increase in demand for labour, rather than an increase in the number of daylight hours, that drove wages.<sup>26</sup> Regardless of the amount of the wage paid, the form of remuneration to artisans was almost invariably in cash before the Black Death. After the epidemic, however, when it was increasingly difficult to find qualified workers, the hospital would occasionally add in-kind perks to the certain worker's pay. By 1365, a local ordinance established regulations allowing construction workers to receive food and drink (*e pan e beure*) in addition to their daily wage, a provision not indicated for agricultural workers.<sup>27</sup>

Construction workers and artisans in other regions around Europe could also receive an occasional supplement in kind but did not usually receive free meals. On building sites in Gerona, employers sometimes offered wine to mark a special occasion in the building process, or perhaps to encourage a worker to accept a particularly difficult or risky task, and sometimes workers who had to come a long way were offered housing, but feeding construction workers was not a typical part of the pay package (Victor 2014, 261-262). Some large construction sites set up food stands so that workers did not have to go far for their meals and could get back to work quickly, but employers did not supply the food for free (Pinto 1984, 1991, 2014). In some account registers from the Florentine wool industry, the amount indicated was the overall value given to the worker; deductions from this amount were made when the employer provided housing, shoes or meals (Franceschi 2001, 2014). Construction workers and other artisans hired by the Holy Spirit Hospital for short periods received only cash until the 1360s when they also began to receive meals in addition to their wages.

Most of the casual labourers hired by the hospital, however, were employed to work in the vineyards and these expenses were generally kept separately in the account registers in a section entitled *vinhas e teras*. Throughout the winter, men were hired to hoe between the grapevines to expose the roots allowing them to absorb the rain (*foyre*) and also to prune the vines (*podar*), while women were hired to collect and bind the vine shoots (*liar vitz*).<sup>28</sup> In the spring time, men were employed to cover up the roots to protect them from the sun (*reclaire*) while women were hired to pull weeds (*selclar*).<sup>29</sup> In about early September, women were hired to pick-grapes. Other workers were hired to supply extra animals during the harvest season, but the rates

<sup>26</sup> A similar situation can be found in other regions around Europe (Braid 2003, 459-61).

<sup>27</sup> Arch. com. de Marseille., BB25, f. 54.

<sup>28</sup> These vine shoots could be sold but were probably mostly used as fuel for the hospital since there are no significant payments for firewood or for anyone to cut wood for this purpose.

<sup>29</sup> For a detailed explanation of these various agricultural chores, see Coulet 1988, 151-80.

indicated clearly cover the rental of the animal rather than simply the wage of the man steering them. The long-term servants no doubt accompanied these casual labourers throughout the year in the various tasks, but since they were paid an annual salary, their numerous and varied contributions do not appear separately.

Men were hired in much greater numbers than women, and most tasks were gender specific, though there were exceptions. In 1350, for example, men were hired to bind vine shoots rather than women and received a significantly lower wage than the other men who pruned and hoed that year (30d rather than 60d), but still received more than female grape-pickers the previous September (24d), or female binders a few years later (24d). Boys or adolescents (*guasons*, *mendics*) were also occasionally employed to do various tasks usually assigned to women and were paid a comparable wage. In 1331, for some reason, the hospital employed mostly *guasons* and *mendics* to bind the vine shoots and paid them slightly more than women for the same task and about half the wage given to men for pruning and hoeing.<sup>30</sup> But young men and boys were not systematically performing women's work at lower wages. In October 1331, for example, one *mendic* received exactly the same daily wage as the men employed that week to help repair the walls of a vineyard.<sup>31</sup> The amount of wages seems to depend more on the type of work performed than on the person performing it. In 1331, men were only paid 15d per day to repair the walls in a vineyard in October, and 22d to hoe in the spring, while boys stomping grapes in September received 2s. Women generally received twice as much to bind oats and other grains than to bind vine shoots or even to pick grapes. Although women occupied a position in society that was inferior to that of men's during the Middle Ages, their wages reflected primarily the perceived utility of the work they performed. Indeed, the hospital paid significantly more to hire a mule for a day than to employ the most qualified artisan.<sup>32</sup> Regardless of the amount they received, it is quite clear that they received only cash for their labour.

One could imagine that casual labourers received meals in addition to their cash wage, as it was the case in other regions, but this does not seem to be supported by the evidence in the account registers in Marseille. There is no clear correlation between peaks in food payments and peaks in hiring. Payments for food by the hospital increased dramatically the week before Christmas (except in 1347 when the plague had just entered the city limiting festivities), and troughed systematically during lent, highlighting the household's observance of religious practices. When the number of casual day labourers hired by the hospital was highest expenses on food stayed stable. When the peak hiring season corresponded with Lent, the expenses for food still dropped as in any other year. There is no indication in the food expenditures or the labour expenditures sections that food was being systematically purchased to feed casual workers.

<sup>30</sup> Arch. dép. BdR, 1 HD E2, section *Vinbas e teras*.

<sup>31</sup> Arch. dép. BdR, 1 HD E2, f. 62.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas Aquinas makes a clear distinction between market value and spiritual value by pointing out that horses fetch a higher price than slaves on the market, though they are clearly less valued in God's eyes. He concludes that market value is proportionate to the *utilitate* people get from a service, not from the status of the person providing it. (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, 77, 2 ad. 3).

There are a few entries, however, which demonstrate that food was occasionally offered to certain agricultural workers. In 1364, the hospital paid 1s 4d for white bread for the winnowers, in addition to their cash wage of 11s 2d, thereby increasing their overall income by 12%.<sup>33</sup> Meals (*vianda*) worth 18s 1d were given to other workers who ground grain under the hooves of their animals (*calcadors*) and wine worth 1s was offered to porters. Because the daily wage of these workers is not clearly specified, it is impossible to understand how these perks affected their overall remuneration. It is simply important here to point out that such payments in kind were possible and were registered in the accounts, but they were exceptional.

Sometimes it is clearly indicated that a worker was invited to the table of the hospital (*e dem li la vianda de lostal*), and in those cases the cash wage offered was significantly below the average. In 1349, for example, in addition to the many other workers hired to prune vines, two men were hired for the same task who were fed by the hospital, one for nineteen days and the other for three. The first was paid 24d per day and the second on 20d per day, thus less than half the rate which was paid to all other workers for this type of task that year.<sup>34</sup> Another man was employed for four days in 1364, ate his meals at the hospital, and was paid only 20d per day in cash for his labour, just one-third the daily rate for any male worker that year (roughly 5s).<sup>35</sup> If we can assume that they were normally qualified workers and should have been able to receive an average wage, taking their meals at the hospital cost them roughly one-half to two-thirds of what they would have received in cash. The fact that such a high proportion of a labourer's wages was dedicated to his own food that day, it seems highly unlikely that they would have been able to support his wife, much less a family, unless she as well worked, thus underscoring the importance of female wage-earning in the pre-industrial economy (Humphries and Weisdorf 2015). In any case, it is quite clear that when day laborers were fed, or offered some other perk, it was written in the accounts and deducted from the cash wage.

Local regulations in the region seem to suggest that payment in cash for casual labour was the norm. The central ordinance of 1348 indicates almost no remuneration in kind and mentions nothing about meals, and the amendments made to this legislation by the town of Brignoles only indicated payment in kind for a few long-term servants; all day rates in this legislation are expressed in cash only. Some local authorities observed that workers attempted to avoid legislation capping wages by demanding various types of perks in addition to their cash wage. During the plague, the town of Sisteron set the wages of day labourers and dispatched workers around the area according to where they were needed most; shortly afterwards, the town officials observed that workers had begun demanding meals in addition to their wages and forbade such supplements.<sup>36</sup> Some workers desired extra leisure time. City official in Aix regulated the workday after the Black Death, requiring agricultural workers to work from sun-up to sun-down as they did before the plague.<sup>37</sup> After

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<sup>33</sup> Arch. dép. BdR, 1 HD E13, f. 88 v.

<sup>34</sup> Arch. dép. BdR, 1 HD E10.

<sup>35</sup> Arch. dép. BdR, 1 HD E13, f. 90 v.

<sup>36</sup> Arch. com. de Sisteron, BB 10 (9 March 1348), BB 81 (23 April 1351).

<sup>37</sup> Arch. com. d'Aix, BB 28, f. 17.

capping wages again in 1366, city officials of Sisteron noticed that workers were reducing their work hours and had to regulate those as well.<sup>38</sup> Similar problems can be observed in other regions around Europe (Braid 2003).

The local regulations controlling the labour market established by the municipal council of Marseille focus primarily on casual agricultural labourers and the remuneration for their services is only indicated in cash. Just after the plague, the city council not only capped wages, but regulated worker mobility, limited the numbers of workers an employer could hire, organized how workers would be dispatched around the territory and stipulated on which days labourers had to work for wages.<sup>39</sup> After the second wave of plague hit the city in 1361, officials again passed a series of similar measures.<sup>40</sup> In an ordinance regulating prices and wages established in December 1365, the city council published an extensive list of wages and fees workers could charge; whereas construction workers could receive food and drink, all of the agricultural wages were expressed solely in cash.<sup>41</sup> Although workers' demands for higher salaries lead local officials to cap wages of agricultural and other workers regularly in the second half of the fourteenth century, demanding payment in kind to increase their earnings does not seem to be an issue in Marseille.

Medieval scholars of other regions have observed regular food payments to casual agricultural labourers on seignorial manors (Thorold Rogers 1886, Bois 1976). Some have noticed a marked increase in such payments after the Black Death, lending credence to the observations of contemporaries about the demands of workers in order to circumvent the laws capping their cash wages. (Hatcher 1994, 2018). Others, however, have noticed that payments of food and other amenities seem to disappear from the accounts around the middle of the fourteenth century (La Roncière 1982). Similar to the fees received by wet-nurses and contrary to salaries of long-term agricultural servants, although they could occasionally receive some type of perk after the Black Death in addition to their wages or meals in lieu of their wages, agricultural day labourers were paid by the Holy Spirit Hospital in Marseille almost exclusively in cash throughout this period.

## 6. Non-remunerated services

As is often the case in history, the most important information comes by interpreting what is not explicitly revealed in the documents, rather than what is stated. There is no mention in these registers, for example, of payments for some of the most basic services without which the hospital could not function. No cooking staff was hired, no fees were paid for cleaners, no money was spent on laundry. Although it is possible that the male servants may have helped with some of these tasks, because these chores were typically performed by females in the Middle Ages, one can assume that they were taken care of primarily by the sisters of the hospital who appear

<sup>38</sup> Arch. com. de Sisteron, Livre Vert, f. 47.

<sup>39</sup> Arch. com. de Marseille, BB 20, ff. 36, 39 v, 55, 61, 63 v., 107, 147, 153.

<sup>40</sup> Arch. com. de Marseille, BB 24, f. 205, BB 25, f. 54 - 55.

<sup>41</sup> Arch. com. de Marseille, BB 25, f. 54.



only fleetingly, and often anonymously, when the hospital provides them with shoes or clothing. The sums paid for these amenities are not clearly higher than for any other of the paid employees who are also part of the household and who were also paid cash. The inventories of the rooms they occupied reveal rather monastic living conditions. One can also well imagine the energy and effort that was put into running this hospital which could take care of up to 80 patients at any given time, buried the ones who did not survive, found women who were willing to breastfeed abandoned infants, fed, clothed and looked after the other orphans, organized a permanent staff of a handful of long-term employees, managed the work of scores of casual labourers throughout the year, organized the sale of the produce of the hospital's property, and managed the accounts. Although these individuals appear only tangentially in the accounts, not as direct recipients of payment but acting as intermediaries for a payment of some kind, most are found there over a period of many years, indicating long-term dedication and service to the community. The brothers and sisters were not clerics, though they took vows of obedience and poverty. They did not take vows of chastity and several of them lived martially with other brothers and sisters. In addition, there are a number of individuals who appear regularly managing the affairs of the hospital who are not referred to as brother, sister or *donat*, indicating that there were numerous other volunteers. Whether they were life-long members of the household or simply regular volunteers, these were people who performed incredibly valuable services for the community in exchange for no tangible form of remuneration.

Rather than any monetary or material reward in exchange for their services, the Holy Spirit Hospital of Marseille was able to offer these volunteers *social currency*. Various approaches to social capital have developed since the 1980s. Like economic and cultural capital, Pierre Bourdieu identifies social capital as a personal possession, unequally distributed among individuals, which improves one's relative power in society, but his concept of social capital focuses on the institutions that are deliberately created to bestow advantages on certain individuals relative to others and to reproduce these social inequalities (Bourdieu 1986, Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992). Bourdieu's is thus a zero-sum or beggar-thy-neighbour concept of social capital. Robert Putnam, on the other hand, considers social capital as a common good, or a characteristic of society, which leads to positive outcomes for all. Trust among members of a community reduces transaction costs and allows individuals to operate efficiently leading to economic development (Putnam 1995, 2000). It must be remarked, however, that such a conception creates a clear insider-outsider dilemma reducing the capability of individuals who are not members of the group to access the same advantages. Based on rational choice theory, James Coleman addresses both the individual as well as the collective aspects by examining how individuals operate within a particular social structure in their own self-interest, responding to social obligations and expectations, acting with a set of social norms and benefiting from a network of information channels (Coleman 1988). Glaeser et al. approach social capital from the standpoint of an investment strategy in which an individual's decisions can lead to an accumulation or a loss of social capital, analysing how age, occupation, mobility,

skills and even homeownership affect one's stock of social capital (Glaeser 2002). Contrary to Bourdieu's underlying assumption that social capital is inherited and reproduced, in a sort of rent-seeking manner, and Putnam's analysis which describes social capital as a type of infrastructure favouring economic and social development, Glaeser allows for human agency in the accumulation of social capital. Assuming that certain actions tend to increase one's stock of social capital, depending greatly on the precise historical context, one may consider that services rendered in order to increase social capital were remunerated with *social currency*.

Although one may be born with a certain degree of social capital thanks to family relations, geographic location, and even racial bias, it is possible to increase or decrease one's social capital stock through a number of actions. Participating in charity events, organizing social gatherings, doing favours for neighbours, etc., which are beneficial to others and the community, are also ways to improve one's total stock of social capital. Each addition to this stock may be considered a form of *social currency*. Generally social currency is offered in lieu of other forms of remuneration. Charging a neighbour a fee to borrow one's ladder, for example, would eradicate all the potential social currency one could have otherwise obtained. As the value of financial assets can be eroded by inflation if there is no return on the investment, and productive capital may depreciate with use unless it is repaired and parts replaced, and human capital diminish with time unless workers practice old skills and learn new ones better adapted to the technological environment, the value of social capital can decline in time if not regularly replenished with the addition of fresh social currency. Although precise measurements of social capital and currency are difficult, by comparing the remuneration of different individuals performing services at the same institution it is possible to observe the high value certain people place on social currency relative to other forms of currency.

As concerns the Holy Spirit Hospital of Marseille, it is clear that many services were being rendered for social currency rather than any other form of remuneration. Doctors could have chosen to perform agricultural work for the hospital and earned more than what they gained through their fees, but still chose to perform services as a qualified professional. One could suggest that manual labourers were receiving a premium for getting their hands dirty, but it is more reasonable to argue that the difference between labourers' wages and doctors' fees constitute a form of social currency. The doctor's social standing is maintained by not having to get his hands dirty and, more importantly, by providing a valuable service to his community for a nominal monetary fee. The many volunteers who took care of the sick and the orphans and managed the affairs of the hospital, receiving only clothing and food for their services, also received a form of social currency. They were considered brothers and sisters of the hospital and remained in service for years. In return for their loyalty and service, they received only food, clothing, shelter and healthcare services like any other member of the household (servants and patients alike), but they received no other tangible form of remuneration. Rather than receive payment in cash like normal employees, they received social currency for their very valuable services.

Once accumulated, as other scholars have pointed out, this social capital could be cashed-in to procure favours to advance one's personal wealth or material well-being. But it could also be used simply to enhance one's social standing in a community, secure more favourable conditions in the afterlife, or simply provide an individual with a feeling of fulfilment experienced when helping fellow human beings. Because the sense of belonging to this community that they derived from their service was more valuable to volunteers than a cash remuneration, the hospital was able to significantly reduce its operating costs. When the volunteer in charge of keeping the accounts died during the Black Death, a professional scribe had to be hired for the significant annual fee of £10. Some years, the hospital did not have enough volunteers to take care of the children, so it hired live-in nurses for a salary worth between £5 and £12. If doctors charged for their services the same daily rate as agricultural labourers, their annual salaries would have to be multiplied by between four and twelve times what the hospital was actually paying them. In most cases, however, it is impossible to measure directly the relative value of this social currency that was being paid to volunteers for their services. It is necessary to recognize, however, its importance in the operations of the institution. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine how the hospital would have managed were it necessary to compensate these people to the full extent of their contribution to the community with some financial or material reward.

As social capital helps to reduce transaction costs by increasing trust among members of a community, social currency can reduce labour costs for certain institutions which fulfil a particular social function. The hospital's social utility could be leveraged to motivate individuals to provide services at below market rates or even for free, which they probably would not do for a private household other than their own. Such social currency, however, is less valuable for some people who were primarily motivated by money or some material reward, in particular those who needed to work for wages to support themselves or to provide for a family. These are the services which are primarily recorded in the registers, though it is possible to infer the existence of other valuable services for which no fees were paid. If the hospital had to remunerate every individual who performed a service with some form of financial or material reward, to the full extent of the market value of that service, there would have been no hospital at all and no one to care for the sick people and orphans of the city.

## 7. Conclusion

Jean-Baptiste Say argued that products are ultimately exchanged for other products and that currency merely facilitated this exchange. An examination of the accounts of the Holy Spirit Hospital of Marseille, however, suggests that the method of payment for services (cash wage, remuneration in kind or social currency) held particular importance in the relationship between the hospital and its employees and staff. The main distinction among individuals providing services for the hospital

seems to lie in whether or not they were members of the household and lived under the hospital's roof. Agricultural and domestic servants hired on annual contracts usually had payments of sheets, clothing and shoes stipulated in their contract, and it is clear that they also received food, shelter and healthcare benefits from the doctor and barber employed by hospital. Due to the long-term nature of the relationship between the hospital and these employees, it was important to ensure that all of them were properly taken care of. Most of these employees also received cash, and certain long-term servants could receive their remuneration exclusively in cash. Those employees who lived outside of the hospital (casual labourers, wet-nurses, doctors, barbers) almost invariably received remuneration in cash for their services, with occasional substitutions of clothing or cloth, or perhaps exceptional in-kind perks such as food or wine. Contrary to the situation in other regions, the form of remuneration does not seem to have changed after labour legislation capped money wages. The only category of worker who, starting in the 1360s, began to receive meals in addition to their cash wage were construction workers.

More importantly, there were many members of the household, the sisters, brothers and other administrators, who provided valuable services for which they received no cash at all. These men and women received food, shoes and clothing, but it would be difficult to argue that the value of such amenities fully compensated the contributions of these people. At the same time, other individuals, namely the patients and orphans, were the beneficiaries of these services for which they provided no payment, though the hospital was entitled to their clothing if they died which was often sold to fund the operations of the hospital. Others, while never providing nor benefiting from any service, gave large donations of land or cash to help the hospital fulfil its mission. The volunteer staff of this hospital, and many other institutions like it, in exchange for providing incredibly valuable services to the community, though they received no remuneration per se, received a form of reward they valued more highly: social currency. Doctors and barbers received a small financial compensation for their services which was well below what one might expect for their level of skill, and wet-nurses provided an essential service to the community for a relatively low sum when compared to other forms of paid labour. The difference between the market rate and what one was willing to accept from the hospital, one can assume, was remunerated in social currency. After the Black Death, however, the fees paid to wet-nurses rose dramatically relative to wages for other forms of service, and healthcare professionals no longer accepted to commit themselves to annual agreements with the hospital for a small fee as they had before. It would seem that the value of social currency dropped significantly after the epidemic.

Although sociologists and economists have attempted to measure how social capital is used to increase one's wealth or improve one's material well-being, much of the social currency gained from performing volunteer services was used to improve one's social standing, fulfil one's civic and spiritual duties, and procure a feeling of belonging to a community or of being useful by helping fellow human beings. As is often the case in the world today, because they were not directly remunerated for these services in anything for which a monetary value could be assigned, the incredible contribution to society provided by these women and men almost goes unnoticed. It is only recently that economists have begun to attempt to evaluate the unpaid

contributions to households and society made by housewives, grandparents, volunteers and other unremunerated individuals. Such contributions escape quantitative analysis which focus on financial rewards yet are a key element of well-being and development. (Fukuyama 2001) It is only appropriate that historians take such valuable contributions into account when assessing the development of the medieval economy, rather than simply those services for which fees were paid or goods given in exchange. As Aristotle very clearly pointed out over two millennia ago, real economic development, based on the well-being of the individuals in society, may be facilitated by the use of money, but depends on much more.

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## 1. Introduction

The privilege of the lord to demand servile works from his subjects is often considered one of the hallmarks of lordship in the past.<sup>1</sup> The right to such *corvées* is often portrayed as a form of pure surplus extraction from which no other party except the lord benefited. In theory, the rights of the lord to command such works lasted until the end of the Ancien Régime. In the southern Low Countries, servile works were officially abolished in 1795 when French revolutionary legislation was implemented. However, many historians have shown that during the late middle ages the power of the lord to command such works had already weakened substantially. In the early modern period, only a minority of lords could still command free labour from their subjects. By the late medieval period, the labour market was freed from any feudal or seigniorial constraints (de Vries 1992, 56). A survey executed in the Duchy of Brabant in 1753, for example, shows that only seven percent of the seigneuries could claim servile works. At that time, servile works had become the exception and only a small minority of the population was subject to labour services (Scheelings 1990, 197-99). Therefore, the economic importance of servile labour during the late medieval and early modern period was probably negligible. There are many reasons why the right to servile works of the lords weakened during the late middle ages. When lords progressively abandoned direct exploitation of their demesnes, such servile works became useless. Also, there are many indications that the quality and speed of the work executed by seigneurial subjects was inferior to waged labour. The right of the lord to command such works was also increasingly curtailed by territorial rulers and states. In the second half of the fourteenth century, the count of Flanders actively halted aggressive lords who tried to impose or extend seigneurial rights (De Waele 2022). With particular reference to labour services the duke of Brabant enacted restrictions at the start of the fifteenth century (Willems 1843, 720-21). Next to these general measures, territorial rulers also intervened in local conflicts to protect peasantries from aggressive lords trying to extort free labour from their subjects. In 1431, for example, Philip the Good forbade the lord of Valkenburg to exact labour services from the inhabitants of Oud-Valkenburg (Janssen de Limpens 1977, 635-36). As in early modern France, the central government in the Southern Low Countries also shielded rural communities from

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this chapter, the terms ‘labour services’ and ‘(servile) works’ are used interchangeably.

heavy labour services imposed by local lords (for France see Gransagne 2015). In the second half of the seventeenth century in particular, the central government of the Spanish Netherlands intervened to limit the exactions of lords. The possession of a seignery as such did not entitle lords to labour services. Servile works could only be demanded if they were included in the description of the seignery (Reglement 1672, art. 54). An instruction from 1700 even stated that only lords that possessed specific legal titles relating to labour services could command such works.<sup>2</sup> Such state interventions limited the options of the lord to demand labour services.

This paper does not dispute the claim that labour services were gradually eroded and even disappeared in most seigneuries during the late medieval and early modern period in the Southern Low Countries. However, in some seigneuries servile works persisted until the end of the eighteenth century. Lords aiming to safeguard their claim to servile works were obliged to maintain an impeccable administration of those customary services. This diligent record-keeping has resulted in the preservation of exceptional archival material. In this paper we turn our attention to a number of well-documented lordships where peasantries continued to execute servile works for the lord. As we will show, labour services in such communities survived because they were compensated by the lord. Peasantries agreed to work for the lord because they were remunerated for their work. By way of close reading of manorial customs and descriptions of lordly rights we are able to reconstruct these compensation mechanisms in some detail. Documentary sources such as manorial customs frequently record the rights of the lord in some detail. Such descriptions indicate that many lordly rights had been subject to negotiation and even compensation. For example, on certain days of the year, the inhabitants of Rahier had to hand over the morning milk produced by their cows. In exchange for the produce of their cows, the subjects of the lord of Rahier obtained the right to fish (with their hands or equipped with rods) in the water streams of the seignery (Poncelet et. al. 1958, 281). This type of contractual exchange was typical of late medieval seigneuries. The lord received part of the produce of the peasantries and in exchange offered them use rights on his private properties. As we will show, the performance of servile works was often embedded in similar exchanges.

The Belgian historian Léo Verriest concluded that labour services in late medieval and early modern Hainaut constituted an unpleasant burden imposed by the lordly class on the rural population (Verriest 1917, 228). He based this conclusion on a number of well-documented conflicts between lords and peasantries. To a large extent, such a view is shaped by the available documentation. The archival paper trail of peasants refusing to perform labour services is more elaborate than those faithfully meeting the labour demands of their lords. Resistance and refusal by peasantries are often much better documented than compliance and obedience. An analysis of the customs offers a more nuanced and representative picture of peasant-lord relations in the past. Customs were the result and outcome of a bargaining process between lords and their subjects. Customs listed and described the rights and obligations of both lords and peasantries and therefore constitute the best source to reconstruct the realities of their relationship in the past. In this paper, we use the rich and detailed

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<sup>2</sup> State Archives Ghent (SAG), *Collection Varia II*, nr. 263: fol. 419r-v.

information embedded in the customs to reconstruct the relation between lords and peasantries through the lens of labour services. In the first section of the paper, we discuss the options of the rural populations to escape servile works by way of commutation. The second section of the paper focuses on the limitations imposed by custom on the mobilization and execution of servile works. The third part of the paper analyses the various ways through which seigneurial subjects were compensated and remunerated by their lords for the labour they supplied<sup>3</sup>.

## 2. Commutation of servile works

During the late middle ages, the type of services as well as the work volume a lord could claim from his subjects was restricted. In most lordships, households owed the lord less than five days of work per annum or a specified work volume (such as mowing a meadow). The type of work subjects of the lord were required to execute could vary. In most cases, the works related to mowing grass or spreading manure on demesne land, sometimes supplemented with transport services to haul peat or firewood. The works were often divided between those inhabitants that possessed horses and carts and those who could only perform manual labour (Lambrecht 2019; Verriest 1917). The former were primarily mobilized to perform transport and carting services, whereas the latter engaged in a variety of tasks. In the south of Belgium in particular, transporting stones from the lord's quarry can be encountered in a number of customs. Exceptionally, lords used their labour services to fish their ponds (Poncelet et. at. 1958, 81) or to assist him during the hunting season (Génicot and Allard 1981, 593). The customs of Wanne from 1464 include the infamous peasant obligation to stir the ponds when the local lord (in this case the abbot of Stavelot) resided in the village. Stirring the pond disturbed and silenced the croaking frogs that would otherwise disturb the night's rest of the abbot of Stavelot (Poncelet, Yans and Hansotte 1958, 370).<sup>4</sup>

By the late middle ages, labour services in the majority of seigneuries could be converted to payment in cash. In many descriptions of labour services, the specific rates charged by the lord were also recorded. The reference to specific rates charged by lords to redeem labour services is not without significance because it meant that peasantries were offered the choice between either the execution of works or the payment of a redemption fee. In most cases, the commutation fee paid by each household was determined by their social and economic background and the type of work they had to perform for the lord. Those who owed work with their horses were constantly charged higher redemption fees compared to labourers, although the differences could be small. The customs of Ogy and Isières from 1234 record a redemption fee of 5 *denari* for a common labourer whereas a four-horse team had to be acquitted for the sum of 18 *denari* (Cauchies and Thomas 2005, 384). On one of

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<sup>3</sup> In this paper, we use the terms «compensation» and «remuneration» in the specific context of labour services: goods, services and/or rights provided by the lord in direct exchange for corvée labour, but in a non-wage labour market context.

<sup>4</sup> This particular labour service did not extend to all inhabitants of the seignery, but was restricted to the owners of specific plots of land listed in the customs.

the estates of the abbey of Lobbes horse-owners and labourers paid nine and six *denari* respectively to redeem one of their works (Génicot and Allard 1968, 443). In the seignury of Kalken, labourers and horse owners could redeem their works owed to the lord for 2 and 3 *groten* respectively (De Potter and Broeckaert 1889, 19). The social and economic background of the inhabitants, and the possession of horses in particular, usually determined the fee. An exception to this rule is found in Lorcé where the customs of 1506 made a distinction between men and women. Here, women were charged half the redemption fee of a man (Poncelet at. Al. 1958, 179). The decision to pay the fee or execute the work resided usually with the peasantry. In Ragnies, the inhabitants could decide on the day if they preferred to perform the labour service or redeem their works by way of a monetary compensation (Génicot and Allard 1981, 684).

In addition to the yearly and individual payment of fees, there were other ways how labour rents were commuted into cash. Commutations could be temporary or permanent, apply to a collectivity or individual and financed by recurrent or one-off payments. The charter granted by a lord from Hainaut to the inhabitants of his seignury in 1338 constitutes an interesting example of the permanent and collective commutation of labour services obtained with a one-off payment. After obtaining permission from the count of Hainaut, Wautier of Enghien freed all the inhabitants of his seignury (extending to the villages of Herne, Tollembeek and Sint-Pieters-Kapelle) from existing labour services. The nature and frequency of these works are not detailed in the document, but they applied to labourers and those who owned carts and horses. According to the lord, he liberated the inhabitants of this burden to stimulate the growth and development (*«l'accroissement et multipliances»*) of these settlements. However, the noble intentions of the lord for his seignury came at a price. In return for the permanent and collective abolishment of labour services, the inhabitants of the seignury had paid Wautier the hefty amount of 300 lb. *tournois* (Cauchies and Thomas 2005, 244-46). In this particular case, the local population agreed to buy off the right of the lord to claim labour services in perpetuity. From the perspective of the lord, such a permanent commutation financed by a one-off sum could be an interesting proposal. If the labour services had little economic value to the lord or, perhaps more relevant in this case - if a lord urgently needed cash - the commutation was an attractive proposal. The outcome of this transaction was a weakened seignury, but on the other hand this lord had successfully transformed his annual labour rent into capital that could be deployed elsewhere.

However, in most cases lords did not transform labour rent into capital, but to money rent. Such commutations could have a permanent character and apply to individual holdings (and subsequently to the households who leased or exploited these holdings). For example, an estate owned by the leprosy of Geraardsbergen located within the seignury of Boelare was exempted from labour services in 1404. The lord of Boelare commuted this labour rent owed by the estate of the leprosy into an annual money rent of 3 lb. *parisis* payable at Christmas (De Portemont 1870: 281). The conversion of labour rent into money rent could also have a temporary and collective character. As late as 1666, the inhabitants of a seignury located in the parishes of Michelbeke and Sint-Maria-Oudenhove agreed to pay the lord an annual fee of 80 guilders for the duration of three years. In exchange for this fee, the lord

renounced all his rights to labour services for a period of three years.<sup>5</sup> Finally, there are also examples of temporary and individual commutations of labour services. In 1774, the lord of Boelare offered his subjects the opportunity to commute their works into cash for a period of eighteen years. Those who owned horses could redeem their works with an annual fee of 21 stuiver per horse. Common labourers were charged 4 stuiver annually to liberate themselves from the execution of servile works.<sup>6</sup> The latter case is particularly interesting because the documentation produced by the steward of the lord not only signals the commutation of labour services well into the eighteenth century, but also sheds light on some unknown complexities concerning labour services in the past. First, the notebooks of the steward make it clear that the organisation of labour services required documentary supervision and organisation. In this particular case, the steward had to keep track of individual redemption payments by one part of the population and the execution of works by another part. Such operations could result in elaborate accounts. As inhabitants of the seignury passed away or emigrated, this required adjustments in the lord's administration. Immigrants had to be registered. The works and fees owed by each individual household could also change over time as household units were merged or separated. Also, the works owed to the lord could change as a result of upward or downward social mobility. The account books of Boelare showcases the many complexities the administration of the lord could experience in keeping the labour services or redemption fees up to date. Importantly, the accounts of Boelare also indicate that the preferences among rural households to execute were far from uniform. Although we do not know the exact numbers, it is clear that not all inhabitants preferred to commute their works. Moreover, the documentation from Boelare also shows that the preferences of individual households to pay the fee or execute the works, could change over time. For example, Joseph Schollaert, owner of two horses, entered the agreement with the lord in 1774 and annually paid the redemption fee of two *guilders* and two *stuiver* until 1780. From 1781 to 1785, Schollaert preferred to execute his works. From 1786, he paid the redemption fee again. There are many other examples of individual households that switched between the performance of works and the payment of a fee. For example, after the death of her husband, a widow decided to perform the works and no longer pay the redemption fee. Pieter van der Beken was registered as a labourer and paid the redemption fee but when he came into the possession of a horse, he changed from paying the fee to executing the works, albeit briefly. All these individual cases are highly instructive because they indicate that the preferences of households to pay redemption fees or execute works could vary and were not uniform. The decision to pay or work was probably influenced by many factors such as the size and composition of the household, access to cash or income to pay the fee, the animal/land ratio on individual holdings and so on. In other words, the documentation for Boelare indicates that multiple reasons probably governed the decisions of individual households to redeem their works by way of labour or cash.

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<sup>5</sup> SAG, *Land van Zottegem*, nr. 4623.

<sup>6</sup> SAG, *Archives de Cassina*, nr. 145-146.

### 3. Executing servile works

In the event that lords and their subjects preferred to execute the works rather than commute them into cash, labour services were subject to very detailed instructions and regulations regarding their mobilization and execution. Much more than the central state legislation, the local customs sought to protect the subjects of the lord from exploitation. The many restrictions imposed by local customs on the execution of labour services reflect the relative strong position of the peasant population during the late middle ages. The customs protected the population from labour extortions by the lord in a number of ways. Documents recording local customs restricted the periods in which the lord could claim works. By the thirteenth century, the lord could not claim works during the busy harvest period. The exclusion of the harvest months indicates that pressing agricultural activities had preference over the lord's demand for helping hands on his estate (Verriest 1917). Also, the lord had to respect specific procedures and time frames when he wanted to mobilize the works owed by the inhabitants of the seigneurie. The lord had to announce the days on which he expected the works to be executed in advance. This could be done by the lord himself or his representative. In the latter case, this could be a seigneurial officer but also a tenant farmer (Janssen de Limpens 1977, 197; Gennevoise 1929: 161-2). In some cases, the local aldermen had to agree to the timing proposed by the lord for the execution of the works (Génicot and Allard 1968, 215). The fourteenth-century customs of Sébourg are exceptionally detailed in this regard as they even recorded the specific words the lord's officer had to use when claiming works owed by the local horse-owners: *«il vous convient demain venir à le coruées»* (Verriest 1946, 295). The period between the notification by the lord and the execution of works varied between seigneuries. In Lompret (1514) the time frame was rather short as the lord had to notify the inhabitants only three days in advance (Verriest 1946, 261). The lord of Donstiennes (1503) enjoyed exceptional flexibility as he could mobilize the works with only one day's notice (Génicot and Allard 1968, 215). In Heusden, on the contrary, the lord had to notify the inhabitants three weeks in advance (Havenith 1900: 343)! The customs of Trith and Maing went as far as to enumerate the specific weeks and weekdays on which the lord had to announce his works (Verriest 1946: 53-4). Failure to respect these customary procedures and time frames gave the subjects of the lord a valid reason not to execute the works. In most cases, the location where the lord announced his works was the parish church. In case of extensive seigneuries, the works were announced in multiple churches (Génicot and Allard 1981, 684). Servile works needed to be claimed each year and could not be accumulated. As is clear from the customs of Ecaillon (1451), if the lord did not claim his works, the population was exempt from labour services for that year (Gennevoise 1939, 30). The customs of Herchies and Sébourg specifically state that works unclaimed by the lord could not be accumulated or transferred to the next year (Cauchies and Thomas 2005, 225; Verriest 1946, 295). Individuals summoned by the lord could send a replacement to execute the work. Also, failure to show up for work on the designated day did not immediately result in sanctioning. Many customs, such as those from late thirteenth-century Elesmes, offered the peasantries the option to

postpone the execution of work for the lord with one day before they were sanctioned (Cauchies and Thomas 2005, 127-28).

Customs also determined the length of the working day which in most cases started with sunrise and ended at sunset (see for example Cauchies and Thomas 2005, 65). The agreement between the lord and inhabitants of the seigneurie of Herchies from 1275 stated that they should be able to return home before dark on days when they worked for the lord (Cauchies and Thomas 2005, 225). Some customs also made arrangements for adverse weather conditions and their impact on the completion of labour services. If the hay harvest was interrupted by rain in Soiron, the workers could return home. However, they were expected to resume work the next day on the exact hour they left the previous day in order to complete their day's work (Janssen de Limpens 1977, 197).

Details about the location of works were particularly important when labour services were expressed in tasks rather than days. For example, in the case of hay works, the customs and other documents frequently identify the specific meadows on which these works had to be executed. The hay works owed by the inhabitants of Herzele had to be executed on two meadows identified by their toponyms (Jansen-Sieben 1975: 8). The meadows that had to be mowed by the inhabitants of Donstiennes were simply named after the works themselves (*«les preits que l'on dit les preits de corouvées»*; see Génicot and Allard 1968, 215). Also, in the absence of toponyms, the specific meadows where the work was to be executed were recorded and described in detail (Diericx 1821, 120). In Fontaine-Valmont the customs limit the hay works to a meadow called *«le Gravière»* and explicitly mention that only on this named plot of land hay works had to be executed (*«et nient ailheurs»*, see Génicot and Allard 1968, 277; other example in Génicot and Allard 1981, 684). Such details about the locations where works had to be executed were important additions because they effectively restricted the works to specific plots of land and thereby limited the volume of work a lord could claim from his subjects.

In most cases, there was an implicit assumption that the works had to be carried out within the territory of the seigneurie. In other words, there were limitations on how far peasantries were expected to travel to execute these works. In Sébourg, the population was able to negotiate that they should be able to return to their homes before sunset from their work locations (Verriest 1946, 295). Such clauses effectively limited the distance lords could make their subjects travel to engage in servile works. The lord of Zaventem and Sterrebeek declared in 1386 that his subjects did not mind to transport his grains within a distance of 3,5 miles from the seigneurie.<sup>7</sup> Older customs, such as those for Vicq and Escautpont (1238) offered the lord more options and flexibility with respect to the deployment of servile works. In these two seigneuries, the lord was able to send his subjects outside the village to execute work and even keep them there overnight (Cauchies and Thomas 2005, 539). In most cases, however, the lord could not force his subjects to travel large distances to execute servile works.

Depending on the specific type of work that needed to be executed, the customs also contain details about the tools and equipment peasantries were expected to bring

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<sup>7</sup> State Archives Belgium (SAB), *Archives de Boisschot*, nr. 23.



along with them. Already in 1258, the customs of Covin stated that inhabitants summoned to do work at the lord's mill were expected to bring the necessary tools to execute their work («porter hostil pour besogner», see Géricot and Allard 1968, 144). In the customs of Boussu-en-Fagne (1454 and 1579), the inhabitants were required to bring the necessary tools to assist with work on the lord's mill or clean the local waterways (Géricot and Allard 1968, 50 and 52). In Fosse (1561), the widows tasked with looking after the horses and oxen that performed carting services had to be equipped with a sickle and small wooden rod to, respectively, cut green fodder and chase away the flies bothering the animals (Poncelet et. at. 1958, 80). The same set of customs also lists the equipment each worker had to bring to fish the pond of the lord (Poncelet et. at. 1958, 81).

The many details in the customs about the execution of servile works reflect the successful attempts by peasantries to limit and restrict the lord's power to extract labour rent from his subjects. By the late middle ages, seigneurial subjects agreed to work for the lord but they did so mainly on their own terms. The details enumerated in the customs, therefore, are testament to the strong bargaining position of late medieval rural populations in the Low Countries. However, the strong position of the peasantries is not only exemplified by the many restrictions imposed on the lord. The late medieval customs also indicate that in most cases, seigneurial subjects were compensated and remunerated for these servile works.

#### 4. Remuneration of labour services

One of the main characteristics of labour services in the Southern Low Countries is that those who worked for the lord were, more often than not, in some way compensated for their work. Similar forms of compensation schemes also existed in other European countries. In many French regions, for example, the lord had to provide food for his labourers and fodder for their horses or oxen (Gransagne 2015, 51-53). This compensation or remuneration could take different forms and shapes. Some forms of remuneration, such as food rations, could be claimed individually by each worker. Others, such as pasture rights, were shared by the community. In this section of the paper, we explore the variety and meaning of the various remuneration packages peasants were able to obtain from lords in exchange for their labour. Although there are many references to compensations for labour services, remuneration in cash for labour services was quite rare in the Southern Low Countries. In Donstiennes (1503) each plough team received a monetary compensation of 3 *deniers* on servile work days. The monetary compensation only extended to households with a plough team as labourers who were mowing the meadows of the lord did not receive monetary compensation (Géricot and Allard 1968, 215). In the seigneurie of Bergen op Zoom, those who transported the fuel of the lord were also given a small monetary compensation (Moll 1915, 127-28). Overall, however, customs that include monetary payment for servile work constitute a small minority. Other forms of remuneration appear more frequently in late medieval customs. This is why we make a clear distinction between seigneurial compensation

or remuneration for servile labour on the one hand, and more market oriented wage labour on the other hand.

#### 4.1 Food

The most common form of compensation for labour services consisted of food. The oldest references to food rations as remuneration for servile works date from the early thirteenth century. The customs of Salesches from 1202 state that during the three servile works executed for the abbey of Maroilles, the inhabitants would receive one meal per day (*«victum semel in die quo laboraverit ab ecclesias accepturustræ»*; Cauchies and Thomas 2005, 468). Another early example of customs with references to food rations comes from Montignies-sur-Sambre (1253). Here, the customs state that when the meadows of the lord surrounding his manor were mowed using servile works, the lord had to feed the workers (*«li sires doit doner a maingier»*; Cauchies and Thomas 2005, 372). The uniquely detailed customs of the seigneurie of Saint-Amand compiled between 1265 and 1271 state that each haymaker received a bread cake (*«mattielle»*) worth one *«maille»*. These customs explicitly mention that this food allowance was given to compensate the workers for the use of their tools (Meijers and Salverda de Grave 1934: 47). By the third quarter of the thirteenth century the description of food rations becomes quite detailed and elaborate in some customs. In the customs of Scheldewindeke (c. 1280) a distinction was made between the food rations for those who assisted during the hay harvest and those engaged in loading and spreading manure. Also, this is the oldest set of customs that contains details about the timing of the distribution of food to workers (Berten 1906, 272; for the dating see Heirbaut 1997). A distinction in food rations depending on the type of work is also recorded in the customs of Couvin from 1301 (Génicot and Allard 1968, 148). After 1200, a growing number of customs contain explicit references to food rations. Quite possibly, the provision of food by the lords during servile works was becoming more frequent in the course of the thirteenth century (Lambrecht 2019, 145). Also, the explicit refusal recorded in the customs of Vicq and Escaupont (1238) to supply food to those who performed servile works (*«en ces corowées, quant il les font, li sires ne leur doit nul despens»*; see Cauchies and Antoine 2005: 540), could suggest that the distribution of food rations had become a standard practice and common expectation by that time. In any case, after the thirteenth century, the provision of food by the lord was widespread within the Southern Low Countries. In most descriptions of labour services from the late medieval and early modern period there is an explicit reference to the provision of food by the lord or his representative. Some customs (Presles, 1405) even explicitly state that the provision of food was considered a form of payment or reward (*«redevanche»*) for the labour services (Génicot and Allard 1981, 651).

Some customs only state that the lord owed the inhabitants who executed work some compensation in food without specifying the type of food (Poncelet et. al. 1958, 104). However, as the description of labour services in Veulen stated, the food rations had to be fair (*«redelike costs»*), meaning that they should be in accordance with the

work executed or on par with what workers commonly expected when they worked (Domsta 1970, 145). Whereas most lords offered their subjects food during servile works, some restrictions also applied. For example, the estate of Bijgaarden only supplied food to the workers when the fields were manured. No compensation was provided when workers were mobilized to cut hay or dig ditches. On these days, the description from 1439 states, the workers had to work at their own cost.<sup>8</sup> In many cases, there was a distinct logic that accounted for differences in the provision of food. In general, work and activities that required more physical effort or caloric consumption were compensated with higher food rations. In Couvin, construction and repair work at the lord's mill and forestry work were compensated by a bread ration valued at four *tournois*. The men that carted the grain of the lord received only two *tournois* of bread. Next to the food ration, the number of meals could also reflect differences in physical effort. Those who were loading and spreading manure in Scheldewindeke probably burned more calories per day than those engaged in hay works. Therefore, the former were given two meals per day (noon and evening) whereas the latter only received one piece of bread at noon (Berten 1906, 272). The food rations also mirrored existing social and economic inequalities. In Fontaine-Valmont the owners of horse teams could expect the same meals as those served in the manor when they were executing their works. If they sent their servants, however, these were only entitled to 2,5 pieces of bread and a pittance of cheese (Génicot and Allard 1968, 277). Some customs adopted more rustic assessments of the quantities of bread that had to be supplied. The customs Francorchamps (1543) specified that the bread given to each labourer should have the same size as the wheel of a plough (*«ung pain de la grandeur de la rolette de l'arren»*; see Poncelet et. al. 1958, 98).

In Neufchateau, the late medieval customs not only recorded the frequency (two times per day) and type (bread and cheese) of meals, but also the exact hours when those working for the lord could expect these meals (Janssen de Limpens 1977: 305). In Boussu the customs even stipulated that the inhabitants could lawfully walk away from their work (*«raller sans plus avant faire corvées»*) if the lord failed to offer them food at the designated hours (Verriest 1917, 222). In Mont-sur-Marchienne, the mid fourteenth-century customs state that failure to supply a loaf of bread of a certain value resulted in the temporary immunity of the inhabitants to specific fines imposed by the lord (Génicot and Allard 1981: 539). The customs of Presles and Boussu-en-Fagne even contain a description of to the specific locations where the inhabitants would receive their food. In Presles (1405) this was the meadow where the works had been performed whereas in Boussu-en-Fagne (1454) a plot of grassland was designated as the customary location (Génicot and Allard 1968, 50 and 1981, 651). The attention to detail in these customs strongly suggests that the food rations were important to the subjects of the lord and had been the subject of intense negotiation.

The most detailed description of the provisioning of food by a lord during servile works was recorded by the lord of Dadizele circa 1480 (see Buylaert and Haemers 2016 for this exceptional document). The description applied in particular to the days when the inhabitants of his seigneurie assisted him in loading, carting and spreading manure on demesne land. The breakfast consisted of bread, sweet milk, butter and

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<sup>8</sup> SAB, *Archives de Boïsschot*, nr. 23.

baked tripe. At lunch, the workmen were offered bread, bacon, peas, meat, cheese and beer. When work ceased in the evening, everybody received a small piece of bread and cheese. Throughout the day, cheap beer was provided to the workmen (Kervyn de Lettenhove 1850, 143-44). Compared to other lordships, the quantity and quality of food provided by the lord of Dadizele was very copious. Also, unlike many of his contemporaries, this lord treated all categories of workers - labourers and horse owners – on an equal footing as there was no differentiation in the food rations. No wonder this lord lamented about the high costs attached to providing meals for his workmen. In the seigneurie of Herzele the annual cost of feeding the servile workers was estimated to be circa 8 lb. *parisis* in the 1470's (Lambrecht 2019, 145). This was the equivalent of circa 50 daily wages of a common labourer. The high costs attached to providing meals might have caused some lord to scale back on the food rations. This happened in Lalaing, where the daily food ration dropped from three loaves to one loaf of bread between 1300 and 1506 (Verriest 1946, 16).

In most descriptions of food rations, there are no explicit references to drink. Probably, drinks, and beer in particular, would have been included in the meals offered by the lord. The provision of wine for workers was truly exceptional and only encountered in one set of customs from the region of Stavelot. In Clotten (1521) some inhabitants owed the abbey of Stavelot the transport of eight cartloads of firewood annually. Possibly, these relatively heavy labour services were compensated by more expensive food rations. In this case, the owners of the carts were each entitled to a fixed wine ration (2,5 quarters) accompanied by cheese worth 6 *denari*. The lord, apparently, could not guarantee these rations as the customs state that if due to unforeseen circumstances only soup could be offered (in lieu of wine and cheese), they could not protest (Poncelet et. al. 1958, 41). In the region of Stavelot, there are also references to the provision of milk to young mothers. In Lorcé, women who carried their infants to the fields could interrupt servile work three times a day to suckle their children. If the mother lived close to the work site, she could even travel home three times a day to feed her child. The lord, however, also had the option to task a young girl (*'mesquine'*) with the care of the infant so the mother could work uninterrupted. In this case, the lord also had to provide the milk to feed the child (Poncelet, Yans and Hansotte 1958, 180). In the neighbouring seigniorie of Stoumont, the lord equally had to provide milk for the infant children (*'du leccéay pour repaïsse, ressaïssier ou réfectionner son enfant'*) of female workers who took their offspring to work (Poncelet, Yans and Hansotte 1958, 346).

Although most customs record the delivery of food to peasantries, some rural communities were able to extend the provision of food to their working animals. The lord of Lompriet had to supply a sack of oats to each horse that turned up for work ((Verriest 1946, 261). The customs of Fontaine-Valmont from the fourteenth century state that the lord had to provide forage to the horses in the same manner as he fed «his own horses (*'oteilz frais comme a siens'*); Génicot and Allard 1968, 277). The lord of Dadizele ensured a constant supply of hay for the horses of his subjects during servile works.

As these many examples indicate, the provision of food by the lord seems to have been a standard practices in many lordships from the late middle ages. Workers did not receive a traditional wage, but were compensated for the calories they

expended when working for the lord. The many details about the quality and quantity of the food and the timing and location of food distributions indicate that peasantries expected some compensation for the work executed for the lord. In the case no food was provided by the lord, other compensation schemes can be encountered.

## 4.2 Common resources and use rights

In June 1440 the abbey of Saint-Peter (Ghent) reached an agreement with the inhabitants of Dikkele over the execution of certain labour services, in particular the five plough works owed to the leaseholder of the abbey.<sup>9</sup> Possibly, there had been a longstanding conflict about these labour services as the leaseholder had already complained to the abbey two decades earlier about the late and substandard execution of the plough works (Thoen 1988: 473). The agreement from 1440 records how two individuals, Jan de Witte and Jan Van Haelst, had taken the lead in in the refusal to execute the plough works. Although they did not challenge the legality of these works, their arguments to withhold these works focused on the non-execution of existing customary (and non-written) arrangements. Amongst them, the abbey had failed to keep a bull and boar for communal use at their estate in Dikkele. As part of the agreement that would end the discord, the abbey agreed to supply their estate with a bull and boar that was entitled to roam throughout the community (*«gaende int ghemeene»*). This passage in the agreement from 1440 refers to a much older and widespread practice that was typically encountered in the county of Flanders. Whereas in many other regions the provision of communal male animals fell upon the owners of the tithes, in Flanders the local lord was expected to supply communal animals.

However, not all descriptions of communal animals can be explicitly linked to the execution of labour services. In the customs of Scheldewindeke, for example, the servile works and communal animals are described separately and therefore the provision of communal animals cannot be connected directly to compensation for labour services. In Zwijnaarde, the section about the communal animals is directly preceded by a description of the works owed to the lord and therefore suggests a clear link.<sup>10</sup> In the description of the seigneurie of Herzele, the provision of a bull and boar by the lord is explicitly related to the performance of servile works by all the inhabitants of the seigneurie (Jansen-Sieben 1975, 8). The description of a fief located in Merelbeke and Lemberg (1461) records that the fief holder was entitled to hay works and in exchange supplied both these communities with a bull and boar. Also, in the description of a lordship in Lede from 1430 the provision of a bull and boar by the lord is explicitly linked to servile works (De Raadt 1901, 512-13). Most of the arrangements between lords and peasants concerning the provision of male animals concerned bulls and boar. Only occasionally did these agreements also include stallions. This was the case in Zwijnaarde where the lord had to supply the unusual

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<sup>9</sup> SAG, *Abbey of Saint-Pieter (1st series)*, nr. 1701.

<sup>10</sup> SAG, *Abbey of Saint-Peter (1st series)*, nr. 1173bis.

combination of a bull, boar and stallion.<sup>11</sup> A description of a fief located in the village of Desselgem, consisting of the local office of *meier* and a farm of circa 21 hectares, records that the fief holder had to supply – upon request of the inhabitants - a stallion to inseminate the local mares (*«omme de merien te springhenes»*). In exchange for this service, the inhabitants of this fief were required to mow a number of designated meadows situated along the river Leie (Diericx 1821, 120). So, at least in some seigneuries, male reproduction animals were explicitly and directly viewed as a compensation for labour services.

The communal animals supplied by the lord (or others exerting seigneurial rights) enjoyed a specific and privileged legal status as they were not subject to the customary rules about stray animals and damage to property and crops. The communal animals, unlike most other domesticated animals, could roam the entire territory of the seigneurie without consideration for private boundaries (*«al theerscap dueren»*, see de Limburg-Stürum s.d., 198). In Zwijnaarde, the communal bull, boar and stallion were equally not restricted to the demesne of the lord but could roam the entire parish (*«al de prochie dor gaendes»*)<sup>12</sup>. The customs of Scheldewindeke state that the owner of the communal bull and boar could not be held accountable for any damage inflicted on property and crops. The inhabitants could gently chase away the bull and boar from their land if they caused damage, but were not able to constrain them physically (as was customary with other animals) or cause them any physical harm. These late thirteenth-century customs seem to suggest that the inhabitants had to bring the female animals to the location where bull and boar were present and could not lead them to their farmyards to inseminate their cows and sows (Berten 1906, 185). In the village of Wambeek, on the other hand, inhabitants could lead the communal bull and boar to their farmsteads, but had to return them to the original location once the animals finished their job. Also, whilst under their individual care, the inhabitants remained responsible for all damage caused by the bull or boar (Strubbe 1963, 272). The services provided by the communal animals were free of charge for the local population. In the description of the seigneurie of Zwijnaarde from the early fourteenth century, the lord explicitly acknowledged that he would not charge anything to his subject for making use of his bull, boar and stallion.<sup>13</sup>

Although seigneurial documents represented such communal animals sometimes as a service to the community, their presence in rural communities was often the result of negotiations about compensation for labour services. For peasantries, such form of compensation made sound economic sense. In particular for small farmers, the maintenance of male animals could be expensive as their use was mostly restricted to inseminate female animals. Male animals required fodder and space to pasture. Also, uncastrated male animals were more difficult and dangerous to manage and supervise. The provision of male animals by the lord as communal animals effectively enabled small farmers to cut costs. The male animals of the lord enabled peasantries to reproduce their livestock, but they did not have to bear the full cost of

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<sup>11</sup> SAG, *Abbey of Saint-Peter (1st series)*, nr. 1173bis.

<sup>12</sup> SAG, *Abbey of Saint-Peter (1st series)*, 1173bis.

<sup>13</sup> SAG, *Abbey of Saint-Peter (1st series)*, 1173bis.

reproduction. For the peasantries, offering limited volumes of work in exchange for continuous and free access to the lord's animals was a small price to pay.

In addition to communal animals communities bargained with their lords for access to pasture, especially in the southern parts of the Low Countries. In Lalaing the customs from 1300 state that, in exchange for the works performed by the inhabitants, the lord granted use rights in perpetuity on two plots of land. Here, the inhabitants could not only pasture their horses, but also cut and collect the vegetation for domestic use (Verriest 1946, 16). In Seraing (1421) and Embourg (1428) the inhabitants had to assist the lord with hay works, but as compensation they could pasture their animals on the meadows of the lord after the hay had been carted (Daris 1885, 68 and 100). In Harvaing, the three works owed by the inhabitants to the count of Hainaut were compensated with pasture rights in the village (extending one league in all directions; see Verriest 1917, 224-25). In some cases, restrictions applied to the duration of such rights. According to the fifteenth-century customs of Neufchâteau, the inhabitants were expected to perform hay works on a meadow called *Gros Pré* and, in addition to food, were also entitled to pasture their cattle on the said meadow for two to three days after the hay harvest (Janssen de Limpens 1977, 305). In Presles, the inhabitants could send their cattle to pasture on the meadow they had worked, but only after Christmas (Génicot and Allard 1981, 651). Compensation under the form of pasture rights typically concerned meadows and grassland and only rarely extended to arable land. The only example comes from Dikkele where in 1440 the abbey of Saint-Peter granted pasturing rights on their arable land as part of compensation for plough works. Here too, restrictions applied with respect to the timing of such rights.<sup>14</sup> The high value rural communities placed on pasture rights and pasture spaces is also evidenced by the negotiations concerning seigneurial taxes. In the county of Hainaut, for example, multiple rural communities agreed to fixed annual seigneurial taxes in exchange for pasture rights and access to the land owned by the lord (Verriest 1917, 198-99). As with communal animals, peasantries exchanged labour for communal resources. In this case, they were compensated for their works by use rights on land exclusively owned by the lord.

### 4.3 Exemptions and monopolies

One final category of compensation for labour services consists of specific exemptions or monopolies granted by lords. In the thirteenth century, the inhabitants of Mairieux had been able to obtain freedom from tolls in the nearby city of Maubeuge in exchange for transport works for the count of Hainaut (Verriest 1917, 225). In 1413, the inhabitants of Ponth agreed to perform works for the lord but as compensation the lord liberated them from the obligation to use the demesne mill (Janssen de Limpens 1965, 94-95). In both cases, the peasantries were able to obtain fiscal exemptions in exchange for labour. In addition to exemptions, rural communities were also bargaining for specific monopolies as the case of Bergen op Zoom illustrates. The seignery of Bergen op Zoom was one of the largest

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<sup>14</sup> SAG, *Abbey of Saint-Pieter (1st series)*, nr. 1701.

individual lordships in the Low Countries. In the fifteenth century, the seigneurial rule of the lord of Bergen op Zoom not only included the city, but also some twenty nearby villages. The labour services owed by some inhabitants of these villages were subject to separate ordinances and regulations. The first of these regulations was drafted in 1479, probably as a result of conflicts and tensions. The ordinance of 1479 stated that all those who owned a horse and wagon under the jurisdiction of the lord of Bergen op Zoom were expected to cart fuel for the lord. The number of wagon loads that needed to be carted depended on the number of horses owned by each household. Apparently, households without horses were not expected to perform any servile works. The transport works had to be executed from the start of June to the end of August and applied to the transport of peat and firewood in particular. The agreement stated that each wagon load of fuel transported for the lord would be compensated by a small denomination coin (*«blancke»*). However, this was not the most important form of remuneration. The regulations concerning transport services also granted the farmers in the region a monopoly. Farmers who performed servile works with their horses were also granted the monopoly to transport goods during the two fairs organized annually by the city. In particular, the agreement stated that all those who wished to sell their goods and wares during the fairs had to make exclusively use of the services offered by the local farmers and horse owners. The monopoly extended to transporting goods to and from the city and within the city walls. This was a genuine transport monopoly as only those resident within the seigneurie could execute such work. The lord protected this monopoly by fining outsiders who performed transport services for the merchants visiting the fairs (Moll 1924, 14-15; Sloomans 1985, 163-64). The economic and financial significance of this monopoly should not be underestimated as the two fairs of Bergen op Zoom had an international character at that time. The two fairs, held around Easter and All Saints Day, originally had a regional character but attracted a growing international audience in the course of the fifteenth century. At Bergen op Zoom, cloth, spices and furs were traded in high volumes. As part of the renowned Brabant fairs, the fair at Bergen op Zoom flourished in the late middle ages (Kortlever 2001, 625-43). Through the transport monopoly during these fairs, the horse owning farmers in this region also profited from the increased volumes traded at this fair. For a period of circa six weeks twice a year, they were able to supplement their income from farming with carting activities. From their perspective, the servile works executed for the lord in exchange for this transport monopoly were an interesting proposition as it most probably resulted in additional net income.

## 5. Conclusions

An early modern legal manual described labour services in the Southern Low Countries as work performed by subjects of the lord for which no compensation was required. The servile works were executed at the cost and expense of the seigneurial subjects.<sup>15</sup> Such a description of servile works was in many respects a legal fiction. In

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<sup>15</sup> State Archives Courtray, *Manuscript Collection*, nr. 64: pp. 94-95: '*à leurs fraix et dépens*'



this paper, we argued that peasantries were often remunerated for the servile works they performed. From the thirteenth century, mounting evidence appears in customs and other documents that clearly indicates that the performance and execution of servile works came at a cost for the lord. In other words, in the late medieval and early modern Southern Low Countries, servile works were no longer a free source of labour for the lord. In many cases, lords had to compensate their subjects directly and indirectly for the ‘gratis’ labour they mobilized. Peasantries were only willing to assist the lord if they were compensated or remunerated. This compensation or remuneration could take different forms. Most frequently, peasantries received food when they worked for the lord. These food rations ensured that servile works did not come at an additional cost for the subjects of the lord. The attention to the quality and quantity of the food rations reflects the importance attached by the peasantries to this form of compensation. The food rations – in some cases very generous – are indicative of the strong position of peasantries vis-à-vis their lords during the late middle ages. Also, the other forms of remuneration obtained by the rural population in exchange for servile works clearly points at a strong bargaining position of the rural population. Lords were willing to grant their subjects fiscal exemptions and monopolies in exchange for small volumes of work. In the case of communal animals and pasture rights, lords were even willing to incur costs or share the produce of their demesne land to secure this servile labour. All this evidence indicates that by the thirteenth century, peasantries had secured a strong bargaining position. After the Black Death this bargaining position probably improved even further when population levels dropped and labour grew scarce and became more expensive. Most of the remuneration packages we discussed in this paper emerged for the first time during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

The particular compensation mechanisms that were constructed between lords and their subjects indicate that peasantries were not necessarily hostile to the labour demands of their lords. On the contrary, these agreements clearly signal that peasantries viewed the various remuneration packages they received as a fair ‘wage’ for their labour. Also, these compensation mechanisms illustrate, albeit for a specific labour context, that remuneration for work could take different forms and shapes during the pre-industrial period. Labour was not necessarily compensated by a traditional wage, but could be remunerated in other ways beneficiary to the working population.

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Mes recherches portent sur le marché du luxe sous la Révolution française. La période est un bon cas d'étude pour saisir l'interaction entre pouvoir politique, régulation économique et négoce en période de crise et de guerre. Plus précisément, à partir d'une branche emblématique de l'économie française, il s'agit dans ce chapitre de mettre au jour les interdépendances et les tensions à l'œuvre pour comprendre les méandres de la stratégie commerciale internationale impulsée par le Comité de salut public dans un contexte extérieur et intérieur extrêmement tendu (invasion, guerre civile, émeutes, disettes) ainsi que la récupération politique et économique d'un secteur idéologiquement et moralement réprouvé. À la différence de la période antérieure au cours de laquelle la régulation du luxe avait disparu – la dernière loi somptuaire date de 1720 («défenses de porter des diamans» (Isambert et al. 1821, 176; 185) –, celle-ci reprend avec force en 1791, portant sur les exportations, prohibitions, contributions, confiscations et réquisitions (Duvergier 1825-1828; Tuetey 1917)). Dans le même temps, la législation contre les émigrés et les condamnés à mort se durcit en 1792-1793, avec le séquestre puis la vente des biens «acquis à la République».<sup>1</sup> L'attitude des révolutionnaires envers le luxe est néanmoins équivoque. Les discours fluctuent selon les auteurs et la conjoncture. Pour certains, il faut «bannir des républiques le luxe et les arts», pour d'autres, «encourager tous les genres d'industrie»<sup>2</sup> afin de préserver le commerce et «attirer le numéraire de

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<sup>1</sup> Décrets du 9 février 1792: «les biens des émigrés sont mis sous la main de la Nation et sous la surveillance des corps administratifs»; des 30 mars-8 avril 1792: «Les biens des Français émigrés et les revenus de ces biens sont affectés à l'indemnité due à la nation» et «seront administrés, de même que les domaines nationaux, par les régisseurs de l'enregistrement, des domaines et droits réunis»; des 2-6 septembre 1792: «Article 2. Les meubles seront vendus à la criée, à la poursuite et diligence du procureur syndic du district, après les affiches et publications ordinaires, inventaire préalablement fait en conséquence de l'article 4 du décret du 30 mars-8 avril, et sur le récolement des effets inventoriés»; des 10 mars et 19 mai 1793: «des biens de ceux qui seront condamnés à la peine de mort seront acquis à la République»; du 14 mai 1793: «Article 3. Les commissaires envoyés à Chantilly, Versailles et autres maisons dépendantes de la liste civile, et la commission des monuments se réuniront au comité d'aliénation pour proposer à la Convention un décret tendant à assurer la conservation et la vente la plus avantageuse des diamans et autres objets précieux appartenans à la Nation, provenant du mobilier des émigrés, des maisons ci-devant royales et autres maisons nationales»; etc.

<sup>2</sup> Annexe à la séance de la Convention nationale du samedi 23 mars 1793, *De l'influence de la guerre maritime sur le commerce et l'organisation des travaux publics*, par l'avocat Charles Barbaroux (1767-1794), de Marseille, député par le département des Bouches-du-Rhône. Barbaroux y défend la construction de canaux pour vivifier la circulation des marchandises et le marché du travail. Le député girondin fut

l'ennemi».<sup>3</sup> Les acteurs – politiques, négociants, producteurs, capitaines de navires, etc. – avancent et se débattent dans la tempête, les uns pris par les contradictions entre leur culture économique libérale et la nécessité du dirigisme, les autres entravés dans leurs activités par une politique prohibitionniste qui se renforce avec l'extension des conflits pour aboutir au monopole de l'État en matière de ventes et d'achats à l'étranger.

La question centrale est celle du financement de l'approvisionnement, nerf de la guerre: comment régler les importations? La dépréciation des assignats, la taxation, les prohibitions, les embargos, les réquisitions sont autant de freins aux circulations et rendent la balance commerciale déficitaire. La guerre absorbe la moitié du budget. Dans ces conditions, la politique d'encadrement économique visait à rétablir l'équilibre général du système des échanges, dont chaque partenaire devait être en mesure de tirer profit;<sup>4</sup> une illusion, explique Dominique Margairaz, que les quelques mois d'expérience dirigiste dissipèrent (Margairaz 1991, 423-26). Or le problème du règlement des paiements internationaux était crucial puisque le devenir même de la Révolution dépendait de sa résolution. Les questions lancinantes étaient de savoir comment produire plus, comment approvisionner les armées et la population civile et acheminer les marchandises, en sachant que la guerre devait être financée par la richesse nationale malgré le faible rapport des impôts et la réforme fiscale en cours, puisque les colonies étaient perdues (Woronoff 1989, 1058; Hincker 1989; 1990; 2005; Belhoste 1991; Margairaz 1991; 1993).

L'objet du présent chapitre est de montrer que le recours aux séquestres aristocratiques comme moyen de paiement alternatif pour régler les importations de matières premières fut décidé, dans un moment de crise aiguë, à la faveur d'une proposition quasi fortuite. La guerre aboutit à la réhabilitation du luxe via le troc. Pour le comprendre, il est nécessaire de faire un détour afin de présenter deux points du contexte dans lequel s'inscrit l'opération: d'une part, la familiarité des contemporains avec l'usage du troc dans les échanges commerciaux, d'autre part, la guerre de l'Europe coalisée (excepté les pays scandinaves, la Suisse et Gênes) contre la France qui soulève la question vitale de l'approvisionnement et de son règlement.

## 1. Le troc, une pratique usuelle dans le commerce de détail

Il convient tout d'abord d'avoir à l'esprit la familiarité des contemporains avec la pratique du troc dans les échanges commerciaux ordinaires. A la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle comme au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, les marchandises continuent de servir de moyens de paiement ou de gages au crédit (Meuvret 1971, 127-38; Muldrew 1998; 2001, 78-120). L'essor de la culture de consommation qui caractérise le XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle occidental s'accommode fort bien des paiements en nature; le troc demeure une pratique

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proscrit par les Montagnards le 2 juin 1793 comme ennemi de la République et exécuté à Bordeaux le 25 juin 1794.

<sup>3</sup> Discours d'Étienne Clavière (1735-1793), ministre des contributions publiques, à propos des vins et liqueurs, 19 octobre 1792.

<sup>4</sup> Le premier maximum sur les subsistances fut voté le 4 mai 1793, le maximum général des prix et des salaires le 29 septembre.

socialement partagée dans les échanges, depuis la boulangerie jusqu'à la sphère privilégiée du luxe. La pratique est vivace, et les auteurs de dictionnaires, à l'article «Troc», ne marquent pas de répugnance face à ce moyen d'échange non monétarisé, y compris les spécialistes du commerce, tel Savary des Bruslons.

Echange d'une chose contre une autre. Un Marchand dit qu'il a troqué une marchandise contre une autre, pour dire qu'il n'a point déboursé d'argent, qu'il ne s'est donné que des marchandises de part et d'autre [...] Il y a beaucoup d'habileté à bien faire ses trocs, car il faut non-seulement être certain du prix de la marchandise que l'on veut donner, mais il faut sçavoir encore celui de la marchandise que l'on veut prendre, & le moyen de s'en pouvoir défaire. Lorsque l'on dit: Acheter de la marchandise partie comptant & partie troc, cela doit s'entendre que l'on paye une partie en monnoye réelle et l'autre sur le champ, & que l'autre partie se paye en marchandise dont la valeur a été estimée. Chez les Sauvages le commerce ne se fait que par troc, en donnant une marchandise pour une autre. Avant que le commerce fût sur le pied qu'il est à présent, cela se pratiquoit aussi par les Nations les plus polissées (Savary des Bruslons 1747).

Furetière pointe la banalité du phénomène dans le milieu des amateurs d'art et de curiosités: «Les curieux font le commerce de leurs bijoux et tableaux moins en argent, qu'en *troc* [...] On appelle [...] *troc* pour *troc*, (celui qui se fait) sans donner de l'argent de retour» (Furetière 1680). Comme l'avait observé Fernand Braudel, il n'y a pas d'histoire simple et linéaire du développement des marchés. Ici le traditionnel, l'archaïque, le moderne, le très moderne se côtoient» (Braudel 1979, II, 12). Traditionnelle, la pratique du troc témoigne néanmoins de la flexibilité du marché et de l'attention portée par les entrepreneurs aux consommateurs (Lemire 1988; 1991). Peut-être que l'aristocrate en incarne l'une des figures les plus dynamiques. Pour ce consommateur impénitent, *fashion victim* en manque chronique de liquidités, le troc est un moyen facile d'acquérir des biens à la mode en se débarrassant d'objets plus anciens, périmés ou qui ont cessé de plaire. L'usage, largement attesté dans les livres de comptes des boutiquiers parisiens, fait des aristocrates et des nobles de robe de grands pourvoyeurs d'objets de luxe, bijoux, argenterie, mobilier, glaces, bibelots, etc. (Coquery 2011); la plupart des paiements sont mixtes, argent et billet et/ou troc. De leur côté, les marchands y trouvent leur compte, même les plus célèbres merciers aux réseaux d'affaires transnationaux, car c'est une façon sûre et commode d'être payé et de s'approvisionner pour répondre à une demande plurielle; le produit de luxe, *neuf* ou *vieux*, circule entre classes sociales. John Styles, Olivier Raveux ont montré que l'engouement pour les indiennes a fini par toucher toutes les classes sociales parce que l'offre était devenue si attrayante et diversifiée qu'elle satisfaisait toutes les catégories de consommateurs (Styles 1994; 2003; Raveux 2015).

Dans le secteur du commerce de détail, le troc peut être interprété comme une forme de redistribution due à la surconsommation aristocratique; il alimente avec vigueur le marché de l'occasion.<sup>5</sup> Régler ses comptes pour partie ou totalité en objets

<sup>5</sup> Il est impossible d'énumérer ici la riche historiographie du marché de l'occasion et de ses pratiques, voir entre autres les travaux de Fontaine, Fennetaux et Lemire.

de luxe était donc une façon de faire banale. Ce qui est frappant, dans la question qui nous préoccupe, c'est le changement d'échelle: la pratique du troc devint celle de la République même, pour répondre aux besoins de la nation, et non plus celle d'acteurs individuels satisfaisant leurs propres envies. Dans les deux cas, anodin ou tragique, les acheteurs profitent d'opportunités pour faire face à des difficultés de trésorerie.

## 2. Guerre, approvisionnement, économie dirigée: trouver la parade au déséquilibre de la balance commerciale

Le contexte tendu, à l'extérieur comme à l'intérieur (guerre civile, émeutes, misère) explique l'ingérence grandissante de l'Etat dans les échanges internationaux. L'économie tout entière est mise au service de l'effort de guerre. Le dirigisme fut un choix contraint qui s'est affermi peu à peu, l'objectif étant de résoudre le problème de l'approvisionnement: d'abord le protectionnisme et les prohibitions (printemps-été 1793), puis une reprise très contrôlée des échanges et le recours aux réquisitions (automne 1793), enfin, le redémarrage des exportations accompagné d'une relance de la production nationale et de la réhabilitation du luxe, utilisé *in fine* comme monnaie alternative (printemps 1794). Reprenons les étapes pour comprendre le cheminement de l'action politique.

Indissociable du contexte de guerre, suite à la formation de la coalition anti-française en février 1793 et à la levée en masse du 23 août 1793 après l'invasion de l'été, la Terreur est instaurée et la Convention proclame le gouvernement révolutionnaire jusqu'à la paix (10 octobre). Comme en rendent compte les débats parlementaires, la politique protectionniste vertigineuse obtenue par les Enragés au printemps et à l'été 1793 visait tout à la fois à faire face au risque de pénurie, de famine et aux besoins de l'armée, à favoriser la production nationale et nuire au commerce anglais.<sup>6</sup> Elle manifestait aussi un rejet viscéral du luxe. Les marchands impliqués suscitent des discours vindicatifs sur la cupidité et l'égoïsme mercantiles (Caron 1910, I) mais le décret contre les accapareurs (26 juillet 1793) tient en suspicion le négoce tout entier.<sup>7</sup> Malgré les difficultés de mise en œuvre et l'échec du rétablissement de l'abondance et de la paix sociale, les historiens s'accordent sur le succès de l'opération qui permit de faire face aux périls. Cependant, comme l'a souligné Georges Lefèbvre, restreindre les échanges était une arme à double

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<sup>6</sup> La législation prohibitive se déploie de début mars à l'automne 1793, avec quelques points d'orgue, tels les décrets du 15 août («relatif aux denrées & marchandises de première nécessité, qu'il est défendu de faire sortir de la République») et du 29 septembre («qui fixe le Maximum du prix des denrées et marchandises de première nécessité»), dont l'article 17 spécifie que «Pendant la guerre, toute exportation de marchandises ou denrées de première nécessité est prohibée sur toutes les frontières, sous quelque nom et commission que ce soit, le sel excepté».

<sup>7</sup> Décret du 26 juillet 1793 «contre les accapareurs»: «Art. I. L'accaparement est un crime capital; II. Sont déclarés coupables d'accaparement ceux qui dérobent à la circulation, des marchandises ou denrées de première nécessité, qu'ils achètent & tiennent enfermées dans un lieu quelconque, sans les mettre en vente journellement & publiquement». La fermeture de la Bourse le 27 juin, la suppression des compagnies financières le 8 octobre et les arrestations de négociants suspectés, comme à Bordeaux dans la nuit du 29-30 novembre, participent de la même méfiance; la loi des suspects est votée le 17 septembre.

tranchant car la guerre exigeait d'importer d'énormes quantités de matières premières, tant pour les armées que pour les populations civiles, et les navires neutres avaient besoin de fret de retour (Lefèbvre 1963, 245; Pourchasse 2013; Marzagalli 2008, 456-64; 2015; Marzagalli et Müller 2016); les capitaines américains, les négociants français le font savoir avec vigueur. Il s'ensuit de nombreux débats politiques sur le statut des produits – luxe ou nécessité? –, qui aboutissent à plusieurs décrets rectificatifs (Coquery 2020; 2021). Limiter à l'extrême les exportations et multiplier les embargos n'était pas viable; les revendications des capitaines et des négociants ont été entendues. C'est ce qui explique le tournant de l'automne 1793, avec une réouverture des frontières, le contrôle des exportations et la mise en place d'une sorte de marché «donnant donnant» sous la surveillance du comité de salut public.<sup>8</sup> Les exportations de produits de luxe réclamées par les capitaines sont autorisées à la condition expresse que lesdits produits soient achetés par la recette d'une cargaison de biens de première nécessité de même valeur; les négociants peuvent exporter des biens de luxe si le produit obtenu sert à payer, en retour, des importations de matières premières; sans importations de denrées de première nécessité, pas d'exportations de marchandises de luxe (voir Annexe 1). Le procédé atténuait le problème du déséquilibre de la balance commerciale. L'idée avait été suggérée au comité de salut public par différents protagonistes, négociants ou politiques. Dès le 21 août 1793, six jours à peine après le décret prohibitif du 15 août et à un moment de dépréciation aiguë de l'assignat, le député Faure, représentant en mission d'un des tout premiers ports de la République, Le Havre, débouché de l'industrie de luxe française, avait plaidé pour l'autorisation «d'exporter toutes les marchandises ouvrées, provenant des manufactures de France jusqu'à concurrence de la valeur» des cargaisons de matières premières. Sans énoncer l'abandon de l'échange monétaire, le système proposé remédiait à l'inconvénient d'une monnaie inconvertible et dépréciée, les assignats.

Nos assignats ne seront jamais une monnaie de valeur à l'étranger qu'autant qu'ils seraient remboursables en argent à bureau ouvert, comme le billet de banque en Angleterre, ce qui n'est pas possible. Si vous voulez donc que l'étranger vous apporte des cuirs, des suifs, des huiles, des soudes, du goudron, du fer, du cuivre, etc., il est indispensable que vous lui procuriez la facilité de les échanger contre des denrées de votre cru. Le salut de l'Etat, j'ose

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<sup>8</sup> Une commission est créée le 22 octobre 1793, en charge des subsistances et des approvisionnements, tandis que le comité de salut public supervise toute opération d'achat à l'étranger, sortie de numéraire ou expédition de navires. L'arrêté instaurant le dirigisme est pris le 18 novembre 1793: «Le Comité de salut public, vu que [...] l'approvisionnement de la République doit être assuré et reposer sur les bases d'un plan uniforme [...] Arrête que les corps administratifs et les municipalités ne pourront faire aucun achat de subsistances en pays étranger, faire partir aucun bâtiment français pour le Nord ou pour les Etats-Unis d'Amérique; Que les représentants du peuple députés ne pourront expédier aucun bâtiment français, envoyer du numéraire ou faire acheter des subsistances dans les mêmes Etats, sans que leurs projets et leurs dispositions aient été préalablement approuvés et autorisés par un arrêté du Comité de salut public». Un arrêté du 30 novembre précise le contrôle des exportations: «Le Comité de salut public arrête qu'aucunes marchandises ne pourront sortir de la République, ni par mer ni par terre, sans une autorisation expresse du Conseil exécutif provisoire, visée individuellement par les membres dudit Conseil et approuvée par le Comité de salut public».



le dire, tient à cette opération. [...] Sans rapporter le décret de prohibition [...], vous pourriez, citoyens, autoriser le ministre des douanes à permettre aux bâtiments étrangers d'exporter toutes les marchandises ouvrées, provenant des manufactures de France, jusqu'à concurrence de la valeur de leurs cargaisons. C'est le seul moyen de vous procurer une foule d'objets nécessaires, tels que le fer, le brai, le goudron, les planches, le cuivre, etc. [...] (Aulard 1897, VI, 53-54).<sup>9</sup>

L'entrepreneur américain James Swan envoya au comité de salut public ou à la commission des subsistances plusieurs mémoires dans lesquels il recensait les produits de luxe qui devaient selon lui être exportés, en précisant les pays destinataires (Rice 1937; 1940; Pourchasse 2013, 168-71, 287, 292, 303, 316-23; Pascal 1999, 217-25). Comme le reconnaît Robert Lindet, membre du comité de salut public, dans une autorisation délivrée audit Swan, la manœuvre « présente le double avantage d'alimenter nos fabriques de luxe et d'attirer en échange des articles de première nécessité ».<sup>10</sup> Capitaines et marchands s'engouffrent dans le cadre, et les exportations de luxe retrouvent un vif essor (voir Annexe 2).<sup>11</sup> Les réprouvés de 1793 sont remis sur le devant de la scène; les entreprises de luxe, y compris les ex-manufactures royales devenues nationales, sont appelées à faire rentrer métal et devises pour l'achat de matières premières. Les réquisitions et les incitations à exporter s'intensifient au moment de la crise du printemps et de l'été 1794 (menaces de famine, revers en Belgique et en Vendée, exécution des dantonistes).<sup>12</sup> C'est la dernière étape du dirigisme: le comité de salut public prend seul les rênes du commerce extérieur (décret du 30 mai 1794) et instaure la Grande Terreur (10 juin). Dans ce contexte paroxystique germe l'idée, en mars 1794, de limiter les sorties de numéraire grâce aux biens des émigrés et condamnés, utilisés comme monnaie alternative.

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<sup>9</sup> Lettre du représentant de l'Assemblée dans la Seine-inférieure au comité de salut public (désormais CSP), Le Havre, 21 août 1793. Pierre Joseph Denis Guillaume Faure (1726-1818) est né et mort au Havre. Avocat, puis juge au tribunal de son district, il fut élu le 7 septembre 1792 par le département de la Seine-Inférieure, membre de la Convention. <[https://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/\(num\\_dept\)/12094](https://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/(num_dept)/12094)>. En pratique, la cargaison de matières premières est réglée en assignats et avec ces derniers, le capitaine achète les produits superflus.

<sup>10</sup> Arrêté du CSP du 24 février 1794, autorisant James Swann à exporter 100 000 livres en marchandises de luxe (Aulard, 1897, XI, 366). Robert Lindet (1746-1825), avocat, fut élu le 30 août 1791 député de l'Eure à l'Assemblée législative, puis réélu le 4 septembre 1792 à la Convention; membre du comité de salut public, il était chargé des subsistances.

<[https://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/\(num\\_dept\)/12859](https://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/(num_dept)/12859)>

<sup>11</sup> Aux Archives nationales (France), les dossiers AF/II/5 à AF/II/8, AF/II/27, AF/II/31, AF/II/75 à AF/II/77 regorgent d'autorisations délivrées à des négociants de luxe français ou à des capitaines neutres.

<sup>12</sup> Deux mesures parmi d'autres: l'arrêté du CSP du 1<sup>er</sup> mai 1794 stipule que «Tous les commerçants sont autorisés à mettre leur expérience, leur industrie, en activité pour concourir à procurer toutes les denrées et matières dont la République peut avoir besoin et en exporter le superflu des denrées et marchandises de luxe et de manufacture» (art. 1). Le décret de la Convention du 17 octobre 1794 déclare «que tout citoyen dont l'industrie tend à vivifier le commerce, mérite bien de la patrie». À partir de rapports, de mémoires et des projets de décrets rédigés de 1789 à 1799, Anne Perrin-Khelissa analyse en quels termes a été posée et résolue la question du luxe public (Perrin-Khelissa 2015, 159-168).

### 3. Face au manque de devises, un dernier recours: le troc du luxe

L'économie dirigée, tendue sur l'objectif d'approvisionnement, se heurte au problème des moyens de paiement de dépenses d'un montant considérable. La mainmise du comité sur les échanges visait à supprimer «une concurrence nuisible entre les divers agents», susceptible de «compromettre le crédit national» et d'«altérer la confiance des nations»:<sup>13</sup> le crédit et la confiance, mots clés des relations commerciales, sont brandis comme garants de l'approvisionnement, non sans raison. Les réquisitions, les exportations et la relance de la production de luxe ne suffisent pas à rééquilibrer la balance commerciale; le papier monnaie est déprécié et le Trésor public se vide. Certes, la ressource essentielle de l'Etat repose sur l'émission des assignats gagés en principe sur la valeur des biens nationaux; le papier monnaie a permis de régler une bonne part des fournitures militaires. Mais les crises successives – mort du roi, défaites militaires, émeutes, arrestations, etc. – provoquent des spéculations à la baisse désastreuses pour le commerce extérieur (Bouchary 1937, 72-73; Lefebvre 1963, 240-43; Soboul 1982, 3, 27-36; Burguière 1992).<sup>14</sup> Les politiques tentent d'enrayer l'avalissement par une législation incitative ou coercitive.<sup>15</sup> L'industrie et les facultés des banquiers, capitalistes et agents de change (marchandises et fonds à l'étranger) sont mises en réquisition le 26 décembre 1793; l'objectif est de mettre les changes au pair et de faire rentrer en France les traites placées à l'étranger pour payer les importations.<sup>16</sup> L'opération échoue, et le problème resta entier (Mathiez 1920; Caron 1924-1925, II, 675-79; Ducoudray 2005; Pourchasse 2013, 284-86).<sup>17</sup>

Le numéraire sert à régler la solde des soldats et les importations de denrées de première nécessité, seule exception à l'interdiction répétée de sortie des matières d'or et d'argent.<sup>18</sup> La confiance se négocie au prix fort. Les neutres européens et américains exigent d'être réglés en métal ou en lettres de change sur l'étranger. Il en

<sup>13</sup> Préambule de l'arrêté du CSP restaurant le dirigisme, 18 novembre 1793.

<sup>14</sup> L'assignat tombe à 51% de sa valeur nominale en février 1793, 43% en avril, 22% en août. Parmi les mesures prises pour affronter la crise, Albert Soboul évoque la Terreur mise à l'ordre du jour (5 septembre 1793), la loi des suspects (le 17), le maximum général (le 29), l'instauration du gouvernement révolutionnaire (le 4 décembre), et l'action législative de la Convention pour défendre l'assignat (Soboul 1882, 34-5).

<sup>15</sup> L'arrêté du CSP du 2 janvier 1794 rappelle «la faculté accordée aux citoyens d'échanger contre des assignats dans les caisses publiques les matières d'or et d'argent et la monnaie qu'ils ont en leur possession». Tout discours discréditant la monnaie papier, toute malversation et tout refus de son usage sont passibles d'emprisonnement, puis de la peine de mort (décrets du 5 septembre 1793 «Relatif aux Personnes prévenues d'avoir fait le commerce d'Assignats, d'en avoir refusé en paiement, ou d'avoir cherché à les décréditer» et du 10 mai 1794 «relatif au Mode de procéder contre les personnes prévenues de vente ou achat de numéraire, de propos tendant à discréditer les Assignats, &c. &c.»).

<sup>16</sup> Propos tenus lors de la commission des subsistances du 29 décembre 1793 à laquelle participent Cambon, président du comité des finances, Lindet, membre du CSP, et des banquiers spécialement conviés (Caron 1924-1925, I, 182-5). L'arrêté du 26 décembre 1793 est pris conjointement par les comités de salut public, des finances et de sûreté générale.

<sup>17</sup> Arrêté du CSP du 16 février 1794 sur le crédit de 50 millions ouvert par les banquiers parisiens. L'affaire fut soldée par un arrêté du comité des finances le 24 septembre 1794.

<sup>18</sup> Voir, entre autres, les décrets relatifs «au paiement de la solde des gens de Guerre» des 20 avril et 18 août 1792.

va différemment du marché oriental. Dans une circulaire du 4 mars 1794 destinée à l'agence de Malte, la commission des subsistances encourage le troc dans un style assez alambiqué: «Comme les échanges des objets que le Levant est habitué de tirer de la France peuvent être dans les paiements, plus désirés que les espèces...» (voir Annexe 3). Quelques mois plus tard, une urne d'or est offerte au dey d'Alger «à la faveur de laquelle le Consul de France a obtenu des extractions considérables en bleds». <sup>19</sup> L'usage n'était pas une nouveauté, en témoigne un échange entre le ministre des Affaires étrangères, demandeur, son homologue de l'Intérieur et l'inspecteur général du Garde-Meuble en avril 1793, suite à une décision du comité de salut public: des objets précieux «à la convenance des puissances musulmanes» doivent être transportés «en Levant et Barbarie pour y être échangés contre des armes et des subsistances». <sup>20</sup> L'envoi d'objets précieux au souverain de la régence d'Alger est un geste diplomatique récurrent en remerciement de l'aide apportée, telles ces armes offertes «en reconnaissance des cinquante mille piastres [...] prestées, pour fournir aux achats de grains» <sup>21</sup> (voir Annexe 4). La culture marchande de l'Empire ottoman était un atout pour la République, mais insuffisant. Tout concourt à raréfier la monnaie métallique: le déséquilibre de la balance commerciale, le difficile recouvrement des impôts, la fuite des capitaux, l'effondrement des investissements étrangers, la chute du tourisme, les emprunts forcés et les taxes, la thésaurisation, le trafic frauduleux, la méfiance envers l'assignat. Les lois n'en peuvent mais, qui visent à améliorer sa circulation <sup>22</sup>, à limiter son usage <sup>23</sup> ou à augmenter sa quantité, de

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<sup>19</sup> Arrêté du 13 juillet 1794 faisant verser 34 700 livres à Gimon, de Marseille, pour une urne d'or offerte au dey d'Alger (Archives nationales (désormais AN), AF/II/76/560/23).

<sup>20</sup> Lettres manuscrites des 10 et 11 avril 1793, AN, O2/491/4/36 et 37.

<sup>21</sup> Rapport de la commission de commerce au CSP du 8 juillet 1794 (AN, F/11/292). L'arrêté du CSP du même jour ordonne l'envoi, via l'agence d'Afrique, d'un fusil et de deux pistolets garnis en or «en reconnaissance de la facilité qu'il a accordé aux extractions des bleds et de ses bonnes dispositions pour faciliter toutes les opérations de commerce de son pays avec la République.» (AN, AF/II/76/559/36).

<sup>22</sup> Voir le décret du 22 juin 1791 «concernant la libre circulation du numéraire dans l'intérieur du Royaume» ou celui du 26 avril 1792 «relatif à l'échange du numéraire contre des Assignats, à la Trésorerie Nationale, ou chez les receveurs de Districts».

<sup>23</sup> Le 8 avril 1793, les fournitures militaires et la solde des soldats sont désormais réglées en assignats, le 11 avril la vente du numéraire est défendue et le 1er novembre, les débits des marchés ne «seront payés qu'en assignats, au pair de la valeur stipulée en numéraire».

Décret du 8 avril 1793 «portant que les prix des achats, marchés ou conventions pour le service de la République, seront stipulés en sommes d'assignats, & qui détermine la nature du paiement de la solde des troupes, tant de terre que de mer»: «Art. I. A compter du jour de la publication du présent décret, les prix de tous les achats, marchés ou conventions pour le service de la République, seront stipulés en sommes fixes d'assignats, sans qu'il puisse y être inséré aucune stipulation de paiement en espèces, ni aucune autre clause y relative.»; «IV. A compter du 15 avril présent mois, la partie de solde, appointement, traitement, qui, d'après les lois, étoit payée en numéraire aux officiers, soldats et autres personnes de tous grades et de toute dénomination, qui sont employés dans les départemens de la guerre et de la marine, et qui seront en Europe dans le territoire français, ou occupés par les armées françaises, sera payée en assignats, avec une plus-value de moitié en sus de la somme qui étoit payée en numéraire...».

Décret du 11 avril 1793 «qui prohibe la vente du numéraire de la République»: «II. Aucuns achats, ventes, traités, conventions ou transactions ne pourront désormais contenir d'obligation autrement

manière classique (apports de vaisselles et bijoux aux hôtels de monnaie<sup>24</sup>) ou inédite (matières d'or et d'argent provenant des églises, maisons ci-devant religieuses ou royales et autres biens acquis à la République, voir Annexe 5).

En ces temps d'extrême pénurie, la République regorgeait d'objets précieux séquestrés à ne plus savoir qu'en faire. Malgré une mise sur le marché accélérée et l'autorisation d'exporter sans frais, Paris s'était transformé sous la Terreur en un immense entrepôt de vins fins et de liqueurs, de meubles et d'objets précieux extraits de l'ex-liste civile et des demeures des émigrés et condamnés.<sup>25</sup> L'engorgement des salles de ventes, le laisser-aller dans la conduite des enchères, les vols et les coûts de garde des dépôts, pesaient sur les finances publiques (Coquery 2023). Or il était un moyen d'activer la circulation des biens. Sans changer de cadre – exportations de luxe subordonnées aux importations de première nécessité –, ni supprimer les transferts de numéraire, une série de mesures met les biens séquestrés à la disposition de la commission des subsistances. La décision revient à autoriser des échanges non monétarisés. L'idée du troc mit du temps à être intronisée. Quelques mois après les propos du député du Havre dont il est difficile de savoir s'il évoquait le troc (voir *supra*), Cambon, au nom du comité des finances, invoque «en dernière analyse» dans un rapport du 3 décembre 1793 sur les matières d'or et d'argent, à un moment d'intense réflexion sur le rééquilibrage de la balance commerciale, «le commerce par échange pur et simple». Le troc est imaginé comme moyen d'échange ultime avec l'étranger, dans une société sans monnaie d'or et d'argent.

[...] l'embargo, la loi du maximum et trop peu d'objets de luxe à offrir à l'étranger, peuvent laisser un vide momentané dans les échanges que nous ferons avec lui; alors nous emploierons à la solde de nos acquisitions en objets de première nécessité de l'or et de l'argent. [...]. Nous avons examiné s'il était nécessaire d'avoir une monnaie d'or et d'argent, et nous nous sommes décidés pour la négative; nous vous proposons en conséquence de ne plus reconnaître comme monnaie que les assignats, les pièces de cuivre et de bronze, et les assignats métalliques dont la fabrique est décrétée. [...]. En attendant, nous pouvons déclarer que si des diverses parties de l'Europe on nous porte des objets de première nécessité, au cas que nos moyens d'échange industriels ne

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qu'en assignats»; «IV. Toute personne qui refusera des assignats en paiement, sera contrainte à les recevoir».

Décret du 1er novembre 1793 «relatif au mode de paiement des Marchés passés pour le compte de la République».

<sup>24</sup> Tel, dès le 20 septembre 1789, l'arrêt du conseil d'État «Portant autorisation aux Directeurs des monnoies de recevoir la Vaisselle qui sera portée librement aux Hôtels des monnoies» ou, le 8 octobre suivant, le décret «sur les moyens de remédier à la rareté du numéraire.»

<sup>25</sup> Décret du 10 juin 1793 «concernant la vente du mobilier du garde-meuble national, et de la ci-devant liste civile»: «X. Il sera procédé, sans délai, à la vente des meubles courans [...]. XI. Les commissaires [...] auront soin de réunir [...] les petites portions de mobilier [...] à l'effet d'accélérer les ventes, [...] et de supprimer ou diminuer les frais que nécessite la garde du mobilier [...]. XLI. Tous les effets mobiliers provenant des biens nationaux, de la liste civile ou des émigrés, vendus postérieurement à la promulgation de la présente loi, pourront être exportés à l'étranger, en exemption de tous droits de sortie».

Décret du 13 septembre 1793 «qui prescrit des mesures pour accélérer la vente des biens des émigrés, et faciliter aux chefs de famille indigènes et aux défenseurs de la patrie, les moyens d'en acquérir.»

suffisent pas à la balance, nous solderons en or et en argent [...]. Ces bases étant adoptées, la valeur monétaire de l'or et de l'argent étant détruite, ces métaux seront fondus en lingots; et, en dernière analyse, ces mesures peuvent nous conduire à établir, sans effort, le commerce par échange pur et simple; ce qui bannirait à jamais l'agiotage [...].<sup>26</sup>

De la conjecture à la réalité, le délai fut bref. Trois mois plus tard, première étape, le décret du 1<sup>er</sup> mars 1794 traduit le revirement du gouvernement par rapport aux précédentes mesures sur le monnayage des matières d'or et d'argent et la vente des objets précieux rassemblés au garde-meuble, dans les maisons nationales ou des émigrés.<sup>27</sup> La mesure concerne un objet emblématique du luxe, de grande valeur, aisément transportable: le diamant. Désormais, les diamants, perles et pierres précieuses ainsi que les effets d'or et d'argent serviront à l'échange de marchandises de première nécessité (voir Annexe 6).

IX. Les diamans, perles et pierres précieuses, qui seront déposés à la trésorerie nationale, ne pourront en sortir qu'en vertu d'un décret du corps législatif, ou d'un arrêté du comité de salut public, et seulement pour l'échange ou la solde des denrées ou marchandises de première nécessité, tirées de l'étranger.

XIII. Les effets d'or et d'argent qui, par la main-d'oeuvre, auront une valeur supérieure de moitié à celle de la matière, ne seront plus fondus.

XVI. Ces objets ne pourront sortir [...] que sur le pied de leur estimation et d'après un arrêté du comité de salut public, et seulement pour servir à l'échange et solde des denrées et marchandises de première nécessité.

L'opération de troc mobilise plusieurs administrations. Sur le rapport de la commission de commerce et approvisionnement, les comités de salut public et des finances autorisent, en octobre 1794, une expédition de diamants d'une valeur de

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<sup>26</sup> *Réimpression de l'ancien Moniteur...*, Paris, Henri Plon, 1870, vol. 18, 3 décembre 1793, p. 565-568. S'ensuit la décision suivante, le 25 décembre: «Le Comité de salut public et le Comité des Finances ont arrêté que les membres de la Commission des monnaies, [...], sont autorisés à recevoir les vaisselles ou matières d'or et d'argent qui leur sont apportées, d'en constater le poids et la valeur, d'en délivrer un récipissé, dont le montant sera payé en assignats par la Trésorerie nationale». La mesure est étendue aux départements de province le 2 janvier 1794.

<sup>27</sup> Outre le décret du 10 juin 1793 (*supra* note 25), voir, parmi de nombreux autres, le décret du 25 mars 1793 «relatif aux caisses renfermant des argenteries envoyées jusqu'à présent à la monnaie de Paris» qui ordonne la fonte des vaisselles et argenteries sans poinçons apparents (art. 3), ceux du 25 novembre 1792 «concernant l'administration & la vente des biens des émigrés, & la liquidation de leurs dettes» dont la section III a pour titre «De la vente du mobilier», et du 14 mai 1793 «relatif à des chevaux, pierreries, or et argent à remettre au ministre de l'intérieur par les administrateurs du département de Gemmapp» qui prévoit un décret «tendant à assurer la conservation et la vente la plus avantageuse des diamans et autres objets précieux appartenans à la Nation, provenant du mobilier des émigrés, des maisons ci-devant royales et autres maisons nationales» (art. 3). Il est prévu que la vente des diamants et autres effets précieux puissent servir au paiement des créanciers de l'émigré auxquels ils appartenaient (24 mai 1793, décret «relatif à différens dépôts à remettre au receveur près l'administration des domaines nationaux»). La législation est accompagnée d'un gigantesque travail d'inventaire et de récolement. Voir entre autres AN, O/2/431 «Joailliers et estimateurs des diamants et pierres fines appartenant à la Nation. An II (1793-1794) Modèles de diamants retirés par les joailliers Étienne Nitot, Jean Rasp et Benjamin Moricand.»

plus de deux millions de livres à la maison de commerce et de banque Durazzo de Gênes; les pierres ont été expertisées par des joailliers de l'atelier monétaire, et remis à la commission des transports. Un plan est élaboré «pour faire parvenir plus sûrement ces paquets à leur destination», depuis la Trésorerie nationale jusqu'à Nice, puis Gênes.<sup>28</sup> Un plan concernant une autre expédition détaille les précautions à prendre: gendarmes accompagnateurs, voyage de jour sans arrêts, berline «choisie expresse pour soutenir la longueur de la route [...] montée à la française comme étant plus solide que les autres voitures», gîte dans une grande commune, repas en chambre «afin de ne jamais quitter de vue leur dépôt», etc.<sup>29</sup>

La deuxième étape est l'arrêté du 23 mars 1794 concernant les meubles des émigrés. Il est pris peu de temps après plusieurs décrets qui, respectivement, entérinent la libre exportation des «productions des arts et du luxe», ordonne l'enlèvement des glaces et meubles de luxe des maisons nationales, met à la disposition de la commission des subsistances les marchandises de fabrication anglaise prises sur l'ennemi et requiert les négociants des grandes places commerciales d'exporter, y compris les denrées coloniales en dépôt.<sup>30</sup> Le préambule de l'arrêté du 23 mars spécifie la destination des biens, à savoir l'exportation et l'échange et non plus la dispersion en salle de ventes. Sont mis à la disposition de la commission des subsistances «tous les meubles et effets précieux» des émigrés et des condamnés «qu'elle jugera de nature à être exportés avec avantage».

Le Comité de salut public, informé que beaucoup d'objets précieux, provenant des maisons des émigrés et de la succession des condamnés, ne donnent pas dans les ventes tout le produit dont ils sont susceptibles, considérant que ces effets pourraient être exportés avec avantage et être échangés contre des matières de première nécessité, arrête:

Art. 1 La commission des subsistances de la République est autorisée à se faire représenter toutes les fois qu'elle le jugera convenable, les inventaires des mobiliers des émigrés et condamnés et disposer de tous les meubles et effets précieux qu'elle jugera de nature à être exportés avec avantage. [...]

Le mobilier des maisons nationales (ex-palais royaux) est également concerné: «le dais, les lits et autres meubles précieux qui se trouvent dans les maisons de la ci-

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<sup>28</sup> AN, AF/II/76/563/61 (arrêté, 18 octobre) et AF/II/76/563/43 (plan, 12 octobre). Le chef du bureau d'agriculture du CSP et un sous-chef de bureau de la commission des transports sont choisis pour «surveiller le transport de ces paquets et en assurer la remise à Nice entre les mains des Représentants du Peuple, qui prendront de nouvelles mesures pour les faire parvenir aussi sûrement jusqu'à Gênes». Les dossiers AF/II/75 et AF/II/76 contiennent plusieurs envois de diamants à la maison Durazzo.

<sup>29</sup> AN, AF/II/77/566/82, 17 janvier 1795, «Plan proposé par les agents du mouvement de l'Intérieur, 5<sup>e</sup> division, pour le transport des diamants destinés pour Gênes», approuvé par le CSP.

<sup>30</sup> Décrets de la Convention nationale des 11, 12 et 13 mars 1794. Ils avaient été précédés d'un rapport du comité de commerce concluant sur l'urgence d'une relance de la production et des exportations de luxe «pour les échanger contre les matières premières qui sont nécessaires à nos armées et à nos manufactures» (Gerbaux et Schmidt 1906-1910, 4, 307-8). Le premier décret est suivi de plusieurs arrêtés du CSP qui en précisent les modalités d'application (Coquery 2021).

devant liste civile seront conservés pour faire des échanges avec l'étranger<sup>31</sup>» ainsi que «des traîneaux existans à la maison ci-devant petites écuries». <sup>32</sup> La maison de l'Infantado rue Saint-Florentin, choisie pour sa proximité avec le Garde-Meuble national, est «mise à la disposition de la Commission du Commerce et approvisionnements de la République, pour y former le dépôt des meubles et effets précieux appartenants à la nation, destinés à l'exportation». <sup>33</sup>

Le rapport de la commission des subsistances qui précède l'arrêté est éclairant sur la prise de décision. Alerté par le ministre de l'Intérieur, le comité de salut public avait pris un arrêté le 3 février 1794 pour que celui-ci mette à la disposition des commissaires aux subsistances «une grande quantité de pièces de soieries et d'étoffes précieuses et de dentelles», <sup>34</sup> évaluée à 200 000 livres, faisant partie de la succession de la «femme Dubarry», car la vente aurait été moins avantageuse. L'agent choisi par la commission des subsistances pour participer à l'inventaire des objets précieux du château de Louveciennes adresse à ladite commission «'état d'une grande partie des meubles et étoffes qu'il a cru devoir retirer de la vente et qui peuvent être avantageusement employés en échange de matières premières tirées de l'étranger». Dans son rapport, le président de la commission propose au comité de salut public d'étendre la mesure à l'ensemble des biens séquestrés. Outre l'utilité financière, la lutte contre l'agiotage, thème récurrent chez les révolutionnaires, est un argument de poids pour justifier le troc; c'est ce qu'avait suggéré Cambon quelques mois plus tôt.

Nous avons pensé qu'en généralisant cette mesure elle pourrait être d'une grande utilité pour la République, puisqu'elle la ferait profiter de bénéfices qui ont jusqu'ici passé dans des mains étrangères.

Personne n'ignore qu'elle retire fort peu des ventes qui se font du mobilier trouvé dans les maisons des émigrés et condamnés. On y voit toujours les mêmes figures, quelques agioteurs adroits et de connivence profitent du petit nombre des concurrens et se rendent à vil prix adjudicataires d'objets précieux qu'ils revendent avec un bénéfice considérable. Le décret qui permet la libre exportation des matières qui ne sont pas reconnues de première nécessité donnerait encore un nouveau champ à leurs spéculations en facilitant leur agiotage.

Tout semble prescrire de prendre une détermination prompte sur cet objet. Elle devient même d'autant plus instante que les ventes des mobiliers de St. Cloud et de Belle Vue sont au moment de se faire.

Nous vous prions d'examiner s'il ne conviendrait pas d'autoriser la Commission à se faire représenter, toutes les fois qu'elle le jugera convenable, les inventaires du mobilier des émigrés et condamnés et d'y choisir tous les objets

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<sup>31</sup> Arrêté du CSP du 12 avril 1794 sur la conservation des «meubles simples, nécessaires pour chaque Commission nationale».

<sup>32</sup> Décret du 13 avril 1794 «relatif à la voiture dite du Sacre, aux autres voitures du même genre qui ont servi au grand-père, aux sœurs et à la fille du dernier tyran, et aux traîneaux existans à la maison ci-devant Petites-Ecuries» (art. 4).

<sup>33</sup> Arrêté du CSP du 12 août 1794; le précédent dépôt, un ex-hôtel aristocratique face à la rue Taranne, s'était révélé insuffisant.

<sup>34</sup> Arrêté du CSP du 3 février 1794.

précieux qu'elle jugera susceptibles d'être exportés avec avantage. Voici l'arrêté qu'elle soumet en conséquence, à votre adoption. Le Président de la Commission Brunet.<sup>35</sup>

C'est à partir de ce moment-là, au printemps 1794, que les exportations pour l'étranger concurrencent les ventes aux enchères. Déboutant les créanciers, le décret de la Convention sur la vente du mobilier du Temple, ex-propriété de Charles-Philippe Capet, ci-devant d'Artois, est explicite:

Les meubles et effets mobiliers qui garnissent les appartements du Temple [...] distraction faite des objets mis en réquisition par la commission des arts et par celle du commerce, pour être échangés avec l'étranger, seront transportés dans une maison nationale voisine du Temple, pour être vendus dans la forme ordinaire prescrite par les lois pour la vente des meubles des émigrés.<sup>36</sup>

La troisième étape, après les diamants et le mobilier, est l'arrêté de la commission des subsistances du 8 avril 1794 qui met en réquisition les vins, eaux-de vie et liqueurs des émigrés, condamnés et détenus; la mesure fut confirmée en janvier 1795 au moment du rétablissement de la liberté du commerce.<sup>37</sup> Le préambule de l'arrêté puis la circulaire du 11 avril destinée aux agents nationaux de district avec un tableau à remplir «dans le délai de vingt-quatre heures» (cru, nom commercial, quantité, qualité) précisent l'origine de la décision.

La Commission [...] instruite qu'il se trouve dans les maisons des émigrés et condamnés beaucoup de liqueurs, vins étrangers et vins fins de toutes espèces; désirant faire servir des objets de luxe à augmenter la masse des matières premières, arrête [...] (Caron 1924-1925, I, 584-5).

[...] nous avons pensé, citoyen, que ces vins [...] pourraient être employés avantageusement en échange de matières premières, et nous avons pris en conséquence l'arrêté ci-annexé (Caron 1924-1925, I, 601-02).

L'expertise des vins nécessite la nomination de plusieurs commissaires qui doivent procéder «à la dégustation des vins existants dans les caves d'émigrés ou de déportés, et d'en faire l'emballage avec soin...».<sup>38</sup>

L'effet ne se fit pas attendre et les effets précieux des émigrés et condamnés vinrent s'ajouter à la masse des exportations de luxe favorisées depuis le printemps

<sup>35</sup> Rapport de la commission des subsistances au CSP, AN, F/11/292 (pièce non numérotée).

<sup>36</sup> *Réimpression de l'ancien Moniteur...*, *op. cit.*, vol. 22, n° 36, 27 octobre 1794.

<sup>37</sup> Arrêté du 3 janvier 1795 des CSP et de commerce «relatif aux réquisitions pour le commerce extérieur»: «des réquisitions en vins, eau-de-vie, et autres denrées de notre superflu portées jusqu'à ce jour pour le commerce extérieur sont maintenues et continueront de s'exécuter, ainsi que celles qui auront pour objet l'approvisionnement des armées», puis arrêté du CSP du 7 janvier: les vins, liqueurs, eaux-de-vie des émigrés et condamnés mis en réquisition «continueront d'être expédiés pour servir d'échange avec les étrangers.» Les deux mesures font suite au décret de la Convention du 2 janvier «sur les finances et le crédit public» qui rétablit la liberté du commerce et met fin aux réquisitions.

<sup>38</sup> Arrêtés du CSP des 3 et 15 juillet 1794.



1794.<sup>39</sup> Le 15 juillet, la commission fournit pour une valeur de trente millions d'objets de luxe à la maison Durazzo (voir Annexe 7). Le commissaire en charge insiste à nouveau sur l'utilité d'un échange qui évite la sortie de numéraire.

Cette opération en masse présente une grande utilité au Gouvernement; elle favorise une exportation en articles de luxe inutiles dans les Républiques, procure des fonds à Gênes notre principal marché pour les achats de blé dans le Midi et facilite le paiement de ces mêmes grains qui éprouvent souvent de grandes difficultés, lorsqu'il faut y faire passer le métal nécessaire.<sup>40</sup>

Cependant, comme pour les transactions entre particuliers, les règlements sont pour la plupart mixtes, numéraire et objets précieux.

Nous nous soumettons envers la République à ne recevoir sur le prix de nos traités que la somme de trois cent mille livres en métal et le surplus en marchandise de luxe dites satins, taffetas, gros de naple, croisés de soie, unis, et bas de soie, lampas et satins brodés, qui nous seront livrés comme métal l'aurait été francs à Basle [...]. L'évaluation de ces marchandise sera faite par experts respectivement nommés, en valeur métallique.<sup>41</sup>

Le système de troc fonctionne si bien qu'il dut être modéré; dans une correspondance sont évoquées «l'immense quantité», «des demandes considérables de la commission»<sup>42</sup>. Il est décidé que le droit de préemption de la commission de commerce ne peut s'exercer qu'après l'examen du comité des domaines et de celui de la commission des arts, «appelée lors de la levée des scellés».<sup>43</sup> Mais la coordination entre les commissions fonctionne avec difficulté. Fin octobre 1794, un rapport de la commission des revenus nationaux au comité des finances sur la centralisation des dépôts de meubles à Paris fait connaître les tensions provoquées par l'activisme de la commission de commerce. Il présente des observations «non seulement sur la

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<sup>39</sup> Voir les journaux «des meubles et effets destinés aux échanges», AN, O/2/402 (96 feuillets, 5 avril-17 octobre 1794), O/2/403 (99 feuillets, octobre-décembre 1794), O/2/404 (69 feuillets, 1794-1796), avec les inventaires détaillés des objets et œuvres d'art saisis chez les émigrés, ou encore les «Effets destinés aux échanges et exportations, provenant des biens de Monsieur au Luxembourg (meubles, coffres, tableaux, gravures), an II-an IV (1793-1796)», O/2/470/62 à 68, et les inventaires trouvés chez des condamnés ou émigrés «choisis pour la Commission de commerce», O/2/470/102 à 112, etc.

<sup>40</sup> Rapport du commissaire Jouennault, cité dans le *Bulletin d'histoire économique de la Révolution*, Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 1912, n° 1, p. 212 (note).

<sup>41</sup> AN, O/2/464/3, «Correspondance sur les étoffes de luxe à livrer à Bosset et Richard», lettre des négociants acceptant le marché proposé par la commission des revenus nationaux, 20 octobre 1794. C'est ce qui explique la récurrence des mesures sur la conversion des matières d'or et d'argent en lingots, tel le décret du 31 juillet 1795 «qui ordonne le versement à la monnaie de tous les effets en or, vermeil, argent, &c. qui restent encore déposés à la trésorerie nationale ou dans les magasins nationaux».

<sup>42</sup> AN, O/2/470/1/128, lettre de la commission des revenus nationaux à Bayard, inspecteur du Garde-Meuble, 24 octobre 1794, suite aux demandes de la commission du commerce d'avoir des objets pour «servir aux échanges».

<sup>43</sup> Article 3 de l'arrêté du CSP du 16 mai 1794 sur la création d'une commission pour le département de Paris «occupée uniquement de la conservation et de la vente du mobilier des émigrés et des condamnés, et des autres domaines nationaux où il y aurait du mobilier».

réunion dont il s'agit, mais encore sur quelques points d'administration relative au mobilier de Paris»,<sup>44</sup> et révèle la concurrence entre les instances. La commission des revenus nationaux rappelle que la commission de commerce «a été autorisée à employer dans ses opérations commerciales avec l'étranger, les diamants, l'argenterie, les bijoux, les meubles précieux de tous genres, les vins et liqueurs qui pourroient être exportés avec avantage et facilité», et affirme ne pas avoir «eu d'abord connaissance de ces mesures». <sup>45</sup> Informée «indirectement, elle a réclamé l'intervention nécessaire de ses agents, pour la distraction, l'estimation et la remise de tous les objets mobiliers qui seroient demandés par la commission de commerce» puisque la responsabilité des meubles nationaux lui incombe «jusqu'à leur vente ou leur emploi réel». Or il existe quatre marchés en compétition sur la place parisienne: les meubles destinés à être vendus; les «objets d'arts et de science, réservés pour l'instruction publique»; les «meubles précieux destinés aux échanges et opérations de commerce»; enfin, «ceux du mobilier propre à l'ameublement des commissions, agences, tribunaux et autres établissements publics». Face à l'opacité de la conduite des opérations par la commission de commerce, poursuit l'auteur du rapport, il convient de «fixer exactement [...] la ligne de démarcation entre les deux commissions pour leur responsabilité respective». La commission des revenus nationaux propose *in fine* d'avoir «la surveillance immédiate du magasin des meubles précieux destinés aux échanges et à l'exportation», de nommer les préposés et de remettre lesdits objets à la commission de commerce, «sur sa demande et d'après estimation».

Les relations entre la commission des arts et celle des subsistances sont tout aussi tendues. Lors de la séance du 24 mai 1794, des membres de la commission des arts du district de Versailles avertissent qu'à Louveciennes «un agent de la Commission des subsistances a fait emballer pour Le Havre une table et une commode uniques en leur genre, destinées à être échangées avec l'étranger.» Il est décidé de faire arrêter la vente et d'écrire au comité de salut public «pour l'informer des abus de pouvoir que commettent les agents de la Commission des subsistances, qui, sans avoir consulté la Commission temporaire des arts, fait échanger avec l'étranger des objets rares et précieux, qui ne peuvent être aliénés sans perte pour l'instruction publique». (Tuetey 1912, 192-93). L'inspecteur du Garde-Meuble s'émeut lui aussi de l'exportation d'objets inestimables, comme lors de la préparation de la vente des meubles de Monsieur, frère du roi; il propose l'intervention préalable de la commission temporaire des arts.

... D'après la protection que la Convention nationale est disposée à accorder aux arts je proposerai même de faire arrêter par la Commission de commerce et approvisionnements de ne rien laisser transporter à la maison de l'infantado en meubles et effets précieux destinés à des échanges avant d'avoir fait bien examiner par la Commission temporaire des arts s'il ne se trouve pas quelques

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<sup>44</sup> AN, O/2/487/2/37, «Rapport au comité des finances», 30 octobre 1794.

<sup>45</sup> Les propos surprennent car sont cités deux arrêtés du comité de salut public (23 mars et 16 juillet 1794) et un décret de ventose de la Convention.

articles uniques qu'il est de la splendeur et de l'intérêt de la République française de conserver dans ses muséum...<sup>46</sup>

La vigilance et les interventions sans relâche de la commission temporaire des arts portèrent leurs fruits mais le système de troc mis en place au printemps 1794 dura plusieurs années: en 1796 et 1797, des capitaines grecs, des fournisseurs français continuaient d'être payés en étoffes, tapisseries, tableaux, glaces ou meubles précieux alors que le processus de restitution des biens aristocratiques avait commencé.<sup>47</sup>

Le recours au troc de la République au printemps 1794 comme monnaie d'échanges alternative correspond à l'ultime étape d'un processus engagé en 1790 avec la vente des biens nationaux. Dans un contexte d'urgence, face à la difficulté de trouver ou d'appliquer des mesures adéquates, l'acte politique peut présenter une part d'imprévisibilité plutôt que de traduire une décision mûrement réfléchie. L'un des objectifs de l'enquête fut d'établir la traçabilité, en quelque sorte, d'une décision politique pour la contextualiser avec rigueur et la comprendre, tant elle paraissait inouïe. L'idée du troc fut un ricochet à partir d'une proposition fortuite émise par un agent de l'administration à l'esprit pragmatique. Présenté comme une solution opportune, le troc avait l'avantage de faire d'une pierre deux coups après l'insuccès d'autres tentatives et dans l'attente d'un retour à des pratiques plus conventionnelles: d'une part accélérer la mise sur le marché de biens séquestrés immobilisés dans des dépôts coûteux, d'autre part résoudre la sempiternelle question du moyen de paiement des approvisionnements de matières premières nécessaires à l'effort de guerre. Le recours au troc était néanmoins une pratique peu usitée dans les échanges commerciaux entre puissances occidentales. Mais l'attrait des produits de luxe à la française joua à plein. Jusqu'alors fragilisés, en dépit d'une indéniable pugnacité, les producteurs et les marchands du secteur, réhabilités et dûment encouragés, purent rebondir. Le luxe *made in France* connut une diffusion accélérée, non seulement sur le marché intérieur mais aussi sur les marchés internationaux, en témoignent les autorisations d'exportation délivrées par le comité de salut public. Révélée par des correspondances et des rapports internes, une course de vitesse s'engagea entre ministres et commissions pour obtenir les biens convoités. L'ironie de l'histoire, s'il est possible de s'exprimer ainsi, c'est que l'opération de troc instituée par le pouvoir révolutionnaire reposait sur le luxe aristocratique, quintessence de l'Ancien Régime. Loin d'être effacé, il était mis sur le devant de la scène.

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<sup>46</sup> AN, O/2/470/65, lettre de Bayard, inspecteur du Garde-Meuble, à la commission des revenus nationaux, 5 décembre 1794, à propos du transfert des meubles de luxe de l'ancien palais du Petit-Luxembourg à la maison de l'Infantado, et notamment d'un «coffre à diamants qui par la perfection et la beauté du travail passe pour un chef d'œuvre de l'art qu'il serait difficile à remplacer».

<sup>47</sup> AN, O/2/457/13, «Récépissés de meubles et objets sortis du Garde-meuble»: «tableaux et estampes provenant du Garde-meuble et du mobilier des émigrés d'Argentré, Bohier-Lantenay, Édouard Dillon, Guinet, Philippe-Égalité, le tout délivré à des capitaines grecs en paiement de fournitures de grains», «étoffes précieuses et basains tirés du Garde-meuble remis aux mêmes capitaines grecs»; O/2/458/3, «Meubles et étoffes précieux, dont une partie vient de Versailles, [...] destinés à être vendus ou donnés aux Capitaines grecs»; AN, O/2/464/2 et 3, «Effets du Garde-meuble et du dépôt de l'Infantado délivrés aux fournisseurs de la République, en paiement de leurs fournitures».

## ANNEXES

### **Annexe 1: Mesures législatives réglementant les échanges commerciaux avec les neutres et le paiement en numéraire, automne 1793: première nécessité *versus* superflu**

Décret de la Convention nationale du 3 septembre 1793 «relatif aux marchandises dont la sortie est défendue par le décret du 15 août, et qui ont été chargées ou destinées à l'être sur bâtimens neutres»

La Convention nationale, voulant [...] assurer les moyens d'échange aux capitaines des bâtimens neutres qui apportent en France soit des subsistances, soit des matières premières, [...], décrète ce qui suit: [...]

IV. Les capitaines des bâtimens neutres qui auront importé en France des subsistances et des matières premières, pourront prendre, en retour, indépendamment des objets dont la prohibition n'a pas été décrétée, des vins, vinaigres, liqueurs, eaux-de-vie, prunes, sucres-têtes terrés ou raffinés, le sel et le miel en barril, sans qu'il puisse être exporté une plus grande quantité de tonneaux que celle qui aura été importée; ce qui sera réglé suivant l'usage ordinaire du commerce. [...]

V. [...] le capitaine d'un bâtiment neutre [...] joindra un état des objets qu'il voudra exporter, et de leur valeur.

Décret de la Convention nationale du 6 octobre 1793 «qui spécifie les vaisseaux dont le déchargement devra avoir lieu en exécution du décret du 11 septembre, et ceux qui n'y seront pas assujétis»

Art. I. Les marchandises chargées sur les vaisseaux pour sortir de la République seront déchargées sur-le-champ, [...], sauf les exceptions suivantes.

II. Le déchargement cessera d'avoir lieu pour les bâtimens français ou neutres qui auroient importé en France des subsistances, approvisionnement et munitions de guerre et de marine, des matières premières ou autres objets compris dans la classe des denrées de première nécessité pour le compte de particuliers, pourvu que les chargemens destinés à être exportés n'excèdent pas la valeur des chargemens importés, et ne comprennent que des denrées et marchandises dont l'exportation n'est pas prohibée.

III. Les bâtimens neutres qui auront importé en France, [...], des subsistances, approvisionnement, munitions de guerre et de marine, des matières premières ou autres objets compris dans la classe des denrées de première nécessité, pourront recevoir et exporter un chargement de même valeur que celui qu'ils auront importé. [...]

V. Nul bâtiment ne pourra emporter de France aucun chargement, s'il n'a importé des subsistances, approvisionnement et munitions de guerre et de marine, des matières premières et autres objets compris dans la classe des denrées de première nécessité [...].

## Arrêté du CSP du 7 novembre 1793

1° Les capitaines de navires neutres, qui auront apporté des denrées et marchandises de première nécessité, les vendront de gré à gré aux agents du gouvernement qui seront désignés dans chaque port; ils pourront acheter, pour leur cargaison de retour, des denrées ou marchandises françaises pour la même somme, en débattant le prix; 2° Les capitaines, qui auront apporté des denrées et marchandises autres que celles de première nécessité, pourront les vendre aux commerçants de gré à gré, et, dans le cas où ils ne pourraient s'accorder, ils seront libres de les remporter, mais dans aucun cas ils ne pourront acheter des [...] marchandises françaises pour leur cargaison de retour.

Arrêtés du CSP en novembre et décembre 1793 pour régler une négociation sur le paiement en numéraire d'une transaction entre Le Havre et des capitaines américains

— 15 novembre

Le Comité de salut public, après avoir entendu le rapport de la Commission des subsistances et approvisionnements de la République, relativement à la vente de marchandises apportées au Havre par des vaisseaux des États-Unis, consistant particulièrement en matières de première nécessité, telles que potasse, tabac, huile de baleine, sucre, indigos, etc.; [...] Instruit que les capitaines ne veulent vendre qu'à la condition que leurs marchandises leur seront payées en espèces monnayées, ou en lettres de change sur l'étranger; considérant que la négociation de traites de cette nature dans un délai très court et pour une somme aussi considérable que celle du montant de ces marchandises, qui s'élèveront à plus de six millions, ferait baisser le change d'une manière désastreuse pour la République; que cette opération compromettrait son crédit et sa dignité et accroîtrait progressivement le prix de ces marchandises; Le Comité arrête qu'il autorise la Commission des subsistances et approvisionnements à nommer des commissaires, qui, de concert avec la municipalité du Havre, traiteront de l'achat définitif des marchandises dépendant desdites cargaisons, et à payer lesdits capitaines américains en espèces monnayées pour la totalité des objets qu'ils lui vendront [...].

— 23 décembre

1/ Le Comité de salut public de la Convention nationale, après avoir entendu le rapport de la Commission des subsistances et approvisionnements de la République relativement aux propositions faites par des capitaines de navires des États-Unis d'exporter des marchandises de luxe, non comprises dans la loi sur le maximum, et pour lever les difficultés du paiement que la municipalité du Havre veut faire en numéraire, dans la même quantité qu'elles sont estimées en assignats, arrête que les marchandises de luxe, que lesdits capitaines américains se proposent d'exporter, seront payés par eux en numéraire comparé avec les assignats dans la même proportion qu'ils en ont reçu pour la cargaison qu'ils ont vendue à la République; que la Commission des subsistances et approvisionnements de la République achètera lesdites

marchandises en assignats pour les livrer auxdits capitaines, conformément à l'article ci-dessus.

2/ Le Comité de salut public de la Convention nationale, après avoir entendu le rapport de la Commission des subsistances et approvisionnements de la République relativement aux inquiétudes témoignées par les capitaines de navires des États-Unis d'être arrêtés dans l'exportation qu'ils se proposent de faire du numéraire qui leur a été donné pour le prix de leur cargaison, arrête qu'il est permis aux capitaines desdits bâtiments d'emporter le numéraire qui leur a été remis [...] pour le prix de leur cargaison; que le montant de ce numéraire sera certifié par la municipalité du Havre; enfin que la municipalité du Havre est autorisée à laisser faire cette exportation.

Arrêté du CSP du 6 mars 1794

Art. 2 La Commission fera acheter à Bordeaux les vins, eaux de vie, articles de luxe, nécessaires pour composer le chargement de six navires américains qui seront expédiés sans retard ds differens États de l'Amérique, et consignés aux membres de la légation française, pour être vendus par eux, & sous leur surveillance, & le produit être employé au paiement des achats que la maison de James Swan et Cie a Boston est chargée de faire pour compte de la République; art 3 Comme ces expéditions pourroient entraîner des longueurs qui suspendroient l'exécution des ordres donnés dans les Etats Unis pour l'achat des denrées de première nécessité, la Trésorerie nationale fera provisoirement passer au havre marat dans le plus court délai possible la somme d'un million en métal pour être mise a bord d'un navire destiné pour la recevoir, qui sera indiqué par James Swan et cie tenus de faire assurer ladite somme pour tout risque en leur nom, et de produire les polices d'assurance qui devront être faites dans plusieurs places de commerce, sur lesquelles on choisira les assureurs les plus solides.

## **Annexe 2: Exemples d'autorisations d'exportation de luxe délivrées à des capitaines neutres ou des négociants français**

Arrêté du conseil exécutif provisoire du 26 novembre 1793

Le Conseil exécutif provisoire, sur le rapport du ministre de la marine, arrête:

1° Que le négociant O.-C. Wessel, de Christiana en Norvège, pourra exporter par son navire *la Résolution* les 20,656 livres de café qu'il a achetées à Brest au moyen du produit des planches de sapin qu'il y a importées; 2° Que ces cafés seront exempts des 6 sols par livre imposés sur les cafés provenant des prises; 3° Que les mêmes cafés pourront être exportés par un autre bâtiment appartenant au négociant O.-C. Wessel, qui aurait importé dans la République des planches de sapin ou approvisionnements de première nécessité, dans le cas où son navire *la Résolution* serait parti avant la notification du présent arrêté. La présente délibération sera soumise à l'approbation du Comité de salut public.

Arrêté du Comité de salut public (CSP) du 10 février 1794

Le Comité de salut public, après avoir entendu le rapport de la Commission des subsistances et approvisionnements de la République, sur les propositions faites par les citoyens Félix Cossin et Nicolas Schweighauser tous deux négociants de Nantes, arrête ce qui suit: 1° Les citoyens Félix Cossin et Nicolas Schweighauser [...] seront autorisés [...] de passer dans les États-Unis d'Amérique, avec une partie de marchandises de luxe et de valeur de 40,000 livres. 2° Les citoyens Cossin et Schweighauser [...] opéreront la rentrée des sommes qu'ils sont chargés de recouvrer pour le commerce de Nantes, et les verseront dans les caisses des consuls de la nation française auprès des mêmes Etats, ainsi que le produit des marchandises qu'ils auront exportées, dont il leur sera fourni un récépissé, pour leur être remboursé en France. 3° Les consuls de la nation française auprès des États-Unis sont chargés d'employer toutes les sommes provenant de ces rentrées au paiement des achats que la République fait faire en Amérique.

Arrêté du CSP du 24 février 1794

Le Comité de salut public, sur le rapport de la Commission des subsistances et approvisionnements de la République sur les propositions qui lui ont été faites par les Clavel, Matheus et Cie, négociants à Rouen, qui ont demandé si les bâtiments neutres qui importeront des matières premières, telles que des cuirs, cotons, suifs, laines, potasses et autres objets de première nécessité, ne seront pas retenus dans les ports de la République, si on leur permettra d'exporter des marchandises de luxe, des vins fins et des objets surabondants ou qui ne seront pas de première nécessité; arrête que les bâtiments neutres qui importeront des matières premières, des objets de première nécessité, tels que les proposent Clavel, Matheus, et autres de même nature ou utilité, ne seront pas retenus dans les ports de la République, et qu'ils pourront se charger en retour de marchandises de luxe, de vins fins et d'articles qui ne sont pas de première nécessité, ou qui se trouvent en quantité surabondante, ainsi que des cottes de tabac.

**Annexe 3: Instructions de la commission des subsistances et approvisionnements à l'agence de Malte, le 4 mars 1794, approuvées par le comité de salut public**

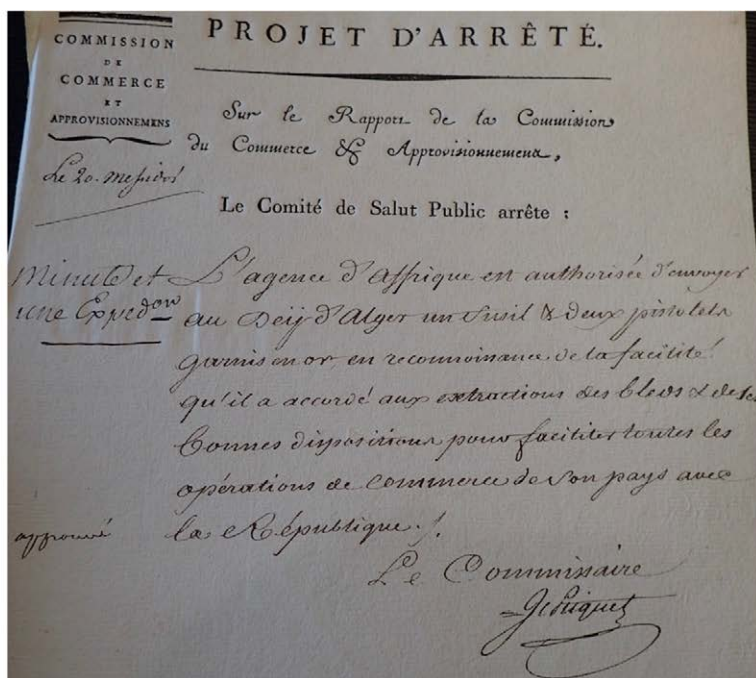
art. 6: L'agent de la République française à Gênes payera dans la huitaine de la présentation qui lui sera faite des états arrêtés et certifiés, leur montant en espèce, à l'agent de Malthe [...]

art. 7: Tous les genres de subsistances sont compris dans l'approvisionnement dont l'agence à Malthe est chargée et cependant elle donnera la préférence au blé et au riz.

art. 8: Comme les échanges des objets que le Levant est habitué de tirer de la France peuvent être dans les paiements, plus désirés que les espèces, [...]

comme l'exportation sera d'autant plus facile et avantageuse que les navires malthais ou autres qui auraient apporté des approvisionnements seront tout disposés pour un chargement de retours, la Commission des subsistances charge ses agens d'engager les négocians malthais ou les neutres qui fréquentent les ports de cette isle, de commercer directement en France où ils pourront se procurer les soieries, draps fins, denrées coloniales, porcelaines, glaces, pierreries et autres objets dont l'exportation sera permise; elle les charge pareillement de se concerter avec l'agence de Marseille sur les moyens de favoriser et d'étendre ce commerce.

#### Annexe 4: Projet d'arrêté du comité de salut public autorisant l'envoi d'armes au dey d'Alger, 8 juillet 1794





**Annexe 5: Mesures législatives prises en septembre 1792 pour convertir en numéraire les matières d'or et d'argent acquises par la République, à la suite du décret du 31 août**

Décret du 31 août «relatif aux matières d'or & d'argent retirées des maisons dites royales & des Eglises»:

L'Assemblée Nationale décrète que toutes les matières d'or & d'argent & bijoux qui auront été retirées par les Commissaires de l'Assemblée Nationale, de la Commune & des Sections de Paris & autres, quelles qu'elles puissent être, soit des maisons dites royales, soit des églises & autres lieux publics ou particuliers, seront portées sans délai, & sous la responsabilité desdits Commissaires, à la Trésorerie nationale, pour être ensuite remises à l'Hôtel des monnoies.

Il sera dressé à la Trésorerie nationale procès-verbal de l'entrée & de la sortie desdits objets, & lesdits procès-verbaux seront livrés à l'impression.

Décret du 4 septembre «relatif à l'adjudication du mobilier dépendant des biens nationaux, & à la destination des effets mobiliers des Églises religieuses & Congrégations supprimées»:

TITRE II. De la destination des ornemens & autres effets mobiliers des Églises religieuses & Congrégations supprimées.

Art. I: Les ornemens tissus d'or & d'argent fin, les galons & broderie détachés des étoffes où ils se trouveroient appliqués, des Églises cathédrales & des chapitres convertis en Églises paroissiales [...]; ceux des Églises religieuses, des Congrégations & Associations religieuses supprimées, seront incessamment adressée, avec les précautions nécessaires pour leur conservation, [...] au Directeur de la Monnoie le plus voisin du Département.

V: Ces ornemens seront brûlés [...]: les cendres en provenant seront converties en lingots [...].

VII: Les lingots provenant de la fonte seront convertis en espèces dont le versement sera fait à la Trésorerie nationale, qui en tiendra compte, en assignats, à la Caisse de l'Extraordinaire [...].

Décret du 9 septembre «relatif à l'Argenterie des Eglises & des Maisons dépendantes de la Liste Civile»:

L'Assemblée Nationale décrète que l'argenterie des églises & des maisons dépendantes de la liste civile soit portés aux Hôtels des monnoies les plus voisins, pour être monnoyée.

Décret du 10 septembre «Décret relatif aux Meubles, Effets & Ustensiles en or & en argent, employés au service du Culte»:

L'Assemblée Nationale considérant que les meubles, effets & ustensiles en or & en argent, employés au service du culte dans les églises conservées, sont de pure ostentation, & ne conviennent nullement à la simplicité qui doit accompagner ce service. Que lorsque la Patrie est en danger & que ses besoins sont urgents, il est nécessaire d'y pourvoir par les ressources qui peuvent être utilement employées sans surcharger les Citoyens. Que tous les objets dont les églises conservées sont actuellement garnies, appartiennent incontestablement à la Nation, qui a le droit d'en faire l'application réclamée par les circonstances actuelles, décrète qu'il y a urgence. L'Assemblée Nationale, après avoir décrété l'urgence, décrète ce qui suit: [...]

III. Le Directoire du District enverra, par la voie la plus sûre et la plus prompte, à mesure de leur réception, toutes les pièces d'or & d'argent qui lui parviendront, à l'hôtel des Monnoies le plus voisin de son territoire [...]

VI. Ces pièces, à l'instant de l'arrivée, seront converties en monnaie, qui sera employée au paiement du prêt des différentes armées françaises. [...].

Décret du 28 septembre: «concernant le dépôt des effets trouvés au Louvre, aux Tuileries, etc.»:

La Convention nationale décrète ce qui suit:

Art. I. La municipalité de Paris, les commissaires des sections de Paris, le garde des archives et autres dépositaires, [...], feront la déclaration, dans le jour, à la Convention, s'ils ont ou non reçu ou retiré des matières d'or, d'argent et des bijoux, soit des maisons dites royales, soit des églises et autres lieux publics ou particuliers [...].

II. La remise des matières d'or, d'argent, des bijoux, mentionnée dans la loi du 31 août 1792, sera faite directement à l'hôtel des monnoies [...].

#### **Annexe 6: Décret relatif aux diamans, pierreries et bijoux qui sont déposés à l'administration des domaines nationaux, 1er mars 1794**

La Convention nationale, après avoir entendu le rapport de son comité des finances, décrète:

Art. I. Les diamans, pierres précieuses, perles et autres bijoux montés ou non montés, qui sont actuellement déposés à l'administration des domaines nationaux, seront transportés sans délai à l'administration des monnoies à Paris, avec les procès-verbaux descriptifs qui existent entre les mains de l'administrateur des domaines nationaux.

II. Les effets mentionnés en l'article précédent seront remis au caissier établi près l'administration des monnoies à Paris, par le caissier de l'administration des domaines nationaux, en présence des administrateurs des monnoies, auxquels il remettra les procès-verbaux descriptifs.

III. Lesdits effets, avec les procès-verbaux descriptifs, seront déposés dans une caisse à trois clefs, dont une restera au pouvoir du caissier, une au pouvoir des administrateurs des monnoies, et la troisième au pouvoir de l'inspecteur national.

IV. Les administrateurs des monnoies feront démonter de suite les diamans, perles et pierres précieuses qui leur seront remis; ils feront déterminer la valeur et le poids de chaque objet séparément.

V. Il sera donné un numéro à chaque objet dont la valeur et le poids auront été déterminés: le caissier s'en chargera en recette, en rappelant le numéro du procès-verbal d'estimation, et il les déposera ensuite dans la caisse à trois clefs.

VI. Le dernier jour de chaque décade, le caissier de la monnaie fera passer au caissier-général de la trésorerie nationale, les diamans, perles et pierres précieuses, qui auront été démontés dans la décade; il y joindra un bordereau contenant le numéro et la valeur estimative de chaque objet, qu'il fera viser par les administrateurs des monnoies.

VII. Le caissier des monnoies tiendra un compte séparé de ses recettes en diamans, perles et pierres précieuses, et des remises qu'il en fera à la trésorerie.

VIII. Le caissier général de la trésorerie nationale portera en recette le montant de l'estimation des effets qui lui seront remis, en indiquant le bordereau qui les accompagnera; il les rangera par ordre de poids dans la caisse à trois clefs, dans laquelle il déposera les bordereaux d'envoi.

IX. Les diamans, perles et pierres précieuses, qui seront déposés à la trésorerie nationale, ne pourront en sortir qu'en vertu d'un décret du corps législatif, ou d'un arrêté du comité de salut public, et seulement pour l'échange ou la solde des denrées ou marchandises de première nécessité, tirées de l'étranger.

X. Le poids des matières d'or et d'argent qui seront séparées des diamans et pierres précieuses, sera constaté par un procès-verbal signé par les administrateurs et l'agent national des monnoies, et le caissier des monnoies s'en chargera de suite en recette au compte des matières d'or et d'argent.

XI. Les diverses dispositions ci-dessus prescrites à l'égard des diamans, perles et effets précieux, actuellement à l'administration des domaines nationaux, seront observées pour tous les objets de cette nature, appartenant à la nation, ou dont elle pourra devenir propriétaire: en conséquence, lesdits objets seront de suite portés ou envoyés directement à l'administration des monnoies à Paris, qui en fera délivrer un récépissé par le caissier chargé de la recette.

XII. Il sera dressé un procès-verbal particulier de l'estimation des diamans, perles et effets précieux provenant des émigrés, en y indiquant le nom du ci-devant propriétaire de chaque objet; le montant de leur estimation sera déposé en assignats dans la serre du produit des biens des émigrés. Les commissaires de la trésorerie nationale enverront un double à la régie de l'enregistrement, afin qu'elle puisse en porter le montant à l'actif du compte de l'émigré auquel ils ont appartenu.

XIII. Les effets d'or et d'argent qui, par la main-d'oeuvre, auront une valeur supérieure de moitié à celle de la matière, ne seront plus fondus.

XIV. Ils seront réparés à neuf; les marques de royauté ou féodalité qui s'y trouveront, seront enlevées. Ils seront ensuite estimés et transportés à la

trésorerie nationale, avec un numéro à chaque objet, et un bordereau indicatif de leur estimation et de leur poids.

XV. Le caissier général de la trésorerie nationale portera en recette la valeur estimative des objets qu'il recevra; il les déposera, avec leur bordereau, dans la caisse à trois clefs.

XVI. Ces objets ne pourront sortir de la caisse à trois clefs que sur le pied de leur estimation et d'après un arrêté du comité de salut public, et seulement pour servir à l'échange et solde des denrées et marchandises de première nécessité.

XVII. Il sera nommé, par le conseil exécutif, trois personnes pour démonter et estimer les diamans, perles et pierres précieuses, et un orfèvre pour estimer et réparer les effets d'or et d'argent qui doivent être conservés en exécution du présent décret.

XVIII. Le comité des assignats et monnoies nommera deux de ses membres pour surveiller les transports et opérations mentionnés au présent décret.

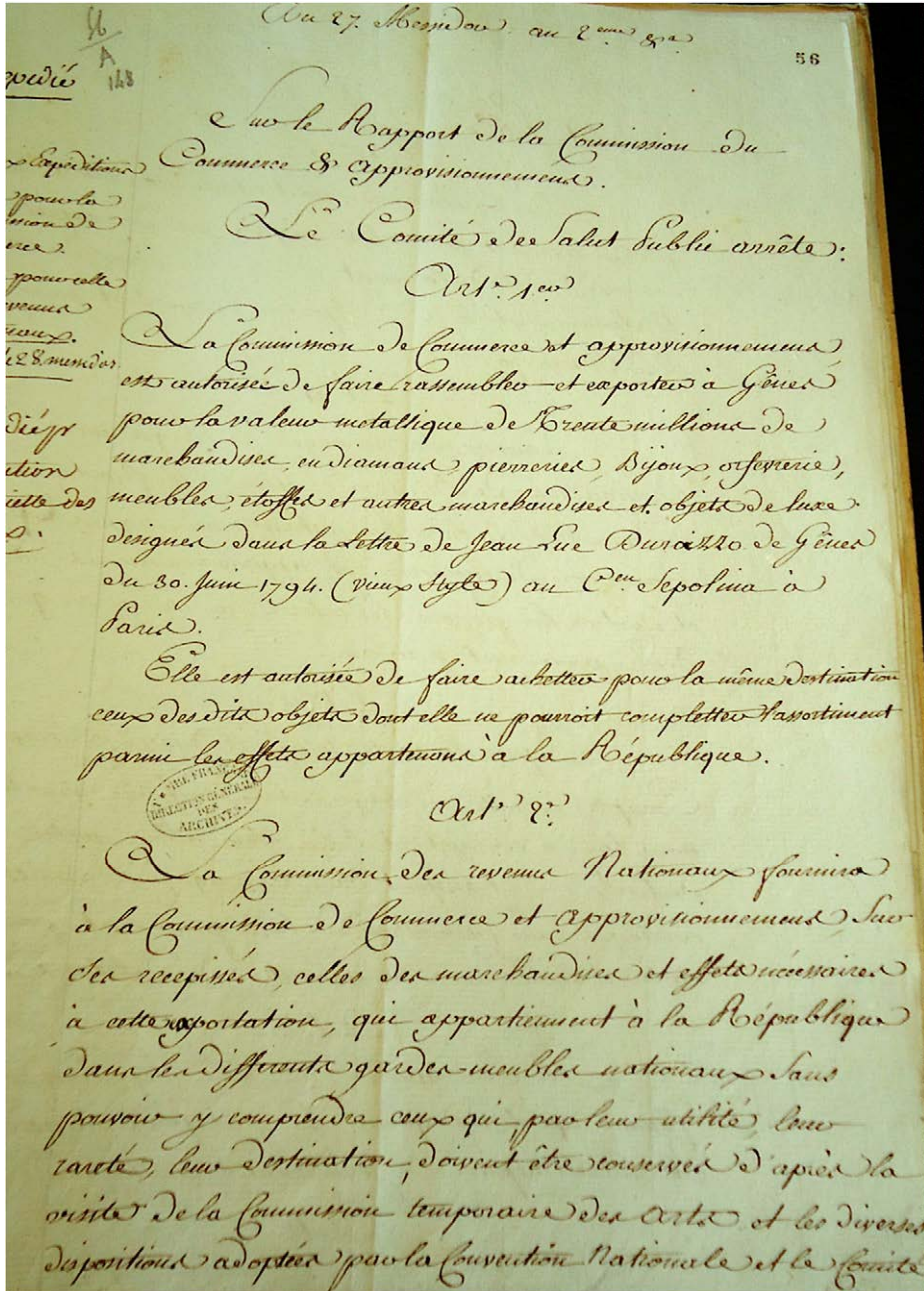
XIX. La commission des approvisionnemens et subsistances se conciliera avec les commissaires de la trésorerie nationale, pour l'emploi des effets mentionnés au présent décret.

XX. Les comités des finances et d'instruction nommeront deux membres pour enlever les scellés apposés sur des caisses contenant des médailles, qui sont déposées à la trésorerie nationale.

XXI. Ils feront un inventaire des effets qui s'y trouveront. Ils feront porter au cabinet des médailles celles qui seront dans le cas d'être conservées, et à la monnaie de Paris celles qui devront être fondues.

XXII. L'administration des monnoies sera tenue de faire terminer, dans deux mois, la fonte et estimation des effets et matières d'or et d'argent, et des diamans et autres effets précieux qui sont actuellement à la monnaie ou à l'administration des domaines nationaux, et de les faire porter dans ce délai à la trésorerie nationale.

**Annexe 7: Arrêté du comité de salut public relatif  
à une exportation de marchandises de luxe à Gênes, 15 juillet 1794  
(extrait)**



De Salet Sublie.

Art. 3.  
 Ces marchandises seront estimées au même temps  
 qu'elles auroient pu valoir en 1789. par des experts  
 nommés contradictoirement par la Commission des Revenus  
 Nationaux et le C<sup>on</sup>. Sepoliva, stipulant pour Jean  
 Luc Durazzo.

Art. 4.  
 À mesure des arrivages de chaque mois dans  
 les magasins de Durazzo à Gènes, il fera les avances  
 des deniers de la valeur estimée, au payeur de la  
 Commission de Commerce et approvisionnement indiqués  
 et dont on lui payera les intérêts à raison de quatre et  
 demi pour cent, par an.

Art. 5.  
 Après la vente totale, Durazzo remettra un  
 Comptes détaillé de chaque article, conforme aux livres qu'il  
 aura tenu à ce sujet et il lui sera alloué outre les frais  
 de Nolis, de transport dans les magasins, Droits et  
 courtages, une Commission de trois pour cent pour la  
 vente et le Turnois, ou garantie des débiteurs.

Art. 6.  
 Il sera accordé au C<sup>on</sup>. Sepoliva et à un  
 commis qu'il indiquera, les passeports nécessaires pour  
 le rendre auprès de Jean Luc Durazzo de Gènes.

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*Alternative currencies and quality of life in late thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Marseille: Negotiating labour in times of turmoil\**

In late August 1297, Doucette Bermond, a young woman who was fearing a postpartum surgical intervention, was granted a miraculous recovery by Saint Louis of Anjou: she was healed after vowing to clean every Saturday for the rest of her life the Franciscan church of Marseille, where the holy man was buried, because «she was too poor» to buy beeswax offerings. Years later in 1308, when summoned to testify before the papal commission investigating the canonization case of the Angevine prince, she reiterated, more pointedly this time, that she had requested to be fed by the friars while on duty in the sanctuary for «she had to work with her own hands to make a living».<sup>1</sup> In other words, she had offered the Minor Brothers her worthy ancillary services with two ends in mind: to clear a spiritual debt and to obtain earthly sustenance. In November 1326, Raymond Garrigue approached the jurist Bertrand Aydolphe to remit his person, goods, and labour into his hands, «given Bertrand's sincere affection toward him» and willingness to ensure his basic needs for the remainder of his life. Although Raymond explained his decision on the grounds that having nothing to live on he had to beg, he was a family man with a minimum of resources since, prior to the transaction, he had returned half his assets in repayment for his wife's dowry and children's alimony.<sup>2</sup> Emotional and psychological factors –

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<sup>1</sup> «[U]nam ymaginem de cera portaret et omni die sabbati, quamdiu viveret, cum una vigilia suum tumulum visitaret; et eodem die, si fratres sustinere vellent, suam ecclesiam scoparet, erat enim pauperrima mulier»: Bibliothèque d'Autun, France, Ms. S 88, 69, *Liber miraculorum sancti Ludovici episcopi* (LMSL), f. 17r-v. The book of miracles attributed to Saint Louis of Anjou was edited in 1951 along with the canonization proceedings by the College of St Bonaventure: *Processus canonizationis et legendae varie Sancti Ludovici O.F.M. episcopi Tolosani. Vol. VII. Analecta franciscana* (AF). Quaracchi-Florence: Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventurae ad Claras Aquas. For the quotation cited above, see AF 1951, 301; for the second quotation, «habet querere panem cum manibus suis», AF 1951, 166.

<sup>2</sup> «Cum non habeo unde vivam et vadam mendicantem, videns et aspiciens affectionem quam vos, dominus Bertrandus Aydulphi jurisperitus de Massilia, erga me habetis et hactenus habuistis, idcirco dono me personaliter et totum laborem meum ac fatigam quam facere potero in futurum quamdiu vixerò ». In turn, the jurist pledged to support Bertrand in all his essential needs until the end of his days: «juravit dictum Raymundum Garrida tenere et custodire quamdiu vixerit sanum et egrum et sibi providere in victu, vestitu, et calciamentis iuxta facultatem persone sue»: the transaction was struck on November 10, 1326, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), nouvelles acquisitions latines (n.a.l.), Fonds Mortreuil, 321, 291.

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Francine Michaud, *Alternative currencies and quality of life in Late Thirteenth- and Fourteenth-century Marseille: Negotiating labour in times of turmoil*, © Author(s), CC BY 4.0, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0347-0.11, in Angela Orlandi (edited by), *Mezzi di scambio non monetari. Merci e servizi come monete alternative nelle economie dei secoli XIII-XVIII / Alternative currencies. Commodities and services as exchange currencies in the monetarized economies of the 13<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries*, pp. 171-189, 2024, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 979-12-215-0347-0, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0347-0

although indebtedness cannot be ruled out – may well have been at play, but Raymond and Bertrand’s mutual agreement was not predicated on chronic material destitution: akin to a corrody, it was rather a reciprocal understanding of goods and service exchange requiring no money transfer.<sup>3</sup> No cash was transacted either in December 1375 when Monette Lambert, a single woman, accepted a wet nurse position in the household of the noble Jacques Ricau, whose wife Lucie had just given birth. Monette contented herself with a salary consisting of her meals and her shoes, one veil and one shirt, in addition to a dress of striped fabric that had belonged to her mistress.<sup>4</sup> Yet, the very same day, Monette had also initiated another labour contract along with her employer to hire out Antoinette Féraud, an acquaintance of hers (they were both from Les Arcs, a village in the Var Valley), to nurse Monette’s own newborn son. Unmarried herself, Antoinette was living with her mother and willing to settle for modest wages, no more than 10 florins. Despite her wageless salary, Monette had perhaps wisely calculated that, given her personal circumstances, the quality of her living conditions under the nobleman’s roof together with the care of her child by a trusted third party was more advantageous. What Monette, Raymond, and Doucette – a cleaning lady, a family man, and a wet nurse – had in common was their unequivocal willingness to accept, if not welcome, commodities and other forms of tangible goods rather than money in return for their output.

Workers in late medieval Marseille, a society hard-wired by a monetized economy, proved keenly attentive to forms of non-pecuniary payments in labour agreements. In this commercial harbour, the trades were loosely organized and, notably with respect to work conditions and wages, bereft of strict corporate regulations. This is made plain and manifest in the municipal statutes, formally enacted in the middle of the thirteenth century, when Charles I of Anjou, the new count of Provence, solemnly acknowledged the city’s privileges (Pernoud 1949; Lesage 1950). Governed by the spirit of contractual law binding two free individuals or their families, work conventions rested on the transfer of specie for the vast majority of adult labourers, but then again rarely without due consideration to other

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<sup>3</sup> Another case of personal donation, this time to an institution, surfaces in a notarial act drawn in 1397, whereby a certain Pons Trani from Aix-en-Provence, a man «without any obligation toward wife or children,» donated himself for life to the Holy Spirit hospital owing to his «profound devotion toward the civic institution,» with all his belongings and labour, promising to look after the hospital’s swine herd in exchange for decent conditions of life, in good health as in sickness: «propter devotionem quam habet, ut asserit, erga hospitale Christi Pauperum Sancti Spiritus dicte civitatis Massilie, dedit sive donavit ac causa dedicavit se et eius mercedes et operas nunc et per in perpetuum ... pro custodiendis porcis et aliis serviciis et operibus eiusdem hospitalis nunc et in perpetuo. ... Et dicti domini rectores ... teneant et debeant ipsum Poncium nunc et [in] perpetuo tenere, salvare, et custodire sanum et egrum ac sibi quamdiu vixerit perpetuo providere in victu, vestitu, et calciamento decentibus juxta suam conditionem, tam in sanitate quam etiam in infirmitate quod absit»: BnF, n.a.l., 1348, f. 181v-82r. On the well-to-do background of corrody beneficiaries in Flanders, see Thoen (2010).

<sup>4</sup> «[P]ensione videlicet seu loquerio potus et cibi ac calciamenti dedi et etiam ... unius veli, et unius camisie, et unius tunice de “mesclate” dicte domine Lucie, quam tunicam dicta Mon[et]a a dictis conjugibus confessa esse habuisse»: December 3, 1375, Archives départementales des Bouches-du-Rhône (ADBDR), notarial series (E), 351 E 44, f. 83v-84v. While a «*tunica*» was a simple dress often covered by a overgarment, «*mesclate*» was a type of fabric (Pansier 1927, 113), probably a woven mixture of woolen threads of different tinctorial dyes (Gérard-Marchand 1995, 93 note 19; 2013, 544; 558).

exchange currencies, such as goods and services.<sup>5</sup> Weighed against their market value, these loomed large in agreements involving young and vulnerable dependants, who represented a considerable segment of the workforce (Michaud 2016).<sup>6</sup> All the while, material goods and services were carefully assessed, especially in periods of economic downturn, severe inflationary trends, or sharp demographic fluctuations, which characterized the better part of the late thirteenth and fourteenth century in Marseille, and Provence as a whole (Coulet 1988; Bourin et al. 2011-13).<sup>7</sup> That a landowner in 1371 accepted to give in salary bonus to his hired ploughman a pair of stockings worth up to one florin, which, in case of a breach of contract, he would expect a tenfold repayment in the form of a houppelande worth ten florins, speaks volume of the trade value assigned to goods, especially in times of high living costs.<sup>8</sup>

For this paper, I have examined the oldest apprenticeship and work agreements from the notarial series of Marseille (1076 contracts) between 1248 to 1400, along with other pertinent archival materials and narratives from the legal, administrative, judicial, and religious records, with a focus on what appears to have mattered the most to the contracting parties across all trades<sup>9</sup>: victuals, clothing, education, and health care.<sup>10</sup> In the first instance I discuss the contemporary understandings and the nature of compensation in labour agreements, before turning to the contractual parties' expectations and obligations with respect to payments in kind and/or service for rendered labour. In final analysis, I place attention on labour negotiations to question whether and how the fourteenth-century crises, foremost in the wake of the Black Death, altered significantly conceptions and expectations relative to goods as currencies.

## 1. Labour compensation

In the language of Marseille's thirteenth-century statutory law, masters' and servants' material obligations were expressed in monetary terms, whether applying to

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<sup>5</sup> Of course scholars have long recognized the dominance of coins in labour payments at the end of the Middle Ages, while acknowledging the importance of mixed salaries.

<sup>6</sup> While at least 32% of household domestics were young workers, and considering that apprentice contracts form 31% of the entire labour corpus, in the seafaring sector alone – if one excludes coral expeditions left to seasoned specialists – young fishermen and sailors aged 10-20 years represented roughly 46% of the workforce (88 youths out of 190 seafarers under contract).

<sup>7</sup> «Il n'est que d'écouter les hommes qui, en 1350-1352, renoncent à leur tenure "*propter raritatem hominum et mortalitatem que precessit et nimiam caritiam operatorum*"» (Coulet 1988, 136).

<sup>8</sup> However, the terms of their understandings proved unusual only because the dissuasive penalty was to apply if the ploughman, who evidently suffered from a gambling addiction, relapsed into playing for money or 'other things': «*ut ipse Jacobus [Raolini, laborator,] non ludat neque ludi faciat ad denarios seu aliam rem valente in tempus infra declaratum, aliqua vice infra duos annos proxime venturos, quatenus submitit se dare pro dictis caligis predicto Johanni [de Laureis] unam chopam usque ad valorem decem florinorum*»: May 4, 1371, ADBDR, 351 E 31, f. 26r.

<sup>9</sup> While most occupations are represented in the corpus, quantitatively the data mirror crafts dominated by the land and sea extractive sectors (38%) and their derivatives industries (Michaud 2016).

<sup>10</sup> I will leave out from the analysis the occasional tools offered to apprentices upon the completion of their training.

income or penalty in case of contractual violation.<sup>11</sup> However, the term *«loquerium»*, commonly used in contracts to signify labour payment, encompassed both specie and kind, a mixture of which applied to the majority of labourers, old and young, men and women alike.<sup>12</sup> The concept also extended to the compensation masters may receive for the training of junior apprentices «by reason of their instructional labour».<sup>13</sup> The more lucrative the trade (and expensive in regards to production cost or capital outlay), the higher the teaching fees. Yet these often assumed the form of commodities – foremost wheat – in lieu of or in addition to pecuniary fees. Handed out as a salary, the *loquerium* sometimes excluded hard cash altogether. Indeed, between 1310 and 1395, I recorded no less than a dozen contracts whereby adult male workers, both unqualified and skilled, satisfied themselves with the necessities of life by way of income, like Raymond Garrigue, the *«donatus»* mentioned in the introduction. All the same, many more labourers settled for their keep with only a few coins in complementary earnings.<sup>14</sup>

Wageless income, though, was evidently more often bestowed on apprentices and young servants –especially girls, two-thirds of whom exclusively worked from hand to mouth.<sup>15</sup> To take only one example, goldsmiths never handed out anything but food, clothing, and shelter to their pupils, no matter how old or productive they were. Bermond Pellisier, a 16-year-old *«aurifaber»*, found a new placement with Raymond de Fabregas in 1390 in exchange for food, cloths, shelter, and, but not least, the ‘secrets’ of the master’s art.<sup>16</sup> When another goldsmith, the Englishman Robert de Rocha, who had emigrated to Marseille shortly after the Black Death, entrusted his son *«pro famulo et dicipulo»* with a local colleague to be trained for eight years in the trade, he did not expect his child to earn wages during all these years, even though the boy had surely been acquainted with some basic rudiments and know-how pertaining to the mysteries of his father’s own art. More to the point, Robert underscored the importance of good education «to secure a God-given honest living in this world».<sup>17</sup> Education was a priceless immaterial good held dear by many a parent, an ethical duty beholding masters to instruct dutifully their *dicipuli*

<sup>11</sup> *«[M]erces conventa seu debita»*: see statutes 2 and 47, book V (Pernoud, 1949, 165; 187).

<sup>12</sup> The ubiquitous meaning of *«loquerium»* pervades the data and is well illustrated by the case of 19-year-old Jean de Saint-Maximin, who was offered a yearly *«loquerium»* of *«viginti solidorum, unius tunice valoris decem solidorum, et unius camisie, et femoralie [breeches], et calciamentorum michi necessariorum»*: September 5, 1312, Archives municipales de Marseille (AMM), notarial series (ii), 1 ii 33, f. 33r.

<sup>13</sup> *«[R]atione laboris docendi»*: apprenticeship with a master barber, January 25, 1398, ADBDR, 355 E 81, f. 105v-06r.

<sup>14</sup> Notably young workers, but also migrants were mostly paid in goods, such as Guillaume Henri from Corail in Piedmont who, at the age of 20, found work for four years in the domestic service of Guillaume L’Anglais, in return for food, shelter, shoes, clothing, and one florin in cash: December 2, 1381, ADBDR, 351 E 38, f. 130v-31r.

<sup>15</sup> The documentary base for girls in domestic service – excluding adult women – is fourteen contracts.

<sup>16</sup> Nine contracts among goldsmiths are known between 1303 and 1390; for the case related here, see circa March 20, 1390, ADBDR, 351 E 39, f. 169r.

<sup>17</sup> *«[C]upiens ipsum arte instrui ut possit vitam in opere deffendere et Deo dante honeste vivere in hoc mundo »*: July 9, 1362, ADBDR, 351 E 25, f. 73r-v.

«out of equity», a principle that had been reminded to a fisherman, as he pledged to a fellow fisherman and his wife to teach the trade to their son to the best of his abilities.<sup>18</sup> Even senior apprentices, such as Bermond Pellisier just mentioned, exchanged their labour exclusively for advanced training, including intellectual knowledge. Jean Breton, a teaching assistant to the «*scolarum doctor*» Barthélemy de Fazino (schoolmaster), was willing to have his employer instruct him in the «science» of liberal arts in lieu of wages.<sup>19</sup> In the same spirit, Ayceline Durand, a widow from Aix-en-Provence, approached Loup Mini, a friar from the Third Order of the Penitence, to take her 8-year-old son Peyret in domestic service for six years, in return for his formal education, «as if he were his own son or brother».<sup>20</sup> Overall and until the time apprentices could master skilfully an art that enabled them to make an «honest living,» the pupils' and, especially, their parents' main concern was fair treatment at the hands of the master.

If in certain sectors or trades pecuniary salaries may be doled out to mature and experienced apprentices, children's limited ability to earn a few coins for their output while in artisanal training was hardly an issue for parents. After all, many were themselves artisans who relied on apprentices' cheap labour in their daily business operations. They tacitly supported the trade-off implied in competent professional training, as long as masters kept their children safe and sound, and under decent material conditions, which were themselves weighed against their market value in accordance with the dependant's social status (*iuxta qualitatem seu statutum vel conditionem*).

However, assessing the quantity as well as the quality of these provisions remains a formidable challenge, for few contracts detail them beyond the formulaic clause «*cibo et potu, vestimentis, et calciamentis*». Some agreements, though, yield of few clues. For instance, in 1335 the draper Pierre Élie estimated that to feed the 14-year-old son of a fellow merchant-draper, Jacques de Vaquières, it would cost him yearly no less than 7 *librae* (140 *solidi*), a sum that represented roughly 25% of the annual pay Pierre offered one of his hired draper-artisans two years later; meanwhile, the daily salary of a painter then was around 2.5 *solidi*.<sup>21</sup> Yet, the notion of decency, commonly stipulated in labour contracts, was evidently adapted to cultural expectations shared across medieval societies, that is, an individual's social and domestic status within a master's household. Thus, co-workers hired as a team may have received differential earnings, not only in wages but also in commodity goods, owing, at least in part, to age and experience. For instance in 1382 three sailors sold their services together: in yearly income, the first was offered 16 florins, plus two pairs of stockings (*caligarum*), two robes – one in colour worth 1 florin the *canne*, the other made of white coarse

<sup>18</sup> «[S]ecundum exigenciam equitatis»: March 16, 1320, ADBDR, 381 E 30, f. 80r-81r.

<sup>19</sup> «[S]erviendum eum ut scolaris litteralis [causa docenti liberos dicti magistri]... et loquerio videlicet quod magister ipsum docere sciencia liberali et teneatur sibi providere continue in cibo et potu decenter et custodire [in]firmita sua»: April 14, 1357, ADBDR, 355 E 35, f. 12v.

<sup>20</sup> «[C]um pacto quod ipsum doceat literas pro posse, velut filium aut fratrem»: December 6, 1386, ADBDR, 351 E 41, f. 121v.

<sup>21</sup> November 15 and 17, 1335, ADBDR, 381 E 58, f. 30v and 32v. The painter's contract, with a local merchant, included free meals tough, in addition to «all the needed pictorial material (*omnes colores*)»: May 7, 1319, BnF, n.a.l., 1321, f. 86r.



wool cloth— and two hoods; the other two men got only 8 florins each, while one of them obtained two marine dresses and the other only a simple tunic.<sup>22</sup> One may surmise that the robe of «colour» (*unius raube coloris*) requested by the team leader was conceived as a distinctive, status-granting good (Kucab 2022, 192-93).<sup>23</sup> Neither did blood-related family, governed by birthright hierarchies, escape a graduated quality-scale for payments due in kind. When in 1398 Jean Raimbaud found work for himself and for his son Antoine as swineherders for the Holy Spirit Hospital, he was content to share a sum of 20 florins in wages with Antoine, as long as the white, heavy woolen dress given to him in extra income was worth a whopping 14 florins, and his son's, only 6 florins.<sup>24</sup> A few years earlier, the brothers Pierre and Antoinet Olivier, both water carters (*aegueserii*), were hired to guard and tend the sixteen horses of a nobleman; even though each was given 3 florins in meat supplement for their meals (*companagium*), Pierre was promised 6 florins in cash, 12 *eminas* of wheat, 9 *eminas* of barley, 8 *millerolas* of pure and good wine, and one *canne* of fabric, while Antoinet would only receive 5 florins in wages, 10 *eminas* of wheat, and 6 *millerolas* of wine, and no piece of cloth.<sup>25</sup>

## 2. Goods and services: Between expectation and obligation

When, as in the cases just related, the masters were willing to offer additional income in kind, it was most likely the fruits of customized agreements (*pacta*) beyond conventional trade practices. It should also be pointed out that these arrangements belong in their vast majority to the post-plague years, a time when the job market had somewhat tightened up. Not surprisingly, a significant number of these *pacta* surface in the context of a short, but intense economic boom in the late 1370s and early 1380s, when low-wage workers could bargain for improved commodities allocated as complementary income. Arguably, in the pre-plague era these provisions were no less subject to bargaining forces, which then, however, favoured largely the masters. Marseille in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century was marked by a period of inflation, economic decline, and reduced monetary velocity (Lesage 1950,

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<sup>22</sup> 22 April 1382, ADBDR, 355 E 28, f. 8r-v. The «*canne*» measured about two meters (Baratier, Reynaud, and Villard 1951, 905).

<sup>23</sup> According to sumptuary laws in this time period, white and black were colours discriminatorily ascribed to the poor and the sick (Pastoureau 2022, 223).

<sup>24</sup> November 14, 1398, Paris, BnF, n.a.l., 1351, f. 21r-v. The reduced value (57% less) assigned to Antoine's garment can only partially be explained by his assumed smaller frame. Following sartorial regulations codified in the municipal law, children's clothes were cheaper to make for they required less material, but only by a third of the cost for those under the age of 14 down to 9 years old: «Si vero sint minoris etatis 14 annorum descendendo usque ad novem annos, accipiant dicti sartores minus tertia parte de predictis taxionibus [in personis XIV annorum et supra]», statute 39, book II (Pernoud 1949, 112).

<sup>25</sup> July 14, 1393, ADBDR, 355 E 77, f. 76v. In Marseille, the «*emina*» and the «*millerola*» had respectively a capacity of about 38.5 and 64.5 liters (Baratier, Reynaud, and Villard 1951, 903).

163-65; Baratier, 1951, 23-62).<sup>26</sup> When Pierre de Saint-Thomas, a pastry maker from Flanders, was transiting through Marseille in August 1320 awaiting for safe passage to the Holy Land in the following spring, he offered his professional services as a *discipulus et servitor* to a local fellow artisan at no wages; all he wanted in return was shelter and decent food, so «to avoid digging into his savings for his intended pilgrimage»<sup>27</sup>. Victuals were a dear currency. In 1338 a school master, hired as a tutor in a private household, did not hesitate to sue his client for one florin of gold because she had failed to provide his meals, as agreed.<sup>28</sup> Evidently food security was a dire issue in times of scarcity, which was a recurring threat in a city chronically dependent on grain imports to feed its community (Drendel 2011, 275; Buti 2003, 769-99). Revealing the pervasiveness of this endemic problem, a master on his deathbed in 1320 purposely left to his handmaid life-time commodity provisions in the form of bread and wine, rather than money.<sup>29</sup> At the time of the 1322-23 bread famine (Lesage 1950, 146), the coral fisherman Raymond Catalan, with his wife Jordana on his side, obtained from his new employer Jordan de Bosse the monthly provision of wheat (*unam eminam annone*) before sailing off, in addition to receiving in cash 18 *denarii* for his wine and *companagium*.<sup>30</sup>

Food provisioning did not come cheap, at least to the minds of those who had to defray its cost. From beginning to end of apprenticeship periods (hovering around seven years in many crafts), a youth's productivity input was expected to grow exponentially and, conversely, maintenance expenditure to decline.<sup>31</sup> This consideration determined in great part whose responsibility it was, overall, to supply not only food, but also clothing and medical care. A trainee in coral carving from Manchester emphatically declared in 1278 to his prospective master, a Manchester man himself recently established in Marseille: «it is customary to provide the necessities of life to apprentices in the art».<sup>32</sup> Yet this seems at variance with other

<sup>26</sup> By judicial decision in 1319, a widow saw the value of her dowry increase by 25% owing to the inflation rate her marriage contribution had suffered from the day (undisclosed) it had been settled, a time when the money «was good» – *bone monete* (Michaud 1994, 117-18, note 4).

<sup>27</sup> «[C]um primum ver expectare cupiens ne perdat quod habet pro sua perigracione faciend»: August 7, 1320, AMM, 1 ii 49, f. 51r-v.

<sup>28</sup> May 7, 1338, ADBDR, judicial series (B), 3 B 33, f. 63.

<sup>29</sup> Testament of Foulques Beroard, July 24, 1320, ADBDR, 381 E 14, f. 98v-100r.

<sup>30</sup> October 11, 1322, ADBDR, 381 E 52, f. 27r. Also, on Christmas eve of 1380, the sailor André Millérole managed to secure wheat supply for his wife while on duty: «cum pacto etiam providendi uxori dicti Andree ipso interim de blado, quantum sibi opus fuerit pro comescu ipsius uxoris dicti Andree», ADBDR, 351 E 37, f. 149r-v. A mason bargained a similar deal with his employer who accepted to supply him and his new bride with daily meals: «quod possit ire comescum ad domum suam quando intrari ire voluerit cum uxore, quam accipere intendit de proximo, et quod tunc teneatur eidem Poncio [employee] dictus Anthonius [master] pro illis victibus dare quod erit usum pro victu suo», November 27, 1389, ADBDR, 351 E 29, f. 123r.

<sup>31</sup> This logic appears plainly in other contracts, such as the one agreed between the shoemaker Durand Reboul and Alice Porcelle, who promised the master 8 librae for her son's training, but only for the first two years of an eight-year commitment: «ad standum cum eo hinc ad octo annos continue numerandos et ad addicendum misterium sabbaterie, loquerio dicto Duranto dando pro primis duobus annis octo librarum regalium», November 5, 1320, ADBDR, 381 E 31, f. 78v-79r.

<sup>32</sup> «[D]ebes michi providere in victu et vestitu competenter et sicut consuetum ut providere scolariis eiusdem officii»: October 10, 1278, BnF, n.a.l., 1321, 234.

agreements in the trade, unless the practice had changed in the field – the second earliest contract being dated from 1327 –, or that it was the native expression of a labour culture shared by contemporary English artisans.<sup>33</sup> In light of the vast majority of the apprenticeship agreements drawn during the pre-plague period, it was normally a parental duty to provide for children in training, either through the disbursement of yearly fees or outright commodities handed out to masters. Even wealthy artisans and businessmen, with easier access to cash, sought cereals by way of payments for their instructional services. In 1248, the money changer Jean Cordier charged his *scolaris*' father, the lawyer Jean de Saint-Maximin, a large quantity of good and pure wheat and 50 *solidi*, with the additional expectation that he shoulder the cost for clothing his own child.<sup>34</sup> In 1303, a father also committed to provide his son's footwear and all his needed garments for the first two years of his training in goldsmithery, while paying the master's *loquerium* in wheat payments every Michaelmas for three years.<sup>35</sup> Never in abundant supply, cereals remained throughout the entire period under study a sought-after currency, even in the post-plague years. This may explain why, in the second half of the fourteenth century, the chief guardian of the royal gaol in charge of hiring alms collectors, allowed the latter to keep for their labour half the coins, but only one third of all the bread loaves donated.<sup>36</sup>

Admittedly, seafarers' hiring contracts stipulated in generic terms that meals would be provided as additional earnings; however, these represented the bulk of their junior staff's income, along with shoes and pieces of clothing in the form of professional gear adapted to the environmental conditions of the trade (*calciamentis et vestibus ad usum maris*). When a mariner affirmed in 1387 that «indeed, it was customary in seafaring that youngsters be provided with clothes, in health as in sickness»,<sup>37</sup> he was by all accounts fairly accurate. After all, the number of masters who procured these essential goods did so for optimal output. Furthermore, their *familiares, famuli, nuncii, servitores, seu garciones*, mostly aged between 15 and 17,

<sup>33</sup> All but one of the other six apprenticeship contracts in coral carving, dated between 1327 and 1393, remain silent on this point.

<sup>34</sup> «[P]ro expensis dicti Guillelmeti cibariis, ut est pani et vini et companagii, XIII eminas pulchre et bone annone et L solidos monete curribilis in Massilia ad voluntatem tuam, et [promitto] providere eidem Guillelmeto in vestibus ei necessariis»: this was understood as a two-year obligation, the length of the contract, May 12, 1248, AMM, 1 ii 1, f. 97; the document was edited by Blancard (1885, 155-56).

<sup>35</sup> «[D]ebet providere ex pacto dicto Hugueto filio suo (Poncii Basterii) hinc ad duos annos proximos in vestitu et calciamentu, et dicto Bertrando (Isnardi aurifabro) dare promisit ex pacto de loquerio suo decem et octo eminas annone bone et pulcre ... apud Massilie proponit expensas dicti Poncii solvendas per terminos infrascriptos, scilicet in festo Sancti Michaelis proxime futurum sex eminas, et singulis annis in dicto festo alias sex eminas donec fuerint solute dicte XVIII emine», March 30, 1303, ADBDR, 381 E 4, f. 53v-54r.

<sup>36</sup> September 28, 1375 and May 17, 1379: ADBDR, 355 E 22, f. 80v and 355 E 26, f. 25r-v.

<sup>37</sup> «Et prout exercitu marinagii est consuetum talibus famulis de vestibus provideri, et hoc tam in sanitate ipsius Arnaudi quam in egritudine, quod absit», November 14, 1387, ADBDR, 351 E 57, f. 146r-47v. References to the expression «ad usum maris ut solitus est» recur in the documentation at a regular frequency in the second part of the century.

represented a profitable source of manpower at low salary cost, that is, 2 florins in wages a year on average, for up to ten to twelve years of service.<sup>38</sup>

From time to time, these provisions were carefully detailed in notarized agreements – often the result of vigorous negotiations – and likely reflected the sartorial outfitting of seafarers, in quantity and in type. On May 3, 1376 Jean Audoard, a young fatherless migrant from Salon-de-Provence, secured a four-year placement with the fisherman Guillaume Audibert at the rate of 2.5 florins a year, payable at contract's end only, but with the assurance of receiving every year two white tunics in wool, two shirts, and two pairs of trousers, in addition to shoes – generally a lesser expense.<sup>39</sup> Although the quality of vestments varied greatly in the marketplace, these agreements typically point to modest, essentially work-related apparel.<sup>40</sup> All the same, even tunics or simple dresses were not cheap, since they could easily fetch up to 32 to 40 *solidi* a piece, while a contemporary cordmaker's wages were in the region of 1.7 *solidi* a day without meals.<sup>41</sup>

Either for personal or professional use, clothing was distinctly held as a valued currency in labour contracts. A good case in point is that of Laurent Vincent, a mariner from Berre who, while waiting to sail off on a galley, received in advance salary only pieces of garments (robes, shirts, and a hood) for his *loquerium*, and was specifically forbidden to alienate or sell them until after his return to port, upon completing his labour commitment.<sup>42</sup> In the urban crafts, notably before the Black Death, these expenses, as mentioned earlier, were often disbursed by parents until the time their children proved sufficiently productive to offset their maintenance costs, even when masters had themselves access to the commodities' raw materials. In 1332, the tailor Guillaume d'Albi accepted Thomas Albin's son in his shop, with

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<sup>38</sup> The average is 4.1 years, but the median value is 6 for the fishermen and 3.5 for the sailors. The documentary base rests on 86 contracts (40 for fishermen and 46 for mariners).

<sup>39</sup> «[L]oquerio decem florinorum pro dictis quatuor annis in fine temporis et duarum tunicarum panni albi, et duarum camisarum, et duarum brayarum pro anno quolibet ipsorum quatuor annorum et calciamenti»: ADBDR, 355 E 23, f. 15v-16r. While I cannot expand here on the differential market value of clothing and footwear, suffice to mention anecdotally that in 1398 a pair of shoes (*sotulariis*) was worth 8 *solidi* (0.25 florin), while a tunic of white woolen cloth could cost as much as 6 to 14 florins: see, for instance, the work contract with an agricultural worker, November 3, 1398, ADBDR, 351 E 69, f. 5v, and also that of the two swineherds – father and son – mentioned previously (above, note 24).

<sup>40</sup> Parties often specified vestments made of lambswool cloth (among several examples, mariners' labour contract, December 12, 1359, ADBDR, 355 E 10, f. 94r), which was considered an average to low-cost fabric (Gérard-Marchand 1995, 93, note 20).

<sup>41</sup> A merchant offered his 15-year-old recruit not only 12 florins in wages, a shirt, and a hood, but also a pair of stockings and a tunic made of dyed wool, each worth 40 *solidi*: June 14, 1380, ADBDR, 351 E 50, f. 125r-v. While the businessman and his apprentice's social standing may explain the provision of such a luxury item as a coloured garment, a migrant from Barjols at the employ of a packsaddle maker, who was offered only goods in kind in salary, also got a «tunica valoris quadraginta solidorum», September 21, 1390, ADBDR, 355 E 74, f. 119v. For the cordmaker's contract: May 22, 1366, ADBDR, 351 E 28, f. 70r-v.

<sup>42</sup> «[A]d ipsam rationem quatenus tempore ipse Petrus [Girardi] accesserit et ire voluerit in galea, cum pacto solvendi ipsum loquerium in raubeis, camisis, et capa necessariis eidem Laurentio in ipso interim, et cum pacto solvendi residuum in redditu viagii. Item de pacto quod dictus Laurentius [Vincentii] de Berra non possit vendere seu alienare ipsas raubas et capam, nisi in redditu predicto»: May 3, 1378, ADBDR, 351 E 35, f. 25r.

the expectation that, for the first year of apprenticeship, Thomas would provide for his child a doublet (*gipa*) with a cotton shirt (*cotondia*), but only one single doublet for each of the subsequent three years.<sup>43</sup> Even waged apprentices were to procure their own clothes and shoes, as an innkeeper made clear to the father of her new 18-year-old trainee.<sup>44</sup> For their part, apothecaries not only imposed hefty educational fees on their pupils' parents, but also the obligation to cover all sartorial necessities, in addition to medical goods and services, if and when required.

Sickness incurred both loss of productivity and costly medical care. Pierre, a physician from Fréjus who was himself blind, while in Marseille awaiting for a miraculous cure from Saint Louis in 1297, admitted to living off charity because he had fallen into poverty after spending all his resources – chattels and landed properties – on expensive medicines from «all over the world», as well as on pilgrimages to other shrines.<sup>45</sup> Just as much as food and clothing, healthcare (that is, medicinal costs and doctors' fees) proved somewhat a matter of intense negotiations with prospective masters, even those specializing in the medical trades. The barber Sansonet de Valveine declared in an apprentice contract that it was an honorable duty for a master to look after the well-being of his charge, even in sickness.<sup>46</sup> Yet a good many masters committed themselves to far less. When the apothecary and candlemaker Jacques of Orange entered an apprenticeship agreement with Gantelme Bermond, he promised to train the latter's son in his arts for two years, «as long as he remained healthy».<sup>47</sup> A less parsimonious artisan might be willing to cover the expense for an apprentice's health care, but only when traveling outside the city.<sup>48</sup> Other masters, such as the cooper Bertrand Candel, may concede to look after their charge in illness, but only in so far as they got sick under their roof, and nowhere else.<sup>49</sup> The carpenter Antoine Lucy's goodwill toward his new recruit went as far as

<sup>43</sup> In return, Guillaume agreed to procure the boy's essential needs by way of food, shoes, and clothes, in sickness or in health: June 15, 1332, ADBDR, 391 E 6, f. 53v.

<sup>44</sup> January 7, 1346, ADBDR, 391 E 9, f. 133v-34r.

<sup>45</sup> «[E]xpectans helemosinam monasterii vel regis cum aliis pauperibus, quia victum suum non valebat acquirere et omnia bona que habebat, mobilia et immobilia, expenderat in medicinis requirendis per diversas partes orbis et in sanctorum peregrinationibus pro recuperanda luce oculorum»: LMSL, f. 22r-v and AF, 309-10.

<sup>46</sup> «Et dictus magister [Sansonet de Valveine] teneatur et debeat dictum Johannetum famulum suum docere et bene et legaliter in dicta arte barbarie et eum tenere sanum et egrum sicut quilibet bonus hono[r]abiliter facere debet»: November 6, 1399, BnF, n.a.l., 1351, f. 18r-v. Yet, the barber Jeannet de Messine asked 15 florins to his new recruit (a former patient) in payment for fixing his broken arm, in addition to his 'teaching labour': «Promittens ipsius dictus Petrus dare dicto Johanneto magistro suo tam ratione cure per eum facte in infirmitate brachii dicti Petri, quam etiam ratione laboris docendi eundem in arte predictae [barbarie], videlicet quindecim florinos auri»: January 25, 1398, ADBDR, 355 E 81, f. 105v-06r.

<sup>47</sup> «[Q]uamdiu tamen sanus fuerit»: October 25, 1378, ADBDR, 391 E 26, f. 41r. It is worth noting that among 28 work contracts initiated by apothecaries, only a handful mentioned this coverage, while others explicitly excluded it. See in particular, April 15, 1324, AMM 1 ii 8, f. 44v-45r; December 15, 1334, ADBDR, 391 E 5, f. 109r-v; September 27, 1338, ADBDR, 391 E 12, f. 54v-55r.

<sup>48</sup> This was a mariner's condition upon hiring a 12-year-old child: July 11, 1390, ADBDR, 351 E 62, f. 13r-v.

<sup>49</sup> «[E]t specialiter ... tam in sanitate quam egritudine, quod absit infra tamen domum suam et non extra, ac etiam de necessariis in infirmitate»: January 31, 1395, BnF, n.a.l., 1347, f. 25r-v.

exempting him from refunding his day of work and meals if he cut himself or fell while on the job, «which often occurs in the trade», he confessed, but with the caveat that «if he got ill due to fever or other ailments, he would have to pay back his food and all the additional expenses in medicines and physicians' care made on his behalf».<sup>50</sup> Similarly concerned by such liabilities, goldsmiths interrupted their teaching in case of illness and sent their pupils back to their parents to be cared for and convalesce at their expense.<sup>51</sup> The baker Gauthier Bourgogne additionally held accountable the parents of his 10-year-old apprentice for any workday lost to illness.<sup>52</sup> A few lawsuits over the payment of medicine suggest that this high-priced expenditure was not lightly afforded or faithfully delivered.<sup>53</sup> Conversely, when merchant Pierre Austria, intent on recruiting talent, hired a junior *mercator*, he promised to provide for him even in sickness, in addition to his meals, footwear, and 25 florins of gold in wages.<sup>54</sup> Evidently, when there was a reasonable balance of power between the contractual parties, this particular good was, indeed, carefully considered.

### 3. Negotiations in the post-plague years

With the advent of the 1348 pandemic and the massive labour shortages that ensued, new habits started to emerge in the way commodities were, or could be,

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<sup>50</sup> «Item fuit de pacto quod si idem Johannes infirmaretur ex insicione seu ictu alicuis ferri dicti artis vel ex lapsu operando, prout sepe contigit, quod non qua teneatur ad refectionem jornalium amissorum seu ad interim temporis nec ad refectionem victus. Si vero alias quod absit infirmaretur ex febre, aut aliter eo tunc, teneatur ad refectionem sumptus seu victus ordinarii, alia vero extraordinaria in medicis et medicinis necessariis de proprio ipsius Johannis solvantur»: December 1, 1398, BnF, n.a.l., 1351, f. 22v-23r.

<sup>51</sup> «Ita quod de pacto quod si dictus Johannetus [de Longa Villa] infirmaretur, quod dictus Johannes [de Longa Villa, avunculus] debeat ipsum tenere in domo sua tempore dicte infirmitatis ad expensas eius, et quod liberari dicte infirmitatis, dictus Jacobus [Britoni magister] debeat eum recipere»: September 7, 1324, ADBDR, 3 B 18, f. 101v-02r. See also a similar «non eger» clause at the behest of the goldsmith Étienne de Manosque: April 3, 1320, ADBDR, 381 E 31 f. 3v-4r.

<sup>52</sup> May 22, 1385, ADBDR, 355 E 31, f. 6r.

<sup>53</sup> The case of Jacques Augier is particularly revealing. When Jacques sued a cooper in 1384 for breaching his son's apprenticeship contract, it was in part because the master had sent the 13-year-old child back home upon falling ill, «at Jacques' personal expense», despite the cooper's duty to keep him in health as in sickness: «Item [Jacobus Augerii] probare intendit quod dictus Gaufridus dicta pacta et questionem eidem Guillelmeto seu Jacobo, ejus patri, minime observavit, qui ymmo hoc anno Domini dictus Guillelmetus infirmaretur, ipsum a domo sua ejetit et congerium sibi dedit et ad domum patris sui redire fecit, in qua domo patris sui dictus Guillelmetus infirmus jacuit per duos menses vel circa sumptibus propriis dicti Jacobi patris sui»: October 17, 1384, 3 B 101, f. 132r (for the original apprenticeship contract, see March 13, 1384, ADBDR, 351 E 54, f. 15v-16r). One may also consider the case initiated by a sailor against his employee's father, who had retrieved his sick boy and pocketed his advanced wages to pay for medical expenses: November 30, 1386, ADBDR, 351 E 41, f. 65r.

<sup>54</sup> December 18, 1336, ABBDR, 391 E 10, f. 149r. It is worth noting that while in Avignon in the early decades of the second half of the fourteenth century, the merchant Giovanni di Marco Datini offered similar pecuniary wages to both his junior partners and the skilled textile artisans in his employ, with the consideration that «with that salary [the employee] must buy his own clothes and shoes» (Frangioni 2010, 265; 271-73; quote, 265).

used as currencies in salary payments. Attraction and retention factors led to the procurement of food to contractual workers. The generic *cibo et potu* was henceforth included in most agreements across the labour market. Likewise, to encourage new vocations instructional fees declined conspicuously, as did their payment in kind with the renewed velocity of money. Still, those among the craft masters who charged parents for their teaching labour, requested payments of the most basic of all foodstuffs: wheat. In 1363, a cooper took a 20-year-old youth under his wing in exchange for some quantities of wheat for two years of training and his keep.<sup>55</sup> When in 1371 the tailor Pons de Pan agreed to train the 10-year-old son of Pierre Gaucelin, a villager recently settled in Marseille, he had Pierre promise to give him copious quantities of wheat in addition to wine on the feasts of Saint-John the Baptist and Michaelmas to compensate for his child's *pensio*, that is, food and clothing.<sup>56</sup> While this expectation is reminiscent of the parental obligation prevailing in the pre-plague period,<sup>57</sup> another tailor, Perrin Gipponier, contended a few years later that «according to custom», he ought to provide his 15-year-old pupil with «not only good instruction, but also his essential needs».<sup>58</sup> One can only ponder about the antiquity and the longevity of so-called customary usages!<sup>59</sup>

As seen in the maritime trades before 1348, a new trend across other occupational sectors, already manifest in the early 1350s, was taking hold whereby additional provisions besides food, such as clothes and footwear, were granted to young workers at the employers' expense.<sup>60</sup> In more conservative circles, though,

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<sup>55</sup> «[L]oquerio pro quaquidem stagia et ut secum addiscat in dicta arte, dictus Monnetus [apprentice] pro suis necessariis vestimentis et calciamentis et camisis, et aliis rebus debitis et necessariis persone dicti Monneti, duas saumatas annone pro dicto toto tempore (usque ad duos annos) promisit dicto Mayffredo [master]: November 11, 1363, ADBDR, 351 E 6, f. 148r-49r.

<sup>56</sup> May 1, 1371, ADBDR, 351 E 83, f. 9r-v.

<sup>57</sup> Four in five of apprenticeship contracts concluded by master tailors before 1348 put the onus on parents to provide the essentials of life to their children.

<sup>58</sup> «[I]nstruere in arte sua necminus eundem induere, calciare, providere eidem in cibo et potu competenter secundum quod est de consuetudine»: May 4, 1379, ADBDR, 391 E 27, f. 29r.

<sup>59</sup> A similar claim to customary practice was raised by a miller who contended that in his art salaries were paid weekly: «cuiuslibet septimane dicti anni sex grossus argenti ad rationem duorum florinorum auri pro quolibet mense ipsius anni solvendorum qualibet septimana ut est moris»: May 10, 1397, ADBDR, 351 E 97, f. 17v-18v. However, in all other work contracts among millers recovered between 1366 and 1390, salary payments were expected in three yearly instalments, following the city's labour tradition. In the seafaring sector, though, periods of employment in large-scale coral fishing ventures may be scheduled for six to nine months. In 1359, a mariner referred to the «custom, until now (hactenus)», of hiring crews between Easter and Michaelmas: «a festo Pascatis proxime futuro usque festum Sancti Michaelis futurum iuxta consuetudinem in talibus observatam hactenus (underlined by me) in civitate Massilie», December 9, 1359, ADBDR, 355 E 10, f. 88v. Yet, other coral fishermen were equally hired on a yearly basis, such as Étienne Abeille, discussed below (see note 80).

<sup>60</sup> Alternatively, parents of very young pupils may have been required to supply a portion of their children's necessities in the early, 'unproductive' stage of their training. For instance, Mayfred Mataron agreed to procure both shoes and clothes for Philippone, his 10-year-old daughter, but only during the first year of a five-year apprenticeship with the dressmakers Antoinette Barban and her daughter Barbanette Dodone: July 30, 1386, ADBDR, 351 E 41, f. 29r-v.

masters resisted the change, notably in the lucrative trades where prudence reigned.<sup>61</sup> For instance, on 27 January 1350, the draper Foulque Raynulfé warned Marguerite de Casals that he would cover her son's meals during his two-year training, but nothing else.<sup>62</sup> Some masters had to compromise further still. In the wake of the Black Death, two orphaned teenagers placed their 12-year-old brother with the apothecary Bernard de Someyre, who promised to supply the child with sufficient food and footwear while the siblings took upon his other sartorial needs.<sup>63</sup>

A majority of employers, like seafarers before them, now seemed also inclined to offer meals to the adult workers performing under their roofs; a sign of times, derogations to this wider-spread usage warranted a restrictive clause in contracts.<sup>64</sup> To be sure, clothes, shoes, and health care provisions varied considerably between and within trades. Under pressure to find an experienced artisan to assist in her goldsmithery, the widowed Huguette Bertrand not only promised handsome wages to Raymond Bruni, a fellow artisan from Aix-en-Provence, but granted him a *cotehardie* with a complementary hood – a sartorial item likely not devoid of symbolic value (Kucab 2021, 193).<sup>65</sup> For their part, salaried butchers obtained footwear, but not the more expensive clothing

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<sup>61</sup> In the apothecary, drapery, and business arts, tuition fees were essentially linked to victualling expenses. Failing to meet payments could lead to judicial claims, as it did in the case of the apothecary Bernard Maximin who successfully sued his apprentice's father, Bernard Mayni – himself an apothecary – for 7.4 florins in arrears during the second year of training, «*ex quibus expensis in victu et potu*»: June 7, 1394, AMM, judicial series, FF 574, f. 119v. Likewise, in more modest trades, some masters imposed similar demands at similar costs. Hence, Guillaume Clavet, a shoemaker, charged his new recruit 8 florins for his food and clothing during the first year of training: «*quod dictus Jacobus pro victu ipsius et calciamento etiam [Guillelmo] dare teneatur octo florinos auri scilicet hinc ad unum annum septem florinos et nunc unum florinum*», c. May 20, 1364, ADBDR, 351 E 27, f. 49r.

<sup>62</sup> «*[C]ibo et potu tantum, et non plus*»: ADBDR, 355 E 34, f. 51v-52r. See also the draper Guillaume de Montilis who placed the same onus on his apprentice Monet Beriti: «*quod dictus Monnetus pro se et suis sumptibus ... providere se debeat de vestimentis et calciamentis decentibus*», August 12, 1362, ADBDR, 351 E 25, f. 107v-08r. This is also what Bertrand Rigord, a draper, expected from his 14-year-old trainee, Hugonet Alaman: «*cum pacto expresse providenti eidem Hugoneto de victu tamen interim in domo ipsius Bertrandi, sicut aliis suis familiaribus, et cum pacto quod ipse Hugonetus de suo proprio faciat sibi interim omnes alios sumptus necessarios persone sue pro vestimentis, calciamentis, et sotularibus et aliis pro persone sue*», March 23, 1374, ADBDR, 351 E 32, f. 265r-v.

<sup>63</sup> The two adolescents, Nicolas and Esmeniardé Milon, accompanied by Philippe Colradi, a third party of unknown relation, discussed the contractual terms with the prospective master on behalf of their brother Arnaud: «*quod ipsi Philipus, Nicholaus, et Esmetendeta teneantur et debeantur in dicto tempore tenere dictum Arnaudum vestitum debite, et ipse Bernardus teneatur de pariter tenere provisum de calciamentis et caligis*»: June 22, 1373, ADBDR, 351 E 32, f. 60r-v.

<sup>64</sup> Such as the cordmaker Pierre Lieutaud, who opened his workshop to a job seeker and fellow artisan, Guillaume de Montpellier, with the assurance of paying him every night in cash but without food: «*sero completa dieta sua ... duos alborum argentem seu valoris ipsorum pro qualibet dieta sine victu* [underlined by me], December 17, 1369, ADBDR, 351 E 82, f. 53v.

<sup>65</sup> «*[E]t unius cotardie (unius) caputi ac potus et cibi*»: October 22, 1352, ADBDR, 355 E 5, f. 63r. In specific contexts, seafaring for instance, hoods were a matter of necessity imposed by environmental conditions, and yet, these were in many cases objects of negotiation.



allocation.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, only one in three workers in the leather industry was offered shoes, despite employers' access to cheaper raw material, and even then, this particular benefit disappeared from the extant contracts beyond the mid-1360s. Meanwhile, wages had remained stubbornly stable. In fact, evidence shows that artisans such as shoemakers or bakers did not see their pecuniary income change significantly over several decades,<sup>67</sup> a reality that was also matched by agricultural labourers, lower-ranked seafarers, and a host of unqualified workers (Michaud 2023). Therefore, it is fair to assume that salaries remitted in tangible goods mattered more than ever.

With the stabilization of both wages and the local currency in the last third of the fourteenth century,<sup>68</sup> extra salary offerings in kind proved a matter of bargaining strategies regardless of the crafts' wage or wage-distribution practices. Even when the balance of power tipped in favour of an employee and a special clause was added to the contract, a master may have raised careful limitations when conceding goods, as the landowner Nicolas Nielli did with his newly hired ploughman, whom he paid in wages, food, and stockings 'only'.<sup>69</sup> Of course, many employees succeeded in getting extra benefits on their own terms. When Antoine Becamille accepted to till Antoine Ancelm's land for a year at good wages (20 florins), he also obtained in added bonus one *canne* of lambswool for the making of a robe «whenever he wanted». <sup>70</sup> In 1384, Jacques Augier brokered a special deal with his employer Doucette Joli, who needed an experienced ploughman to tend her vineyards and clear her land. Jacques offered to work at modest wages, that is, under market value (13 florins a year, instead of 20-22 florins<sup>71</sup>), in so far as Doucette was willing to provide for Catherine, his parturient wife, until after her postpartum recovery, upon which Catherine herself would perform ancillary labour in back payment for a midwife's anticipated services.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Only two in twenty-one workers, probably young ones given their modest wages, were offered clothing. On the higher value of clothes in relation to footwear, see above, note 39.

<sup>67</sup> For instance, paid-by-the-piece shoemakers made 2 *solidi* per dozen of shoes in 1350 as they did in 1379: February 22, 1350, ADBDR, 355 E 2, f. 178v-79r; March 26, 1379, ADBDR, 351 E 36, f. 5r-v. In 1360, bakers were offered 0.46 florin weekly while they roughly earned the same in 1389, i.e., 0.5 florin: September 9, 1360, ADBDR, 355 E 36, f. 81v; June 27, 1389, ADBDR, 351 E 29, f. 34v.

<sup>68</sup> While the local money (*minutum massiliensium*) was devaluated several times between 1324 and 1364, it remained unaltered at 32 *solidi* against the florin until 1400, a trend that mirrors a similar evolution across most regions in the fourteenth century (Fournial 1970, 112). In the Western Mediterranean regions, the possible reduction of the velocity of money toward the end of the fourteenth century must equally be taken into consideration, « [s]i l'on en croit les trouvailles, il se pourrait qu'il y ait une diminution de la circulation des espèces métalliques dans la seconde moitié du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle » (Bourin et al. 2011-13, 687 note 83).

<sup>69</sup> «[L]oquerio seu pentione 12 florinos auri fini ... et ultra victu et calciamentis sotularium tantum»: April 2, 1357, ADBDR, 381 E 81, f. 3r.

<sup>70</sup> «[E]t unum canna anhini pro una tunica facienca dum voluerit dictus Antonius Becamilli»: July 23, 1380, ADBDR, 355 E 37, f. 10r.

<sup>71</sup> At this time, Marseille's ploughmen earned the equivalent of what a municipal notary made (Michaud 2023, 68).

<sup>72</sup> December 12, 1384, ADBDR, 351 E 31, f. 184r.

In the post-plague years, ploughmen enjoyed a lot of clout amongst landowners: beside decent salaries, they gained additional perks in the form of commodities, mostly wheat, wine, and meat (Michaud 2023). In this regard, the case of Geoffroy Isnard is quite typical. In April 1374 he was hired by the noble Pierre Amel to manage his landed estate in the countryside for a whole year; along with his wages (20 florins), Geoffroy was to receive 60 *solidi* for his *companagium*, 8 *eminas* of wheat, 4 *eminas* of barley, and 8 *millayrolas* of pure wine or a larger quantity of both mixed and pure wine, and a bolt of fabric.<sup>73</sup> Competing for ploughmen's skills, many other propertied citizens had little choice but offer similar bonuses.<sup>74</sup>

The complementary commodities dispensed to workers specializing in wine and wheat production coincide with heightened activities in the maritime sector in the late 1370s and early 1380s, when coral extraction and trade were booming (Baratier 1951; Michaud 2016).<sup>75</sup> The local seafarers were then offered competitive wages,<sup>76</sup> meals included; among them, a number of mariners insisted to be fed on shore, before departure, and also at destination.<sup>77</sup> Others, concerned to be treated with decency, requested quality food. Even the best paid coral mariners raised this issue, such as Guillaume Donadieu, who headed a coral expedition to Sardinia at the yearly rate of 110 florins and the assurance of being served proper meals.<sup>78</sup> Laurent Vincent, the sailor from Berre hired to work on a galley, wanted to be fed the same as his master.<sup>79</sup>

Clothing *ad sufficientum* proved also a central concern for seafarers when they negotiated revenues in kind. The coral mariner Étienne Abeille, with a total

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<sup>73</sup> April 9, 1374, Paris, BnF, n.a.l., 1339, 44.

<sup>74</sup> The landowner Doucette Joli, mentioned above, is a good case in point, for between 1372 and 1384, she hired ploughmen with advantageous labouring conditions on at least four occasions (Michaud, 2023).

<sup>75</sup> The coral extractive industry in the Western Mediterranean throughout the fourteenth-century is still in need of a comprehensive study, while traditional and current scholarship largely depends on regional fifteenth-century data (Bresc 1986, 221-25; Bresc, 2000, 41-53; Barceló Crespi and Mas Forners 2021, 138-42).

<sup>76</sup> On average, coral fishermen earned above 40 florins a year, while 34% of these specialized seafarers could fetch anything between 50 and 100 florins, and some 15% above that threshold. These calculations rest on 177 contracts. By comparison, ploughmen earned around 22 florins, simple agriculturists and other unskilled labourers, 12 florins, while adolescent workers and maids rarely made more than 6-8 florins (101 contracts).

<sup>77</sup> «[Q]uando navigabit et extra Massilie per terram»: June 11, 1380, ADBDR, 351 E 50, f. 114r-v. While references to «decenter cibo et potu» are ubiquitous among coral fishermen, some workers gained enough leverage to acquire wheat benefits for members of their households, as did Jordan de Bosse or André Millérole discussed earlier (see note 30 above).

<sup>78</sup> «[D]umtaxat de precio sive loquerio CX librae auri de regina ad rationem anni et victus decenter»: March 1, 1384, ADBDR, 351 E 53, f. 188r-v.

<sup>79</sup> «[E]t etiam quod dictus Petrus teneatur ipsi Laurentio providere in victu interim continue sicut sibi ipsi»: May 3, 1378, ADBDR, 351 E 35, f. 25r.

annual salary of 100 florins, also requested one *canne* of quality cloth.<sup>80</sup> The enhanced marketable position of sailors and fishermen also explains the larger number of contemporary contracts with sartorial descriptions, a clear indication that these provisions were valued beyond customary expectations. Hence, when these benefits were procured in *«pares»*, that is in double quantities of single articles of clothing, one suspects even greater bargaining power was at play. Unsurprisingly, documentary evidence peaks in the two noted periods of increased labour demand: in the early 1350s and, especially in this sector, around 1379-83. All the while, these detailed accommodations are mostly found in hiring agreements made with lower (*famuli*) to middle rank staffers within the maritime trades' hierarchy, perhaps in compensation for their modest wages. For instance, Jacques Arquier, a villager who hired himself to the mariner Jacques de Fonte at the annual rate of 10 florins, was given the assurance of good meals and a new pair of shoes whenever the old ones would wear out during his two-year service.<sup>81</sup> The 14-year-old *famulus* of a sailor also managed to obtain, besides his wages (5 florins *per annum*), one tunic, stockings, and shoes «worth at least 16 *gros*» (43 *solidi*).<sup>82</sup> In the winter of 1382, the sailor Bernard de Saint-Florentin found work with the mariner Albert Raynaud at the rate of 10 florins, but with the understanding that he would be handed additionally two tunics of lambswool, two pairs of trousers, two pairs of shirts, one of which «he could get whenever he wanted».<sup>83</sup> Mondono Corelli, a migrant from Arles, would be given «upon his first request» any of the clothing items he was promised by his new master, Geoffroy Rasso, himself a successful coral fisherman: one tunic, stockings, one pair of shoes, one pair of trousers, and two shirts.<sup>84</sup>

However, when the balance tipped the other way – increasingly the case after 1385 when perks dwindled conspicuously and garments granted in pairs all but disappeared – masters were keen to formally limit their commitments. In a special agreement with the mother of his new *famulus*, a fisherman consented to provide ‘only’ marine shoes and one tunic for the boy during the entire three years of

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<sup>80</sup> Upon committing to the agreement, Étienne was immediately handed the two meters of cloth from Wervicq: February 3, 1379, BnF, n.a.l., 1342, f. 24r-25v; see also Baratier, who reported on the same case (1951, 76, note 4).

<sup>81</sup> «[C]ibo et potu bene et decenter et calciamento tanto quanto franget ipso tempore durante»: August 17, 1388, BnF, n.a.l., 1343, f. 11v.

<sup>82</sup> «[V]aloris ad minus»: December 24, 1379, ADBDR, 351 E 48, f. 195r-v. This was four times the estimate given to Antoine Étienne, a servant in the household of Pierre Giraud, for a pair of shoes valued at 4 grossos: April 2, 1388, ADBDR, 351 E 88, f. 2r-v. A monetary figure assigned to goods remitted as labour payment appears in a number of other contracts throughout the period under study, but recovering the market value of these articles in order to weigh the balance of power between employer and employee (or their parents) remains an insuperable task in the absence of price lists in contemporary Marseille.

<sup>83</sup> «[Q]uando ipse Bernardus voluerit»: February 20, 1382, ADBDR, 351 E 38, f. 172r-v.

<sup>84</sup> «[S]ibi dandi unam tunicam, caligas, una paria camisiarum, una paria brachiarum, una paria sotularium, et ad suam primam requisitionem dicti Mondoni»: November 15, 1381, ADBDR, 351 E 38, f. 125r.

service, «and nothing more».<sup>85</sup> In 1400, the artisan entrepreneur Geoffroy Aycard hired the ploughman Antoine Prime for one year of service; aware of his new employee's dire need for credit, Geoffroy agreed to give him 45% of his wages in advance salary, the remainder payable only at the year's end, with the warning that should Antoine's household fall into indigence in the interim, Geoffroy alone would decide, «according to his goodwill and own discretion – and not otherwise [an added note reads] – whether to remit his earnings in wheat or in coins».<sup>86</sup> Words, once more, spoke volumes. Given the volatility of the local money which, that year, lost 40% of its value vis-à-vis the florin, one may surmise that wheat, by far, would be what Antoine would have hoped for in currency.

## Conclusion

If it is true that «[p]ower hides, both visibly and invisibly, behind any conceivable form of credit», transacted goods and services may just as well serve to gauge the nature of social relations in labour agreements.<sup>87</sup> Between the end of the thirteenth and the turn of the fifteenth century in Marseille, market forces, themselves impacted by exogenous factors, affected these dynamics. Younger workers, women, and unskilled labourers, given their limited ability to earn cash for a living, had to rely more heavily on commodity goods dispensed by their masters. Even so, when Doucette Bermond, the 14-year-old girl who, after being granted a miraculous cure by Saint Louis of Anjou, had knowingly put herself in the domestic service of the Franciscans of Marseille in exchange for her meals, later in life, she sought elsewhere a better return for her labour. When in 1308, at the age of 25, she appeared before the papal commission to relate the miracle she had been granted by the holy man, she admitted to have reduced her commitment to clean the Friars' church because, «being a poor woman living from her hands», she had to make a (better) living elsewhere.<sup>88</sup>

Masters themselves followed two distinct approaches in the procurement of goods and services in payment for labour: either as compensation for lack – or limited amount – of cash or as salary bonus. The former typically applied to young, female, or unskilled workers, the latter to sought-after skilled artisans. Undoubtedly the frequency, quantity, and quality of the goods and services offered in exchange for work responded to the laws of supply and demand according to economic trends, themselves compounding personal circumstances in a century of ceaseless upheavals. The unprecedented labour shortages

<sup>85</sup> «[E]t ad amplius non teneatur»: March 12, 1387, ADBDR, 351 E 41, f. 82v-83r.

<sup>86</sup> «Pacto tamen retento simpliciter inter eos quod dictus Gaufridus Aycardi, iuxta sui beneplacitum et voluntatem <et non alias>, tradet dicto Antonio Prime de blado vel pecuniis, si illis indigeret ad usum et sustentationem sue domus»: April 19, 1400, BnF, n.a.l., 1352, f. 15v.

<sup>87</sup> «[C]omme une trame à la fois visible et invisible derrière chaque manière d'envisager le crédit, se tient le Pouvoir» (Fontaine 2008, 13).

<sup>88</sup> «[S]et pauper mulier est et habet querere panem cum manibus suis», AF 1951, 166.

following the Great Mortality of 1348 stimulated across many trades the supply of additional earnings, but essentially in the guise of food to workers of all stripes, young and old, with extra sartorial benefits offered to the former rather than hard cash. Yet, in-demand labourers, notably those specialising in the land and sea extractive industries, which underwent a thriving expansion through the 1370s and 1380s, enjoyed special extras granted by prospective masters. They did so, however, with a clear focus on commodity goods and services that mattered dearly: basic victuals – wheat, wine, and meat –, regular clothing, and health care. Notwithstanding competent teaching and training imparted on youngsters, those goods, which ensured a rudimentary quality of life, had been all along the most valued currencies at the heart of labour negotiations, whether led by employers or employees, parents or masters, and were well worth fighting for.

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*La diffusione dei mezzi di scambio non monetari*

*The diffusion of alternative currencies*





Fabrizio Alias

*Uso e diffusione della 'moneta alternativa'  
in Sardegna tra XI e XIV secolo*

## Introduzione

Nell'aprile del 2023 la De la Rue, azienda britannica che stampa un terzo delle banconote in circolazione nel mondo, ha annunciato di essere entrata in crisi per la bassa richiesta di contanti da parte delle banche centrali.<sup>1</sup> Stando a quanto riferito dalla stessa azienda, si tratterebbe del picco più basso degli ultimi vent'anni. Sulla diminuzione della richiesta di moneta stampata concorrono fattori diversi e complessi, non ultimo la difficoltà economica dei mercati, ma certamente un ruolo ha avuto anche la diffusione della moneta digitale. In particolare, il processo ha subito una significativa accelerazione durante la pandemia di Covid-19.<sup>2</sup> La tendenza ha però le sue radici alla fine del primo decennio del secolo XXI, in concomitanza con la crisi bancaria mondiale del 2008 (Kahn, van Oordt, Zhu 2021).

Tra le nuove forme di pagamento affermatesi come risposta a tale crisi, nel 2009 nasceva in Sardegna il Sardex, unità di conto monetaria, convenzionalmente pari a un euro, finalizzata allo scambio di beni e servizi<sup>3</sup>. Essendo la diffusione della moneta digitale in parte connessa alla cultura economica e finanziaria dei luoghi in cui si afferma, non è forse un caso che il Sardex sia nato ed abbia attecchito proprio in Sardegna, dove forme di economia naturale e concreta sono state persistenti e resistenti attraverso i secoli. Un esempio su tutti, richiamato da Enrico Stumpo nel suo saggio sull'imposta tra economia naturale ed economia monetaria, è quello dei Monti nummari, istituiti nel 1780 dal governo sabaudo, che non riuscirono però a sostituire i Monti frumentari, questi ultimi più funzionali al sostegno del credito nell'isola (Stumpo 1983).

In un contesto profondamente differente, nei secoli XI-XIII, quando la Sardegna era divisa nei quattro regni o *giudicati* di Cagliari, Arborea, Torres e Gallura, gran parte dei pagamenti era effettuata per mezzo di beni e servizi, impiegati in sostituzione della moneta metallica. È stato dimostrato come il ricorso a tali forme di pagamento non sia automaticamente riconducibile a un'economia di baratto (Dopsch 1967; Polanyi 1980). Infatti, merci, beni e prestazioni potevano svolgere la funzione di mezzo di scambio, configurandosi dunque come moneta sostitutiva, alternativa o

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-65249034> (2023-04-13).

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/06/29/covid-19-drives-global-surge-in-use-of-digital-payments> (2022-06-29).

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.sardexpay.net/>.

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‘quasi moneta’. La differenza tra il semplice scambio di un bene con un altro e l’impiego di un bene con funzione di moneta sostitutiva era ben chiara agli attori delle transazioni nell’isola, come dimostrano in maniera inequivocabile i *condaghes*, registri patrimoniali d’ambito monastico e laico, redatti in volgare sardo (uno tradotto in castigliano alla fine del XVI sec.) Si tratta nello specifico di codici che riportano memorie di compravendite, permutate e donazioni effettuate da monaci e giudici.<sup>4</sup> Dei cinque *condaghes* superstiti, quattro sono di ambito monastico (S. Pietro di Silki,<sup>5</sup> S. Nicola di Trullas,<sup>6</sup> S. Michele di Salvennor<sup>7</sup> nel giudicato di Torres; S. Maria di Bonarcado<sup>8</sup> nel giudicato d’Arborea); uno solo è laico (il *condaghe* di Barisone II di Torres<sup>9</sup>). Pur tenendo conto della dispersione documentaria che ha interessato il panorama delle fonti giudicali, va segnalato che non si sono conservati – né se ne ha notizia – *condaghes* per i giudicati di Gallura e Cagliari.

Lungi dall’essere espressione di arretratezza, gli scambi che privilegiavano la moneta sostitutiva avevano alla base «precise scelte economiche come l’allargamento di attività agricole o il consolidamento dell’allevamento» (Petrucci 1986, 624). In questo contesto ricoprivano un ruolo fondamentale servizi e prestazioni d’opera, necessari sia per l’agricoltura che per l’allevamento, oltre che per attività quali l’estrazione del sale. Queste forme di ‘quasi moneta’ sono talvolta accompagnate dall’espressione del loro valore attraverso la moneta di conto. Non mancano peraltro compravendite effettuate mediante l’effettivo esborso di contante, come attestato ancora nei *condaghes*.

L’inserimento della Sardegna nei traffici commerciali tirrenici tra XII e XIII secolo favorì la monetizzazione degli scambi, di cui furono veicolo i mercanti pisani e genovesi operativi nell’isola. Questo processo fu accelerato nel corso del Duecento dalla caduta di tre dei quattro giudicati (Cagliari, Torres e Gallura) e dalla contestuale affermazione del Comune di Pisa e delle casate signorili dei Doria, dei Malaspina e dei Della Gherardesca. La documentazione fiscale pisana dei primi del XIV secolo offre in tal senso importanti indicazioni. Da un lato attesta infatti il processo di monetizzazione dei tributi, in precedenza versati ugualmente attraverso beni e prestazioni d’opera, dall’altro testimonia la parziale persistenza o il riadattamento dei pagamenti in natura. La transizione di cui si è detto non significò perciò la scomparsa di mezzi alternativi alla moneta metallica, ma solo un ribaltamento del rapporto tra questi e la moneta stessa.

L’intento del presente contributo è pertanto quello di investigare le modalità e le forme di pagamento mediante moneta alternativa, in uso sia in contesti commerciali che fiscali, nella Sardegna bassomedievale. Alla luce dei *condaghes* e di altri documenti giudicali (XI-XIII sec.), si intende esaminare le principali ‘monete alternative’ nel contesto socio-economico in cui furono impiegate. Parimenti, mediante la documentazione pisana e catalana (XIV sec.), si illustreranno le dinamiche di

<sup>4</sup> Per una panoramica sui *condaghes* cfr. da ultimo Fadda, Rapetti 2019 e Soddu i.c.s.

<sup>5</sup> Per l’edizione del *condaghe* cfr. CSPA.

<sup>6</sup> Per l’edizione del *condaghe* cfr. CSNT.

<sup>7</sup> Per l’edizione del *condaghe* cfr. CSMS.

<sup>8</sup> Per l’edizione del *condaghe* cfr. CSMB.

<sup>9</sup> Per l’edizione del *condaghe* cfr. CBT.

cambiamento e le costanti, per giungere in definitiva a una migliore comprensione dell’economia e della struttura sociale della Sardegna nel Basso Medioevo.

## 1. Donare, barattare, comprare

Nei *condaghes* emerge in modo chiaro la distinzione tra il dono (in sardo: *postura* o *datura*), la permuta o baratto (*tràmutu*) e la compravendita (*còmpori*). Attestate anche in altre fonti dello stesso periodo, si tratta delle principali forme di scambio documentate a livello locale, attraverso le quali è possibile analizzare l’uso e la diffusione della moneta sostitutiva.

### 1.1 Donare

Sul dono si impernano a partire dall’XI-XII secolo i rapporti tra giudici ed enti monastici. Attratti nell’orbita sarda sulla scia delle relazioni instaurate con i Comuni italiani e la Chiesa, gli ordini monastici furono dotati nell’isola di estesi patrimoni fondiari, numerosi capi di bestiame e di una nutrita manodopera servile. Per i giudici il dono aveva la funzione di consolidare l’alleanza con i monasteri e allo stesso tempo ribadire con un’azione esemplare il dominio della casata giudiciale sul territorio. Non è peraltro da escludere che a queste donazioni seguissero versamenti di denaro non a titolo di acquisto ma di contro-dono, una pratica che in questo caso potrebbe giustificare la disponibilità di monete e tesori da parte dei giudici.<sup>10</sup> Tali meccanismi di dono e contro-dono, che talvolta mascheravano veri e propri acquisti, sono stati rilevati ad esempio a beneficio del monastero di Camaldoli – che in Sardegna aveva ricevuto ampie donazioni – da parte dei villaggi del Casentino (Wickham 1987, 365-66). Significativo per confermare il quadro sardo può essere anche il caso riportato da Cinzio Violante per S. Silvestro di Nonantola: la contessa Matilde, dopo avere ottenuto il tesoro del monastero per destinarlo alla difesa della causa pontificia, concesse infatti allo stesso «l’offerta di due corti, due castelli e altri possessi fondiari» (Violante 1986, 496).

Al di là dei rapporti al vertice tra giudici e monasteri, il dono era uno strumento impiegato anche dai privati, con l’intento evidente di entrare nell’orbita di potere degli enti monastici, o di rafforzarne i legami sociali laddove questi fossero già esistenti.<sup>11</sup> Sono attestate in particolare donazioni di appezzamenti di terra, vigneti, ficheti, orti, servi, ma anche di argento non monetato. Queste donazioni, nella maggior parte effettuate *pro anima*, erano talvolta accompagnate da un contro-dono: i *condaghes* attestano con questa modalità l’offerta di animali (un cavallo bianco, un bue, una vacca, un montone, un puledro), beni alimentari (grano e orzo), tessuti (una «coltre variopinta»), infine denari in moneta effettiva (Strinna 2019). Anche in questo caso le donazioni sono la spia di operazioni non sempre a titolo gratuito, alla cui base vi potevano essere «sollecitazioni, accordi o negoziazioni che generalmente non

<sup>10</sup> Cfr. *infra* il paragrafo sulla moneta.

<sup>11</sup> Sul significato del *dono* dal punto di vista storico e antropologico cfr. la bibliografia citata da ultimo in Strinna.

risultano esplicitati» (Strinna 2019, 64). Allo stesso modo, la contropartita era inserita in «quella rete di scambi di doni che funziona da adesivo in tutti i sistemi clientelari» (Wickham 1987, 367).

Nel corso del XIII secolo il ricorso al dono dovette diminuire progressivamente. Dagli Statuti di Sassari del 1316, ma la cui prima redazione risale agli anni Ottanta del Duecento, in cui il dono è chiamato *presente*, conosciamo la sua cristallizzazione in un tributo fiscale<sup>12</sup>. Tuttavia, si tratta di un caso isolato e attentamente normato, mentre viene fatto esplicito divieto di chiedere ai commercianti formaggio «in dono aut pretio»<sup>13</sup>. L'attenzione verso la pratica del dono e degli effetti da essa derivanti, in un contesto istituzionale quale quello del Comune di Sassari, è spiegabile attraverso la necessità di prevenire forme di corruzione mascherate dallo scambio di beni. Attraverso il dono, soprattutto quando questo era rivolto all'autorità, si poteva infatti aspirare indebitamente a forme di promozione economica e sociale<sup>14</sup>.

## 1.2. Barattare

Il baratto o permuta era frequentemente impiegato in età giudiciale come forma di scambio. Nelle schede dei *condaghes* in cui è attestato, non è indicato il valore monetario dei beni interessati. Si scambiava un bene per un altro, e ciò era sufficiente alle parti coinvolte per concludere l'operazione. Salvo alcune sporadiche eccezioni, la permuta riguardava beni della stessa tipologia: beni immobili per beni immobili, alimenti per alimenti, merci per merci etc. Così, ad esempio, per S. Pietro di Silki è attestato lo scambio di due vigne, espresso dall'eloquente formula di «una vigna per un'altra» («binia per binia»)<sup>15</sup>.

Rispetto all'oggetto, oltre ai beni immobili (terreni, salti, vigne, frutteti etc.), è attestata frequentemente la permuta di servi. Quest'ultima non riguardava la persona fisica ma le giornate lavorative, che potevano essere frazionate tra più padroni (Simbula, Soddu 2015). Il servo era tenuto a offrire sino a quattro giornate lavorative settimanali: mutuando la terminologia impiegata per il bestiame, il servo poteva essere *intregu* («intero») – quando prestava 4 giornate settimanali ad un unico padrone –, *lateratu* («a metà») – 2 giornate –, oppure *pedatu* («per un quarto») – 1 giornata –. Non conosciamo tuttavia quali parametri fossero tenuti in considerazione negli scambi, se ad esempio contassero età, caratteristiche e competenze dei servi. Un caso singolare è quello di Gosantine d'Urieke, il quale cedette una terra al monastero di Silki in cambio dell'esenzione dalle prestazioni d'opera cui era tenuta la moglie, quest'ultima evidentemente alle dipendenze dell'ente.<sup>16</sup> Per quanto riguarda i terreni, non sono noti i dettagli relativi ad estensione e destinazione d'uso né tantomeno quelli della rendita, presumibilmente presi in considerazione ai fini dello scambio. Certamente dovevano essere rilevanti motivazioni di tipo economico, che per i monasteri possono essere ricondotte alla volontà di accrescere il patrimonio fondiario ma anche

<sup>12</sup> Guarnerio 1892-94, I, XXXVI.

<sup>13</sup> Guarnerio 1892-94, I, XXXI.

<sup>14</sup> Alias 2019.

<sup>15</sup> CSPS, 26.

<sup>16</sup> CSPS, 166.

di favorire la specializzazione delle produzioni, magari inglobando terreni attigui a quello del monastero. Accanto a queste motivazioni economiche – il discorso vale allo stesso modo per i servi – sugli scambi tra beni dello stesso tipo agivano evidentemente dinamiche di tipo sociale (Polanyi 2010), finalizzate alla creazione o rafforzamento dei legami reciproci tra latifondisti, enti monastici e giudici. Alcune schede del *condaghe* di S. Maria di Bonarcado, seppure non specificamente riferite a permutate o compravendite, mostrano monaci, élites giudicali (*donnos*), laiche ed ecclesiastiche ritagliarsi spazi di incontro in pubblico, finalizzati al consolidamento di alleanze e alla loro esibizione.<sup>17</sup>

Infine, benché nei *condaghes* siano rubricati come acquisti, mostrano il carattere di scambio alcune operazioni basate su accordi specifici, in cui l’acquisizione di un bene è contraccambiata con un altro bene scelto dalla controparte. È il caso della badessa di Silki, che comprò una proprietà dai figli di Furatu Cambella, dando loro in cambio un cavallo che – questo è il punto – fu scelto da loro stessi («kale si kerverunt issos»).<sup>18</sup> Così, il priore di Trullas comprò due giornate di lavoro di una serva, dando ai due venditori una cavalla da domare, scambiando «una cosa per un’altra» («caput a caput»), di comune accordo («placendonos appare»).

### 1.3. Comprare

L’acquisto ci conduce al cuore del nostro tema. Se infatti il dono e la permuta erano costituiti da un semplice scambio di beni, senza che fosse indicato il loro valore, la compravendita prevedeva invece una transazione perfezionata dal ricorso alla moneta, cioè un *medium* che assolvesse alle funzioni di «misura dei valori [di scambio], mezzo di pagamento e strumento di conservazione dei valori» (Bloch 1981, 35).

Nella Sardegna giudicale la quasi totalità degli acquisti era effettuata ricorrendo alla ‘moneta alternativa’ o ‘sostitutiva’ (detta anche ‘quasi moneta’), cioè a beni – facilmente conservabili e fungibili (Bloch 1981, 35) – e servizi che svolgevano la medesima funzione della moneta metallica. D’altra parte, l’impiego di questi strumenti monetari alternativi, come vedremo, era spesso accompagnato dalla moneta di conto (detta anche «moneta fantasma» o «moneta immaginaria») (Cipolla 2020), la cui funzione era di indicare il valore dei beni oggetto di compravendita.

#### 1.3.1. ‘Moneta altertnativa’ e moneta di conto

In un’economia «seminaturale» (Stumpo 1983, 560) quale quella sarda, la ‘moneta alternativa’ fu preferita a quella metallica, quest’ultima mai coniata in età giudicale pur a fronte di un’ampia disponibilità di risorse argentifere.

In Sardegna, alla base delle forme alternative di pagamento vi erano la produzione agro-pastorale e il patrimonio zootecnico, che si configurano dunque come ‘merce moneta’. Erano impiegati beni alimentari tra cui cereali, formaggio, carne e fave, e animali quali bovini, suini, ovini e caprini. Largamente presenti nell’economia locale,

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<sup>17</sup> CSMB, 110.

<sup>18</sup> CSPS, 114.

essi avevano il vantaggio di avere un valore riconosciuto e misurabile. I terreni (al di là di un'unica eccezione per le vigne) e i servi non vengono invece usati come 'merce moneta'. Alla radice della scelta vi è la loro importanza fondamentale nell'economia dell'epoca, per cui si era disposti a scambiarli con altrettanti beni immobili e servi, ma non a cederli come moneta d'acquisto di un altro bene. In quest'ottica la permuta sembra caricarsi maggiormente di quelle funzioni sociali a cui abbiamo fatto riferimento (par. 1.2.).

Entrando nel merito degli usi della 'quasi moneta', occorre distinguere quei beni impiegati *tout court* come moneta sostitutiva, il cui valore è cioè immediatamente riconoscibile da venditori e acquirenti, da quelli il cui valore è attribuito in seguito a una stima o a una valutazione. Anche in questo caso sono soprattutto i *condaghes*, così come le *carte* dell'archivio arcivescovile di Cagliari e altra documentazione d'età giudiciale, a fornire una chiave per distinguere le due tipologie. A queste corrispondono infatti altrettante espressioni impiegate nei documenti per definirle. Prima di analizzarle, è bene ricordare come in entrambi i casi la 'merce moneta' sia (quasi sempre) accompagnata dal valore di scambio espresso in soldi (sardo: *sollos*) o frazioni di soldo (un terzo: *tremisse*; un sesto: *semisse*) di *bisante*, la moneta aurea che circolò in Sardegna in età bizantina.

Il connubio tra 'quasi moneta' e moneta di conto trova espressione in due formule linguistiche:

- 1) valore espresso in soldi + 'merce moneta': es. 5 soldi di grano («V sollos de labore»)
- 2) 'merce moneta' + valore espresso in soldi: es. maiale del valore di 5 soldi («maiales in V sollos»)

L'impiego delle due formule non è casuale, e anzi rivela come tra di esse vi fosse una differenza sostanziale, come dimostra il fatto che per alcuni beni o animali è sempre utilizzata o l'una o l'altra, mai entrambe. Ad esempio, il maiale richiamato nell'esempio n. 2), non compare mai nella formula n. 1), per cui non troveremo mai l'espressione "soldi di maiale".

La prima formula (n. 1) è impiegata soprattutto in relazione ai beni alimentari: maggiormente attestato è il grano («sollos de labore»<sup>19</sup>), mentre non compare mai l'orzo; in diverse occasioni è utilizzato il formaggio («sollos de casu»<sup>20</sup>); sembrerebbe solo episodico il ricorso alla carne («tremisses» o «semisses de carne»<sup>21</sup>) e alle fave («tremisses de faba»<sup>22</sup>). Tra gli animali troviamo esclusivamente gli ovini, in particolare le pecore («sollos de berbeces»<sup>23</sup>); per le merci i riferimenti riguardano quasi unicamente i panni («sollos de pannu»<sup>24</sup>), che paiono essere impiegati nel solo giudicato di Torres, e almeno in un caso il ferro («sollos de ferru»<sup>25</sup>). Rappresenta

<sup>19</sup> CSNT, 1.

<sup>20</sup> CSPS, 329.

<sup>21</sup> CSMS, 196, 109.

<sup>22</sup> CSNT, 6.

<sup>23</sup> CSNT, 27.

<sup>24</sup> CSPS, 147.

<sup>25</sup> CSNT, 10.

un’eccezione rispetto a quanto prima enunciato a proposito dei beni immobili, l’impiego delle vigne («sollos de binia»<sup>26</sup>) come forma di pagamento.

Rispetto alla seconda formula (n. 2), in cui la merce è seguita dall’indicazione del valore monetario assegnatole nella compravendita, gli esempi riguardano in maniera preponderante gli animali. Bovini, ovini, equini e suini sono largamente impiegati per l’acquisto di svariati beni: si tratta nello specifico di vacche («baccas en sollo»<sup>27</sup>), buoi («boes de sollos»<sup>28</sup>), pecore («ovejas en sollos»<sup>29</sup>), capre («cabras en sollos»<sup>30</sup>), cavalli («caballos en sollos»<sup>31</sup>), cavalle («ebas en sollos»<sup>32</sup>) e maiali («maiales en sollos»<sup>33</sup>). Oltre agli animali sono utilizzati pellame e tessuti grezzi e lavorati: pelli di cervo («piel de cervo en sollo»<sup>34</sup>), lana («codos de frisa en sollo»), una coltre («colkitra in sollo»<sup>35</sup>). Tra gli utensili troviamo in un’unica attestazione una gràmola («fargala»).

Alla base della differenza tra la prima e la seconda formula (n. 1 e n. 2) vi dovevano essere le caratteristiche della ‘merce moneta’ dell’uno e dell’altro gruppo. Il grano, per riferirci al bene maggiormente impiegato, soddisfaceva i requisiti propri – già richiamati in precedenza – della moneta effettiva, quali la fungibilità, la misurabilità e la riconoscibilità. Il ‘soldo di grano’ rimandava dunque a un’esatta quantità, che l’impiego di misure ufficiali permetteva di riscontrare con precisione. Alcuni raffronti permettono di ipotizzare come il valore del ‘soldo di grano’ corrispondesse a una certa quantità di prodotto. Nella Castilla e León dei secoli X-XI «era talmente comune saldare debiti convenuti in soldi con grano e pecore che, con l’andar del tempo, restò comunemente sottointeso che *soldo* fosse sinonimo di *moggio di grano* oppure di *pecora* e l’equivalenza tra queste due cose era generalmente accettata» (Cipolla 2020, 27).<sup>36</sup> Un caso simile è quello del *panis de cambio*, sorta di ‘moneta alimentare’ in uso a Milano ancora nel XII secolo, che Bognetti ritenne essere «un relitto del sistema ordinario dei mezzi di pagamento del periodo altomedievale» (Bognetti 1944, 116).<sup>37</sup> Esprimendosi in merito alla funzione del pane come moneta, in conclusione dei suoi ragionamenti, lo stesso studioso ne identificava il valore con la quantità misurabile:

Quindi è una unità di misura, cioè l’essere fatto con la quantità di farina corrispondente alla sesta parte dello staio di grano, ciò che caratterizza il “panis de cambio”. [...] Si trattava di un grossissimo pane, di forse due libbre; e perciò

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<sup>26</sup> CSNT, 23.

<sup>27</sup> CSNT, 47.

<sup>28</sup> CSNT, 47.

<sup>29</sup> CSMS, 35.

<sup>30</sup> CSMS, 252.

<sup>31</sup> CSNT, 47.

<sup>32</sup> CSMB, 43.

<sup>33</sup> CSNT, 23.

<sup>34</sup> CSMS, 64.

<sup>35</sup> CSPA, 172.

<sup>36</sup> L’Autore rimanda al saggio di Sánchez-Albornoz 1928, 110-11.

<sup>37</sup> Lo studio è ripreso e commentato da Ugo Tucci, nella sua *Prefazione* al volume di Marc Bloch sulla moneta (Tucci 1981, XXII).



riteniamo che le sue stesse frazioni potevan servire come minore unità di scambio, cioè come surrogato dell'infimo numerario divisionale (Bognetti 1944, 118).

Una conferma per il caso sardo potrebbe arrivare dalle registrazioni di grano misurato in moggi, del quale è espresso il valore in soldi («moios de tridicu in sollo»);<sup>38</sup> la stessa modalità si ritrova per i panni, misurati in *cubita* e accompagnati dal valore in soldi («cubita de pannu in sollos»);<sup>39</sup>

Diverso è il caso della pecora, il cui utilizzo come unità monetaria suggerisce l'esistenza di uno standard riconoscibile: l'animale doveva essere un esemplare di una certa età, stazza e peso. Da questo punto di vista la pecora era probabilmente l'animale che meglio si adattava al requisito della fungibilità.

Nel caso degli altri animali, difficilmente riconducibili a un *tipo* immediatamente riconoscibile, parametri quali età, peso e caratteristiche fisiche dovevano incidere profondamente sulla determinazione del valore. Questo è il motivo per cui, nei casi in cui l'acquisto è completato con il versamento di un animale, se ne esprime il valore subito dopo, quasi a sottolineare come quest'ultimo fosse l'esito di una stima.

Svolgono funzione di moneta sostitutiva anche quegli animali, beni alimentari e merci impiegati negli acquisti di cui non è espresso il valore in moneta. Numerosi scambi, rubricati nei *condaghes* come *conporu*, sono in effetti realizzati attraverso il pagamento in animali, beni alimentari e merci dei quali è indicato solo il numero o la quantità. È questo soprattutto il caso in cui la 'merce moneta' è rappresentata da capi di bestiame. Tra 1110 e 1127, ad esempio, la badessa di Silki, Teodora, acquistò un *salu* pagando 40 maiali e 2 pecore («XL maiales e II vervekes»);<sup>40</sup>

Spesso, oltre al numero, le registrazioni riportano anche le caratteristiche degli animali. Tra 1127 e 1150, ancora il monastero di Silki comprò due giornate al mese di lavoro servile pagando un bue domato, oltre a un puledro («I boe domatu et I pulletru»);<sup>41</sup> Esempi simili riguardano acquisti effettuati con i cavalli: è attestata la compravendita di un terreno pagato con un cavallo bianco da corsa («caballu albu curiace»);<sup>42</sup> di una vigna con un cavallo domato provvisto di finimenti («cavallu domatu atrassatu»);<sup>43</sup> di due giornate lavorative mensili di una serva con una cavalla da domare («equa de domare»);<sup>44</sup>

Relativamente ai cereali (grano e orzo) e ai tessuti, il loro valore è talvolta indicato attraverso le rispettive unità di misura, che variano anche all'interno dello stesso giudicato.<sup>45</sup> Anche l'argento non monetato, che in alcuni casi compare nelle registrazioni come argento «lavorato» (forse intendendo con questa espressione oggetti e monili), quando impiegato negli acquisti è indicato rispetto al peso, con

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<sup>38</sup> CSNT, 49.

<sup>39</sup> CSNT, 49.

<sup>40</sup> CSPA, 96.

<sup>41</sup> CSPA, 155.

<sup>42</sup> CSNT, 71.

<sup>43</sup> CSPA, 117.

<sup>44</sup> CSNT, 64.

<sup>45</sup> Cfr. *infra*.

riferimento alla libbra e al suo sottomultiplo dell'oncia («media libra de argento»;<sup>46</sup> «II unthas de argentu»<sup>47</sup>). L'argento era utilizzato anche nei prestiti, come quello che *donna Sarra*, monaca di S. Pietro di Silki, fece negli anni 1110-1127 a Dericcor de Gitil: non essendo stato in grado di restituire l'argento ricevuto – probabilmente perché lo aveva utilizzato per effettuare degli acquisti – fu condannato alla cessione di un servo al monastero come misura compensativa («in pariamentu»)<sup>48</sup>.

Va inoltre rilevato come lo stesso argento fungesse da misura di valore per altre ‘merci-moneta’: un esempio su tutti quello relativo all’acquisto effettuato dal giudice di Torres Barisone II delle proprietà che il prete del villaggio di Bosove aveva nell’omonima valle; il giudice propose di pagare con un codice di mezza libbra d’argento («I codike de mesa libra d’argentu»<sup>49</sup>), poi rifiutato dal prete in cambio di un terreno.

Sono infine attestati casi – per i monasteri di S. Maria di Bonarcado e S. Michele di Salvennor – in cui alla moneta sostitutiva veniva associato un valore di scambio in relazione alle giornate lavorative («operas» o «oberas»). Se alla base di questo sistema di calcolo vi doveva essere inizialmente l’identità tra i beni e il monte ore di lavoro necessario per produrne una data quantità, successivamente le *operas* passarono a indicare una preciso sistema di misura. I beni impiegati – relativi esclusivamente alla compravendita di terreni – sono il grano, il sale, il formaggio, la carne, i panni, gli utensili. Troviamo così pagamenti effettuati con grano e sale del valore di 2 giornate lavorative ciascuno («II oberas de laore»; «II oberas de sale»);<sup>50</sup> carne e formaggio del valore complessivo di 6 giornate lavorative («VI oberas inter peza e casu»);<sup>51</sup> 11 cubiti di panno del valore di 4 giornate («cubita de pannu in IIII oberas»);<sup>52</sup> una zappa del valore di 2 giornate lavorative («ligone in II oberas»);<sup>53</sup> ferro del valore di 2 giornate («II ferros in obera»);<sup>54</sup> una gràmola di 8 giornate («fargala in VIII operas»)<sup>55</sup>. Da ultimo, l’acquisto di una vigna fu pagato attraverso la concessione di giornate lavorative della servitù femminile da impiegarsi nei lavori domestici («das mugeres para luzirle la casa»);<sup>56</sup> si tratta di un’eccezione, visto che la cessione diretta di manodopera servile come forma di pagamento non è altrimenti attestata in tutta la documentazione giudiciale.

Un’ultima e particolare forma di moneta sostitutiva impiegata nei pagamenti – ma non nella compravendita – è data dalle clausole di anatema e maledizione di tradizione bizantina (Feniello, Martin 2011), funzionali a scongiurare forme di

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<sup>46</sup> CSMB, 81.

<sup>47</sup> CSPS, 352.

<sup>48</sup> CSPS, 83.

<sup>49</sup> CBT, 16.

<sup>50</sup> CSMB, 44.

<sup>51</sup> CSMB, 143.

<sup>52</sup> CSMB, 70.

<sup>53</sup> CSMB, 44.

<sup>54</sup> CSPS, 224.

<sup>55</sup> CSMB, 70.

<sup>56</sup> CSMS, 263.

contestazione circa quanto stabilito in sede di giudizio, e che sostituirono le multe in denaro sino alla metà del XIII secolo.

### 1.3.2. Prezzi, unità di misura, calcoli e stime

A partire dalle registrazioni dei *condaghes*, e mettendo in relazione i pagamenti effettuati negli acquisti, sono stati fatti tentativi di esprimere i rapporti di valore tra i beni impiegati nelle transazioni, con il fine di arrivare a ricostruire i prezzi. Per il giudicato di Torres, sulla base delle operazioni di acquisto di terreni e lavoro servile, sono state ricavate delle equivalenze tra valore dei beni immobili, degli alimenti e delle giornate di lavoro servili (Meloni 1994).

Tuttavia, queste operazioni mostrano dei limiti poiché le informazioni presenti nelle fonti sono incomplete. Relativamente ai beni immobili, ad esempio, non è mai indicata l'estensione degli stessi, per cui non è possibile conoscere il prezzo in relazione alla superficie. Le prestazioni d'opera servili, proprio in ragione del loro frazionamento in un certo numero di giornate al mese, appaiono più riconducibili ad uno standard. Mancano però riferimenti all'età dei servi e delle serve, così come, salvo alcuni casi, alle loro specializzazioni, parametri che dovevano influire sulle valutazioni complessive. Degli animali, come abbiamo visto, è solitamente indicato il numero dei capi impiegati nello scambio, così come per i beni alimentari e le merci è indicata quantità o misura. Relativamente al bestiame, mancano informazioni precise rispetto all'età, alla stazza e (pur con diverse eccezioni) alle caratteristiche generali. Rispetto ai cereali e ai tessuti, il limite è dato dai sistemi di misurazione impiegati. Questi infatti variano anche all'interno dello stesso giudicato. Rimanendo in quello di Torres e limitando l'esempio ai cereali, vediamo come grano e orzo venissero misurati in moggi («moios»),<sup>57</sup> starelli («estareles»),<sup>58</sup> staia («istaios»)<sup>59</sup> e *carras*.<sup>60</sup> È tuttavia possibile avanzare delle ipotesi, laddove ci viene fornito non solo il riferimento al valore monetario impiegato ma anche a quello del bene acquistato. Ad esempio, il priore di S. Nicola di Trullas comprò una vigna del valore di 1 soldo e 2 *operas*; il pagamento, dietro accordo tra le parti, fu però effettuato attraverso la consegna di 10 moggi di grano e 1 moggio di fave («X moios de tridicu et I de faba»)<sup>61</sup>. Se ne potrebbe dedurre che 10 moggi di grano costassero 1 soldo, e che 1 moggio di fave valesse 2 *operas*. Se la prima deduzione fosse corretta, potremmo arrivare a stabilire che un 'soldo di grano' fosse equivalente a 10 moggi di grano.

Pur dovendo riuscire a ricostruire i prezzi delle derrate alimentari, dovremmo comunque considerare come questi non fossero uniformi in tutta l'isola, non potendosi considerare neanche ciascun giudicato come un'area omogenea. Resta inoltre da chiedersi se sia possibile parlare in questo caso di prezzi o se, come è stato fatto in relazione ai canoni fissati nei contratti agrari, sia meglio riferirsi a «valutazioni

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<sup>57</sup> CSPS, 157, 167; CBT, 12.

<sup>58</sup> CSMS, 9.

<sup>59</sup> CSPS, 224.

<sup>60</sup> CBT, 11.

<sup>61</sup> CSNT, 3.

convenzionali stabilite dalla tradizione» (Tucci 1983, 331). Certo è che in ciascuna area di scambio documentata i beni avevano un valore (anche in rapporto tra di loro) riconosciuto come valido (e quindi accettato) da acquirenti e venditori, tanto che la maggior parte delle transazioni era veicolata attraverso la 'quasi moneta'. D'altra parte sono attestate operazioni di carattere speculativo, come quelle portate avanti da S. Pietro di Silki in occasione di un anno imprecisato, nel corso del XII secolo, caratterizzato da una grave carestia, tanto da essere definito nel *condaghe* come 'anno della fame' («annu dessoru famen»).<sup>62</sup> In quell'occasione il monastero comprò una serie di terreni e vigne, pagandoli attraverso orzo e carne: vista l'estrema necessità di questi alimenti – di cui evidentemente Silki disponeva in abbondanza –, è probabile che il 'prezzo' pagato fosse inferiore a quello normalmente richiesto per l'acquisto di quegli immobili.

A ulteriore prova della precisa conoscenza circa il valore dei beni utilizzati in alternativa alla moneta – e alla loro riconoscibilità da parte di chi partecipava alla compravendita –, numerose attestazioni documentarie riportano i calcoli effettuati per pareggiare il prezzo del bene con il valore della moneta, e completare così l'acquisto. Ne è un esempio la scheda n. 2 del *condaghe* di S. Nicola di Trullas in cui è registrato l'acquisto di una vigna da parte del priore.<sup>63</sup> Per il pagamento vengono utilizzate diverse monete sostitutive: 3 'soldi di grano' e 1 'tremisse di grano', 1 panno del valore di 1 soldo e 1 tremisse, 10 pecore valutate per 1 soldo. Alla fine dell'elenco la registrazione riporta il totale del valore monetario: 5 soldi e 2 tremissi. Ancora in riferimento a Trullas, l'acquisto di 4 'soldi di vigna' fu completato con la consegna di 4 maiali del valore complessivo di 4 soldi (dunque 1 soldo ciascuno) («III maiales in III sollos»).<sup>64</sup> Talvolta è riportato solamente il totale, senza che sia possibile risalire al valore delle diverse 'merci moneta' impiegate: nel caso di un acquisto di giornate servili, ad esempio, furono pagati 9 soldi tra panni, ferri e un cavallo<sup>65</sup>.

Dinamiche simili si riscontrano in occasione dell'impiego congiunto di moneta effettiva e moneta sostitutiva. Un'operazione del monastero di Silki per l'acquisto di un *salu* è stata conclusa con il pagamento di 1 bue, 1 vacca e 2 maiali (del quale non è espresso il valore monetario), oltre a di 2 soldi in moneta metallica («II sollos de pecui»). Anche in questo caso è riportato il totale pagato: 11 soldi<sup>66</sup>.

In alcune occasioni è necessario effettuare stime e valutazioni dei beni oggetto di compravendita. Una scheda del *condaghe* di S. Nicola di Trullas esemplifica in un'unica casistica la necessità di arrivare alla valutazione del bene, con riferimento alla moneta di conto, per poi procedere al pagamento mediante moneta sostitutiva. Secondo quanto registrato, il monastero comprò una vigna in abbandono tra quelle dei vigneti del villaggio di Semestene (giudicato di Torres). Il prezzo, stabilito in 4 soldi e 2 tremissi, fu stabilito attraverso una valutazione (richiamata dall'espressione 'me la apprezzarono': «apreçarunmila»). Il pagamento venne effettuato con 2 'soldi di pecora' e 2 vacche (del valore ricavabile di 1 soldo 1 tremisse ciascuna). Stante la

<sup>62</sup> CSPS, 212-215. Per la datazione delle schede cfr. Soddu 2021, 126.

<sup>63</sup> CSNT, 2.

<sup>64</sup> CSNT, 23.

<sup>65</sup> CSNT, 10.

<sup>66</sup> CSPS, 321.

condizione di abbandono della vigna, il venditore scontò dal prezzo d'acquisto 2 soldi e 2 tremessi, cioè il valore delle 2 vacche. Chiude l'operazione l'elenco dei testimoni che parteciparono alla valutazione («testes ci bi furun ad apreçare»).<sup>67</sup> Occorrerebbe infine chiedersi se il ricorso alla stima fosse alternativo all'accordo tra compratore e venditore. In diversi acquisti, infatti, è la comune volontà delle parti a definire il prezzo, mentre la richiesta di valutatori esterni e testimoni sembrerebbe rimandare a un possibile disaccordo circa il valore da assegnare ai beni oggetto di compravendita.

### 1.3.3. Moneta effettiva

Il collasso delle istituzioni giudicali di Cagliari e Torres a metà Duecento e la conseguente formazione delle signorie 'italiane' favorì l'affermazione della moneta effettiva come mezzo di scambio. In accordo con questa cronologia, i ritrovamenti archeologici nell'isola mostrano una bassa attestazione di monete coniate nel XII e inizi del XIII secolo (maggiore è la loro presenza nei tesori di Pattada, Oschiri e S. Miali di Padru), mentre il livello si alza a partire dalla seconda metà del XIII secolo, spia di un maggiore uso e diffusione: si tratta prevalentemente di «denari e grossi d'argento genovesi nella zona settentrionale e di aquilini minuti e grossi pisani nelle aree centro-orientali e meridionali dell'isola» (Baldassarri 2017).<sup>68</sup> Se dunque è evidente «un certo ritardo nella monetizzazione dei segmenti bassi del mercato sardo» rispetto all'area alto-tirrenica, dove le attestazioni di moneta raggiungono l'acme nel XII secolo, vero è anche che l'affermazione della moneta metallica non fu un fenomeno improvviso.

La transizione da un'economia in cui scambi e prelievo erano imperniati sull'uso della moneta sostitutiva a un'economia in buona parte (ma non totalmente) monetizzata è fotografata a livello documentario dall'uso del bisante, reintrodotta sulla scia della diffusione della moneta genovese e pisana. Se tra 1114 e 1120 il vescovo di Suelli, Torchitorio, comprò alcune terre pagando con 'soldi di capra' e 'soldi di grano' («sollu de cabra et sollu de trigo»),<sup>69</sup> tra 1190 e 1200 Paolo, a capo della medesima diocesi, acquistò terreni agricoli pagando 25 bisanti («XXV bisantis»).<sup>70</sup> In questa fase moneta effettiva e moneta sostitutiva vengono spesso impiegate congiuntamente. È attestato per gli stessi anni, ancora ad opera del vescovo Paolo, un acquisto di terre, vigne e salti per le quali sborsò la somma di 34 bisanti, ai quali si aggiunse la consegna di un cavallo («et eu deindellis XXXIIII bisantis et unu cavallu arzzu ambulanti»<sup>71</sup>). Caratteri più marcati e in qualche modo inaspettati assume invece la vicenda che vide coinvolti agli inizi del XIII secolo Lamberto e Ubaldo Visconti, i quali, con l'appoggio dell'arcivescovo di Arborea, occuparono e poi vendettero le terre che il giudice arborense Barisone II aveva destinato al *subsidium*

<sup>67</sup> CSNT, 27.

<sup>68</sup> Per il XII secolo sono attestati «rari denari di Lucca e di Pisa e più frequentemente denari e mezzi denari della zecca di Genova e di Asti» (Baldassarri 2017, 58).

<sup>69</sup> CV, 3.

<sup>70</sup> CV, 9.

<sup>71</sup> CV, 10.

*Terre Sancte* promesso al pontefice: il ricavato della vendita di queste terre arrivò infatti alla sorprendente somma di 55.000 bisanti. Altro sintomo della circolazione del bisante, seppure con cifre più contenute, è dato dal suo utilizzo in ambito sanzionatorio nella seconda metà del XIII secolo. Tra 1252 e 1269, ad esempio, in seguito a un contenzioso per una terra aperto da Saltaro de Nuketu contro Preziosa, badessa di Silki, fu stabilita una penale di 100 bisanti nel caso in cui fosse stata intentata nuovamente causa contro il monastero (CSPS, 411). Si tratta di una delle prime testimonianze del passaggio dalla sanzione ‘verbale’ a quella “‘pecuniaria’”.

Di sicura penetrazione pisana è l’usanza di accompagnare la compravendita con un oggetto (un anello, un bracciale, un sigillo etc.) definito *meritum* o, dall’area germanica da cui proviene la tradizione, *launehild*. Il bene non funge tuttavia da moneta sostitutiva, poiché non serve a indicare il valore della transazione bensì ad accompagnare il pagamento con lo scopo di convalidarlo (Garzella 1979). Questa prassi inizia ad essere attestata in Sardegna alla metà del XII secolo, proprio quando per Pisa smette di essere documentata, «in concomitanza con la coniazione della moneta comunale, in un momento cioè in cui, con la comparsa di una moneta propria della città, il circolante aumentò grandemente» (Garzella 1979, 41)<sup>72</sup>. Come esempio valga la vendita nel 1143 da parte del vescovo di Galtelli (Gallura) all’opera di S. Maria di Pisa di due *curtes* per 1.240 soldi lucchesi, convalidata con la consegna di un anello d’oro indicato nella fonte come *meritum*.<sup>73</sup>

La spinta principale verso un’economia di tipo monetario fu data dalle attività dei mercanti italiani. In particolare, emerge il ruolo nello sfruttamento delle *donnicàlias* – aziende ricevute in concessione dai giudici – quale punto di convergenza tra attività produttive (in particolare incanalando il surplus delle aziende monastiche) e commerciali (immettendo i prodotti nei canali distributivi locali ma anche extra isolani) (Petrucci 1986). Alcune attestazioni documentarie sembrerebbero suggerire l’uso delle *donnicàlias* anche per praticare prestiti a usura (Bresc 1983, Petrucci 1986, Soddu 2009).

Il Duecento «registra (già a partire dai primi decenni) un chiaro *trend* di crescita, con l’attiva partecipazione delle *élites* locali ai traffici tirrenici» (Simbula, Soddu 2020, 632). In questo contesto, gli inventari di Gottifredo di Pietro d’Arborea (1252), «espressione di un’*élite* dell’aristocrazia al potere in Arborea e dei grandi proprietari, a capo di fiorenti aziende nell’oristanese» e Gualtiero da Volterra (1274), «mercante che opera tra Genova e Sassari, investendo in particolare nell’ambito conciaro», testimoniano la grande disponibilità di moneta attraverso i loro lasciti (Simbula, Soddu, 632-633).

Questa nuova fase trova riflesso negli Statuti di matrice comunale o signorile che vedono la luce proprio tra XIII e XIV secolo. Per Sassari gli Statuti di tardo Duecento prevedono pagamenti in denari genovini («denari Janue») <sup>74</sup>. I prezzi delle merci e dei beni alimentari, così come le multe e le tariffe dei sensali sono espressi in quella moneta. Per il Breve pisano del porto di Cagliari le tariffe dei sensali e le multe sono

<sup>72</sup> Cfr. anche Ceccarelli Lemut 1979, 51-54; Strinna 2019, 59.

<sup>73</sup> CDS, sec. XII, doc. LI: «pro qua a vobis meritum recepi annulum aureum pro solidis mille duocentis quadraginta».

<sup>74</sup> Guarnerio 1892-94.

indicate in «denari pisani» (Murgia 2021). Questa moneta era impiegata anche a Villa di Chiesa (Iglesias), sebbene nel Breve i valori siano riportati in *alfonsins menus*, poiché il testo è stato emendato dopo la conquista del regno di Sardegna del 1323 (Ravani 2011). Proprio con l'arrivo dei Catalano-Aragonesi fu vietata la circolazione della moneta genovese e pisana, la quale progressivamente uscì dalla scena monetaria isolana lasciando spazio agli alfonsini minuti, la nuova moneta del *regnum* coniata nella zecca di Iglesias per volontà dell'infante Alfonso (Tangheroni 1985).

## 2. Pagare le tasse

### 2.1. La fiscalità giudiciale: tributi in natura e prestazioni d'opera

Il prelievo delle autorità giudiciale era imperniato sulla riscossione della produzione agro-pastorale così come sulla richiesta di prestazioni d'opera; il ricorso alla moneta effettiva non è attestato per la fiscalità ordinaria, mentre per quella straordinaria occorrerà spendere alcune parole più avanti.<sup>75</sup>

La principale forma di riscossione era data dall'imposta diretta, consistente nel prelievo di beni e, in minor parte, animali. Nel giudicato di Cagliari, dove è chiamata *ceyga*, un ruolo centrale nei pagamenti era rivestito dai cereali, anche se non sono chiari i criteri del prelievo (Alias 2020, 109). Un peso significativo aveva poi il vino, pagato sia dai lavoratori che dai proprietari delle vigne; questi ultimi versavano un barile di vino prodotto oppure un quarto della vendemmia («quarta partes vini»)<sup>76</sup>.

In maniera complementare alle forme di pagamento nelle compravendite, il dono era riscosso anche a fini fiscali. Nel giudicato di Cagliari erano previsti doni in formaggio e animali e in quello di Torres in formaggio e grano, mentre in Arborea è attestato il dono di un agnello e di una forma di formaggio. Un'antica usanza prevedeva la donazione di una coppia di servi a S. Maria di Lotzorai da parte del giudice di Cagliari e della sua consorte, contestualmente al loro insediamento nel trono giudiciale. Di tradizione bizantina è il tributo detto *gimilioni*, alla cui radice vi sono prestazioni di dono e contro-dono legate all'istituzione del matrimonio, come dimostra il fatto che in età giudiciale gli scapoli ne fossero esenti (Alias 2020, 104-24).

A fronte della larga disponibilità di bestiame, la sua riscossione è attestata solo sporadicamente (Livi 2006, 132). Dalla documentazione pisana veniamo però a conoscenza di antiche tradizioni fiscali giudiciale. Nel villaggio di Lustinchi in occasione della festa di san Michele i proprietari di vacche («homines habentes vachas») dovevano versare due capi di bestiame come tassa.<sup>77</sup> Era certamente previsto il prelievo della decima parte dei maiali portati al pascolo. In Gallura gli agricoltori erano tenuti a consegnare un bugno d'api al fisco.<sup>78</sup> Attraverso l'esenzione concessa dal giudice d'Arborea a S. Maria di Bonarcado apprendiamo dell'esistenza di un tributo sulla pesca negli stagni e in mare. In Arborea e in Gallura, una quota

<sup>75</sup> Cfr. *infra*.

<sup>76</sup> Artizzu 1958, 66; 77.

<sup>77</sup> Artizzu 1958, 66.

<sup>78</sup> Artizzu 1961-65, 243.

della cacciagione (carni e pelli) era versata al termine delle battute di caccia cui i sudditi erano tenuti a partecipare come forma di obbligo fiscale (*silvas*) (Alias 2020, 112-19). Nel giudicato di Torres, dove abbiamo visto essere diffuso l'impiego di pannimoneta, è attestata un'imposta sui tessuti chiamata *therga* (Alias 2020, 117). Relativamente alle proprietà immobiliari, era previsto il prelievo dei beni mobili di quei defunti che non avessero avuto figli al momento del decesso.<sup>79</sup>

Risulta invece marginale se non assente l'imposizione indiretta: non sono attestati dazi sulla circolazione interna delle merci, mentre la concessione delle franchigie doganali ai mercanti pisani e genovesi annullava di fatto quel tipo di prelievo (Pistarino 1981). Da questo punto di vista possiamo considerare la stessa esenzione fiscale una moneta sostitutiva attraverso la quale i giudici 'comprarono' l'alleanza con Genova e Pisa.

Parte della 'moneta' impiegata nel pagamento al fisco era costituita dalle prestazioni d'opera (Alias 2020, 107-19). Questa forma di prelievo era evidentemente finalizzata allo sfruttamento delle risorse territoriali. Nelle terre cerealicole del Campidano, tra giudicato d'Arborea e giudicato di Cagliari, un ruolo centrale era rivestito dalle *operas* di carattere agricolo, divise per giornata e per attività: semina, mietitura, raccolta; nel giudicato di Torres era prevista anche la molitura. Tra queste prestazioni, chiamate nella documentazione cagliaritano con i nomi di *roadia*, *arrasonis* o *gimilioni*, era compresa anche la vendemmia. Servizi di carattere servile o semiservile erano quelli connessi con lo sfruttamento delle saline. Alle operazioni e trasporto del sale erano tenuti sia gli uomini alle dipendenze dei Vittorini di Marsiglia, a cui era stata concessa una parte delle saline cagliaritano, sia quelli costretti al *servitium* perché residenti nei villaggi limitrofi agli stagni del sale (Manca 1966). Tale tipo di servizio è attestato anche nel giudicato di Gallura.<sup>80</sup> Il fisco poteva richiedere ugualmente attività di manovalanza, oltre a mansioni specializzate. Uno spaccato completo, seppure attinente all'ambito monastico, è quello offerto da S. Maria di Bonarcado, i cui *homines* erano tenuti a fornire giornate lavorative per l'allevamento dei cavalli e l'addestramento dei cani, fondamentali per l'attività venatoria diffusamente praticata in quelle zone. Anche agli apicoltori era richiesta la fornitura di prestazioni di lavoro. Le donne partecipavano ai lavori di carattere agricolo, oltre a occuparsi della cura degli ambienti domestici, della tessitura e filatura. In tutti i giudicati erano poi previste prestazioni quali la partecipazione alle battute di caccia (*silvas*), ai dibattimenti giudiziari (*coronas*) e ai servizi di posta. Infine, il richiamo della documentazione a prestazioni dovute agli ufficiali giudicali (*curatore*, *maiore*, *armentariu*) introduce il tema – altrimenti non documentabile – dei salari. Per la loro attività i funzionari che operavano nei vari livelli amministrativi – organizzati per ciascun giudicato in distretti chiamati *curatorias*, che comprendevano a loro volta un certo numero di villaggi – potevano sfruttare le prestazioni d'opera dovute dai contribuenti, così come incamerare una parte del prelievo in natura.

Occorre infine interrogarsi circa i riferimenti all'imposta in moneta effettiva presenti nella documentazione a partire dalla seconda metà del XII secolo. Il pagamento di tributi in moneta metallica è attestato in ambito ecclesiastico. Il censo

<sup>79</sup> Artizzu 1958, 20.

<sup>80</sup> Artizzu 1961-1965.



che i priori del monastero di Nurki dovevano versare alla cattedrale di San Gavino per l'arrivo del legato pontificio in Sardegna constava in una libbra d'argento e 20 soldi da pagarsi in bisanti («viginti solidos de dinares»).<sup>81</sup> Difficile invece pronunciarsi sul censo annuo dell'importante somma di 1.100 bisanti («census ... mille et centum bisantios»),<sup>82</sup> promessa nel 1237 da Pietro II, giudice d'Arborea, al papa. Tuttavia è necessario considerare come le somme dichiarate nei documenti non sempre o non totalmente venissero rimosse in moneta metallica. Così è dimostrato ad esempio dal cosiddetto *affaire* Barisone, l'operazione – gestita dal Comune di Genova – attraverso la quale il giudice d'Arborea ottenne il titolo di *rex Sardiniae* dall'imperatore Federico I (1164) (Pistarino 1981). Tale spericolata (e in definitiva) infruttuosa manovra richiese il versamento di 4.000 marchi d'argento in favore dell'imperatore, anticipati da mercanti-banchieri genovesi, alcuni dei quali protagonisti dell'indebitamento pubblico a sostegno della campagna genovese di Almería e Tortosa (1146-1148) (Alias 2020, 114, n. 133). Per la restituzione di tale importo, al quale si aggiunsero i costi organizzativi per una totale di circa 26.000 lire di genovini minuti, furono assegnate le entrate fiscali del giudicato d'Arborea (Livi 2002, 21). Nonostante gli impegni presi con il Comune a tutela dei creditori, le somme puntualmente riportate nella *cartula debitoria* non furono ripagate in moneta metallica, o quantomeno se vi furono pagamenti in denari genovini questi non furono la parte preponderante. Non sappiamo inoltre se fosse fondata la promessa di concedere un pegno «in auro argento monetis vel lapidibus preciosis, aut serico vel pannis sericis».<sup>83</sup> Quel che è certo è che per saldare il debito il giudice e i suoi successori fecero ricorso a prelievi straordinari (*collette*). Significativa è la vicenda relativa alla colletta del 1166, stabilita in 700 lire: come sappiamo dalla cronachistica pisana, essa fu in realtà versata in beni e merci caricate su una nave in direzione di Genova, poi intercettata dai Pisani, i quali si impossessarono delle mercanzie – così si afferma – destinate al pagamento del debito («pro debito iudicis Arboree») (Alias 2020, 114-15). Riferimenti ai tributi in moneta arrivano anche dagli impegni successivi. Nel 1186 Agalbursa, consorte di Barisone, promise al Comune il versamento di un quarto delle entrate fiscali del giudicato, riservandosi però una scorta di vino sufficiente ai bisogni della corte giudiciale. Nel 1189 Pietro I d'Arborea si impegnò ad effettuare pagamenti annuali in favore di S. Lorenzo di Genova e del Comune di Genova, rispettivamente per 20 lire di genovini («dibras viginti Ianuae monetae»)<sup>84</sup> e 80 lire («dibras octuaginta ianuensis monete»),<sup>85</sup> specificando per quest'ultimo caso che la somma sarebbe derivata dalla metà delle entrate fiscali («de meam medietatem introitum»). Ancora una volta, la documentazione indica il valore dell'imposta in moneta di conto, mentre il pagamento effettivo doveva avvenire in natura.

D'altra parte, anche negli altri giudicati gli accordi presi con i Comuni italiani o con le Opere delle rispettive cattedrali prevedevano il pagamento di merci, o in alternativa di denaro e merci, generando presumibilmente l'introduzione di imposte

<sup>81</sup> CDS, sec. XII, doc. XCVII.

<sup>82</sup> CDS, sec. XIII, doc. LXVII.

<sup>83</sup> CDS, sec. XII, doc. LXXVII; Puncuh 1996.

<sup>84</sup> CDS, sec. XII, doc. CXXXI; Puncuh 1996.

<sup>85</sup> CDS, sec. XII, doc. CXXXIV; Puncuh 1996.

straordinarie sui sudditi. Nello stesso anno dell’incoronazione di Barisone d’Arborea, anche il suo omonimo giudice di Torres fece un accordo con il Comune di Genova: il documento riferisce esplicitamente come il versamento avrebbe dovuto riguardare merci per il valore di 2.000 lire («duarum milium librarum valens in mercibus»).<sup>86</sup> Sappiamo inoltre che il giudice di Cagliari versava a Genova annualmente una forma di formaggio (Alias 2020, 110) e che nel 1108 si obbligò nei confronti dell’Opera di S. Maria di Pisa al pagamento di una libbra d’oro («libram auri»), oltre a consegnare una nave di sale di buona qualità («navem unam ... de bono sale»), facendosi peraltro carico delle spese di trasporto.<sup>87</sup> Tra 1115 e 1116 la stessa Opera ottenne dal giudice di Gallura l’impegno a versare una libbra d’oro o l’equivalente in merci («libram boni auri vel valens»), oltre a due *curtes* e alle rispettive rendite.<sup>88</sup>

## 2.2. Moneta effettiva e ‘moneta alternativa’ nella fiscalità post giudicale

Come abbiamo visto in precedenza, la circolazione monetaria fu stimolata dalle attività commerciali dei mercanti pisani e genovesi. Sino alla metà del Duecento, e cioè sino a quando tutti e quattro i giudicati erano in vita, la leva fiscale sembrerebbe non avere avuto un ruolo nello stimolare l’uso della moneta metallica, in accordo con l’assenza di quest’ultima nel prelievo.

Il maggiore artefice della penetrazione di un modello impositivo di tipo comunale in Sardegna fu Pisa (Alias 2020).<sup>89</sup> Le rilevazioni fiscali pisane per il contado sardo – le cosiddette *composizioni* – mostrano come la monetizzazione dei tributi non sia stata un processo uniforme e totalizzante<sup>90</sup>. Accanto alle imposte in moneta effettiva, continuano a persistere infatti pagamenti in natura e prestazioni d’opera. Più nel dettaglio, possiamo osservare come nella costruzione del sistema fiscale i Pisani abbiano operato attraverso le seguenti modalità:

- monetizzazione dei tributi giudicali;
- conservazione dei tributi giudicali;
- monetizzazione delle prestazioni d’opera;
- conservazione o trasformazione delle prestazioni d’opera;
- introduzione di nuovi tributi in moneta;
- introduzione di nuovi tributi in natura.

Nei villaggi la tassazione diretta non fu più basata sul prelievo di derrate alimentari, prodotti o animali, quanto sul prelievo in moneta attraverso la *data*, un’imposta diffusa e consolidata nel sistema fiscale dei Comuni italiani ben prima del XIV secolo (Alias 2020). Questa “nuova imposta” ingloba e monetizza precedenti tasse e canoni di età giudicale («datione ... et altri avaritij simili»).<sup>91</sup> Nel caso dei servi,

<sup>86</sup> CDS, sec. XII, doc. LXXXII.

<sup>87</sup> CDS, sec. XII, doc. VI.

<sup>88</sup> CDS, sec. XII, doc. XX.

<sup>89</sup> Cfr. in particolare il *Paragrafo 3.8.* intitolato *Verso un mondo nuovo: la fiscalità comunale nella Sardegna giudicale e postgiudicale (seconda metà del XIII secolo)*, 134-144.

<sup>90</sup> Cfr. Artizzu 1957; Artizzu 1958; Artizzu 1961-1965; Artizzu 1967; Artizzu 1982.

<sup>91</sup> Artizzu 1957, 400.

iscritti ai ruoli della *data*, un apposito tributo in moneta *pro eorum servitio* riscatta l'obbligo dalle prestazioni.<sup>92</sup>

L'introduzione della *data* non fu esente da attriti, in particolar modo generati da una certa opposizione dei maggiorenti locali. La categoria dei *liberi et terrales ab equo*, latifondisti e proprietari di bestiame appartenenti all'élite militare, non pagava la *data* ordinaria ma il *donamento*, un tributo il cui nome ne rivela la natura pattizia (Alias 2020, 135-137). Nell'ambito degli stessi accordi con l'autorità, i *liberi et terrales*, ben quanto fossero proprietari di bestiame, non erano tenuti al pagamento del bovatico, di cui diremo a breve.

Oltre alla *data*, la monetizzazione del prelievo interessò alcuni tributi che colpivano il lavoro agricolo. Un pagamento in moneta era previsto per chi arava con gli asini («chi ara a juvo di molenti»).<sup>93</sup> In alcune zone erano previsti specifici tributi in moneta per le attività agricole svolte in determinate festività. Nel distretto di Decimo, ad esempio, per l'aratura con i buoi durante il triduo pasquale erano richiesti 8 denari, mentre nel giorno di Ognissanti si pagavano 3 denari.<sup>94</sup> Anche i palatori – coloro che aravano con la vanga, evidentemente non disponendo di buoi – dovevano versare un'imposta in moneta in quelle occasioni. Altrove, tuttavia, agli stessi palatori era applicata la vecchia tassazione in orzo («paga catuno palatore orgio starella I»).<sup>95</sup> Rimangono legati al pagamento in natura anche i canoni per l'utilizzo agricolo delle terre signorili e demaniali. Gli abitanti di Fumenala pagavano 1/6 e 1/10 del grano lavorato rispettivamente nella *terra donnica* e nel salto del villaggio.<sup>96</sup> È riconducibile all'età giudiciale il pagamento al fisco mediante forme di formaggio in occasione della pesatura, così come il prelievo della decima sul bestiame condotto al pascolo. Per la Gallura è confermato l'obbligo per gli apicoltori di consegnare un'arnia al fisco, così come in Ogliastra il prelievo dei beni mobili dei defunti che non avessero figli.

Il processo di monetizzazione coinvolse anche le prestazioni d'opera (Alias 2020). Nel Campidano una tassa riscossa in moneta subentrò ai preesistenti servizi agricoli, mentre rimane nel linguaggio il calco della tradizione giudiciale, per cui i «gioghi tenuti alle prestazioni d'opera» (*jovi d'opera*) pagano ora 4 soldi.<sup>97</sup> Altri esempi certificano dinamiche simili. Se prima il termine *gimilioni* indicava una prestazione d'ambito agricolo (ma anche un dono in natura), ora è un tributo pagato in moneta (nelle fonti pisane è italianizzato in *gimiglione*). Allo stesso modo, per l'attività venatoria (*silva*), che in età giudiciale prevedeva il versamento di quote di cacciagione, l'amministrazione pisana riscuoteva una somma in denaro. Così nei villaggi del Sulcis, nel sud-ovest dell'isola, gli abitanti pagavano 3 soldi l'anno per il *gimilioni* e 2 soldi per la *silva*.<sup>98</sup> In Ogliastra l'antica prestazione della *roadia* legata alla coltivazione e alla semina diventa tassa in moneta.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Artizzu 1958, 54.

<sup>93</sup> Artizzu 1957, 407.

<sup>94</sup> Artizzu 1957, 389.

<sup>95</sup> Artizzu 1957, 365.

<sup>96</sup> Artizzu 1957, 416.

<sup>97</sup> Artizzu 1957, 407.

<sup>98</sup> Artizzu 1957, 368-88.

<sup>99</sup> Artizzu 1958, 77.

Come detto, i Pisani non si limitarono a sostituire il prelievo in natura con quello in moneta, ma introdussero nuove imposte o ripensarono le vecchie prestazioni d'opera mettendole al servizio di nuove esigenze produttive. A dimostrazione di come non sempre il prelievo in moneta fosse più conveniente, parte di questi nuovi tributi era riscosso in natura. Il bovatico – a cui si è fatto già riferimento – è la novità, insieme alla *data*, che investe la fiscalità diretta. Sino al Duecento non sono infatti documentati tributi sui buoi. La tassa, attestata in area peninsulare a partire dal XII secolo, era calcolata sul giogo di buoi (*jugum boum*) e riscossa dai Pisani sempre in cereali (grano e orzo). Nel meridione dell'isola il fisco prelevava un certo numero di *starelli* di grano e d'orzo per ogni giogo di buoi.<sup>100</sup>

Un altro esempio del diverso adattamento del prelievo alle esigenze dell'amministrazione pisana è la tassa sugli ovini. Si riscontrano infatti, per regioni non distanti tra loro, diverse forme di riscossione. Il tributo era pagato in alcune zone attraverso la cessione di una parte del bestiame, utilizzando come metro di riferimento il *segno*, cioè un certo numero di capi («et paga ciaschuno signo di pecore ciaschuno anno: pecore II»);<sup>101</sup> sono però attestati anche prelievi in moneta, come quello applicato sulla proprietà delle capre («et paga ciaschuno signo di capre l'anno: s. XXVI»);<sup>102</sup> Alcune registrazioni suggeriscono la gradualità del processo di monetizzazione, laddove si ricorda che i contribuenti fossero soliti pagare («solvere tenebantur») in natura: evidentemente si trattava di una tradizione fiscale sino a poco tempo prima in vigore, tanto da essere richiamata nella documentazione.<sup>103</sup> Talvolta, invece, il tributo è confermato: i maiali al pascolo vengono ancora tassati con il versamento di un capo ogni dieci.<sup>104</sup>

Per il sostegno di attività produttive quali la raccolta del sale e l'estrazione dell'argento, fu introdotto il prelievo in prestazioni d'opera, poi trasformato in tributo (in natura o in moneta). Nelle zone minerarie, in luogo delle prestazioni per il trasporto dell'argento sui buoi («gioghi d'argentiere») dalle miniere alla zecca, è previsto il pagamento di un 1/12 del grano raccolto o seminato («diricto de li duodeci starella I»);<sup>105</sup> È possibile, inoltre, che a questo diritto fosse connesso quello di misurazione dei cereali, in quelle stesse zone chiamato *crilia*, attestato in un unico documento catalano-aragonese. Nel villaggio di Quartu, i cui abitanti erano tenuti alle prestazioni negli stagni del sale, è da ritenere che il tributo sui gioghi d'asino («jovi de molenti»), di cui abbiamo già detto, andasse a sostituire la prestazione d'opera di trasporto del sale dovuta dagli asinai, detti *molentarios* o *molentargos* (a tutt'oggi le saline fanno parte del parco naturale del *Molentargius*) (Manca 1966, 49; Alias 2020, 143). Nei villaggi del nord-Sardegna controllati dai Doria, un'imposta in moneta prende il posto della prestazione di trasporto dei cereali nelle masserie per mezzo di buoi («jous de massariçies») (Alias 2020, 143). Nel complesso, i tributi riscossi in grano e orzo

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<sup>100</sup> Artizzu 1957, 360.

<sup>101</sup> Artizzu 1957, 389.

<sup>102</sup> Artizzu 1957, 361.

<sup>103</sup> Artizzu 1958, 66.

<sup>104</sup> Artizzu 1958, 20.

<sup>105</sup> Artizzu 1957, 349.

risultano particolarmente retributivi: i Pisani non li monetizzarono, come dimostra la *composizione* del 1320, in cui la tassa in cereali affianca la *data*.

Tra le nuove imposte si ritagliano un ruolo quantitativamente rilevante quelle sul commercio. Sintomo di una vitalità dei pagamenti in moneta è la tassa sul commercio del vino nelle taverne («li taverni de lo vino»)<sup>106</sup>. L'imposta sulla vendita della carne («lu dirictu de la carni che si vende») era appaltata annualmente con pagamento in moneta, così come il diritto di *castaldaria*, legata alla vendita del vino, delle carni e alla pesatura.<sup>107</sup> Sono infine presenti tariffari doganali per il trasferimento delle merci tra il sud-est (in particolare l'Ogliastra) e le zone interne della Sardegna. Per tali tributi, in parte forse già presenti nella tarda età giudicale, erano prevalentemente richiesti pagamenti in moneta.

Questo doppio livello di tassazione, tra moneta effettiva e moneta sostitutiva, è confermato dalle pur esigue fonti relative all'amministrazione signorile dei Doria e dei Malaspina nel nord-Sardegna (Soddu 2017; Basso 2018).

Anche nelle aree dove la monetizzazione dei tributi è pressoché totale persiste l'uso della moneta alternativa. Questa visione elimina l'idea dell'opposizione tra campagna e città. Nella Sassari comunale, ad esempio, la *data* in moneta è riscossa nei villaggi del contado, mentre i cittadini ne sono esenti. In città, invece, sono richieste a titolo fiscale prestazioni quali la guardia del perimetro murario (Alias 2019).

Dai tributi, tanto nel contado quanto in città, dipendeva infine il pagamento dei salari. Anche in questo caso è confermata l'esigenza di procedere ai pagamenti tanto in moneta effettiva quanto in moneta sostitutiva. Al salario degli ufficiali amministrativi (*camerarii*) di Castel di Castro (Cagliari) concorrono gli introiti (in moneta o in natura) derivanti dal prelievo nel contado. Ad essi andavano ad esempio «40 soldi dovuti dagli eredi di chi fosse deceduto lasciando figli o consanguinei», mentre in caso di assenza di figli il fisco avrebbe prelevato i beni mobili. Andavano a loro beneficio i prelievi sui falconi che nidificavano nelle montagne di Baunei, per i quali le comunità locali avrebbero dovuto inviare gli esemplari appena nati, coprendo i costi del trasferimento a Cagliari.<sup>108</sup> Anche nel contado i pagamenti avvenivano tanto in moneta metallica quanto in natura. Nei territori controllati dai Della Gherardesca parte dell'imposta diretta era destinata al salario degli ufficiali incaricati del prelievo, che incameravano una percentuale della *data* a titolo di remunerazione («et a quelli che ricogleno lu datio, de la dicta soma: s. V»)<sup>109</sup>. La monetizzazione dei salari non fu però sistematica. L'ufficiale incaricato del prelievo dell'imposta sui bovini riceveva un salario consistente in 4 coppie di buoi («jovi IIII»)<sup>110</sup>.

Con l'istituzione del regno di Sardegna i Catalano-Aragonesi accelerarono il processo di monetizzazione (Alias 2013). L'imposta diretta assorbì il pagamento in cereali calcolato sul bestiame e divenne una tassa in moneta. A tale proposito è stato ipotizzato come alla base di questa scelta vi fosse la difficoltà di prelevare le imposte a causa dei disordini scoppiati dopo la stessa conquista. Aggiungiamo come non

<sup>106</sup> Artizzu 1957, 417.

<sup>107</sup> Artizzu 1957, 395.

<sup>108</sup> Artizzu 1958, 95.

<sup>109</sup> Artizzu 1957, 420.

<sup>110</sup> Artizzu 1957, 413; cfr. inoltre Alias 2023.

vadano trascurate le politiche annonarie finalizzate allo stoccaggio di cereali presso Cagliari, che forse resero meno importante accumulare grano attraverso il prelievo. Tuttavia, è indubbia la persistenza di tributi in natura e prestazioni d'opera, che troviamo documentati ancora nel XV secolo. Agli inizi di quel secolo a Villamassargia erano richieste le prestazioni agricole di tradizione giudicale (Galiana Chacón 1996), mentre gli Statuti portuali di Terranova (Olbia) e Castelgenovese (Castelsardo) riportano il prelievo di formaggio al momento della pesatura (Argiolas, Mattone 2004). La resistenza delle forme del prelievo in natura andrà in realtà ben oltre il Quattrocento, accompagnando i tributi in moneta lungo tutta l'età moderna.

## Conclusioni

Nella Sardegna giudicale, l'adozione di forme alternative alla moneta metallica – sia nelle transazioni commerciali che in ambito fiscale – non nacque dalla necessità di fronteggiare una limitata circolazione di quest'ultima ma rappresentò una strategia deliberata da parte dei sovrani sardi. Questa scelta privilegiò forme e modalità di pagamento considerate più coerenti e, di conseguenza, più efficaci rispetto alle dinamiche economiche e sociali locali. I giudici, che ben conoscevano le ricchezze minerarie del sottosuolo sardo, tanto da promettere in diverse occasioni la donazione delle «vene argentifere» nell'ambito di accordi e alleanze con i Comuni italiani, non avviarono processi estrattivi finalizzati alla coniazione di moneta. Più che gli elevati costi che queste operazioni avrebbero comportato, l'eventuale impiego della moneta metallica in un'economia a corto raggio – in cui erano peraltro disponibili beni fungibili da impiegare come misura di valore e mezzo di scambio – fu evidentemente ritenuto superfluo. Pertanto, contestualmente al ricorso a forme più conservative quali il baratto e il dono, furono animali, beni o prestazioni d'opera a fungere da moneta sostitutiva. Costituendo beni fondamentali nell'economia sarda, tali merci-moneta erano impiegate in maniera oculata, come dimostra l'impiego delle diverse forme di moneta alternativa alla tipologia di transazione. L'esempio relativo ai servi e ai terreni, di frequente barattati con altrettanti servi e terre, ma mai impiegati come moneta per l'acquisto di altri beni, dimostra l'attenzione rivolta alle forme e alle modalità di pagamento. Allo stesso modo il ricorso a precise formule quali 'soldi di grano' e simili, non sono mere espressioni linguistiche, ma veri e propri riflessi di unità di misura e valori economici.

L'irruzione nello scenario sardo dei mercanti pisani e genovesi diede vita a una realtà ulteriormente complessa, segnata dal connubio – e non dalla dualità – tra la monetizzazione degli scambi e la conservazione delle pratiche di pagamento in natura.

L'impiego prevalente della moneta alternativa in Sardegna tra XI e XIV secolo, sia negli scambi che nella fiscalità, riflette un panorama economico solo apparentemente lineare e di facile lettura. Il ricorso al dono, al baratto e alla moneta sostitutiva rivela l'esistenza di dinamiche non solo funzionali ma, soprattutto, interconnesse con la costruzione di relazioni tra enti monastici, giudici ed élites locali, il cui studio, seppur introduttivo, apre le porte a ulteriori indagini sulle complesse interazioni tra economia, società e mezzi di pagamento alternativi nella Sardegna bassomedievale.

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Francesco Guidi-Bruscoli

*'Wherever they consider it more profitable, for cash, baratto or credit'.  
Florentine merchants and the export of silk cloth (15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries)*

Florentine merchants frequently take their cloth and fine fabrics down to the Kingdom of Sicily to sell for cash, and it often happens that they cannot find ready payment for their goods, particularly those that can only be sold on over a long period; these merchants, finding themselves in Sicily with their goods, and desiring to dispose of them but not managing to do so for cash, in order not to lose time or render the journey fruitless, have to decide on some local product that they can take in exchange which will have a better chance of being sold advantageously in their native city than their own cloths and fabrics, were they to take them back. By choosing thus to barter, they manage to exchange the said merchandise for wheat, either through a broker or otherwise, which the Florentine will be able to dispose of at home more easily than the cloth and fabrics, other things being equal.

(Benedetto Cotrugli, *The Book of the Art of Trade*, Book 1, Ch. 5)

In his *Libro de l'arte de la mercatura* (*The Book of the Art of trade*) of 1458, Benedetto Cotrugli devotes the fifth chapter of the first book to *De lo vender a baratto*, or *Exchange selling* (Cotrugli 1990, 147-49; 2016, 42-44). Significantly, this topic precedes Chapter 6, *On selling for cash*. By devoting to the two forms of exchange equal space, Cotrugli shows that even in a monetised economy such as the one he discusses, the sale of goods without the use of cash was an important aspect of the life of the 'ideal' merchant. He even pushes it beyond that, and describes *baratto* «the first and principal part of trading» («la prima et principal parte de la mercatura») (Cotrugli 1990, 147; 2016, 42).

Before continuing the discussion on *baratto*, few words about the nature of money are needed. Dictionary definitions of 'money' may have different nuances, and various functions have been attributed to 'money' by economic theorists. Two in particular are more or less universally accepted, although scholars are divided on which should prevail in representing its essential quality: 'medium of exchange' or 'standard of value'. The former quality could be also described, in a less restrictive manner, as 'means of payment' ('medium of exchange' implies something that is generally accepted within a community, whereas 'means of payment' can refer to a single, isolated instance). According to this definition, potentially any commodity is as good money as coins (or paper money).

Moreover, when commodities are exchanged one for another, the value of both can be referred to some 'standard of value'. Obviously it is possible that occasional

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Francesco Guidi Bruscoli, *'Wherever they consider it more profitable, for cash, baratto or credit'. Florentine merchants and the export of silk cloth (15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries)*, © Author(s), CC BY 4.0, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0347-0.14, in Angela Orlandi (edited by), *Mezzi di scambio non monetari. Merci e servizi come monete alternative nelle economie dei secoli XIII-XVIII / Alternative currencies. Commodities and services as exchange currencies in the monetarized economies of the 13<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries*, pp. 219-235, 2024, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 979-12-215-0347-0, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0347-0

exchanges are performed when the mutual interest of two counterparts is satisfied by the acquisition of a specific item irrespective of its value (by comparison to the value of the commodity given away in exchange): this type of transaction is called barter. However, when the items in the cashless transaction are assessed for their monetary value, the situation is somewhat different and implies an operation that we can define ‘market exchange’ because here money served as medium of exchange (see more below, Par. 1) (see also Lane and Mueller 1985, 3-6; Cipolla 1956, 3-12).

This paper has different purposes. In Par. 1 terminological issues will be discussed, in order to clarify the nuances implied by the use of certain words, and their supposed connection with different stages in the evolution of the economy. Secondly (Par. 2), I will describe how frequently this type of commercial transaction was adopted in late-medieval long-distance trade, contributing with more examples to an already rich literature concerning especially Italian (Florentine) merchants (Ashtor 1983; Dini 1995; Tognetti 2002). This will lead to a discussion of the strategies behind the choice of adopting *baratto* instead of cash payments, and (Par. 3) to an assessment of the profitability of such operations. This evidence demonstrates that cashless exchanges were not necessarily a sign of a ‘less advanced’ economy; on the contrary, when performed at an international level, these exchanges implied a network of information, a knowledge of the demand and a capability to connect marketplaces, that only few possessed. As a case study, I will focus on Italian (mainly Florentine) merchants, who were among those who possessed these features; moreover, the quantity of written sources (correspondence and account-books) that are still extant contributes to make them an ideal case study.

## 1. Terminology

In the rest of this paper I will use the term *baratto*, in Italian, although ‘barter’ has often been used, including in the translation of Cotrugli’s merchant manual introduced above. I do so, because the activity carried out by the late-medieval international merchants I am discussing should be intended as ‘market exchange’ rather than ‘direct exchange’, which is the meaning we normally associate to barter (Goldthwaite 2020, 358). The terminological distinction is not devoid of meaning and needs some specifications, because whereas in the former a monetary value is assigned to each of the commodities, in the latter (direct exchange) that is not necessarily the case.

A vast array of literature has presented the use of different means of payments in a linear way, from barter to cash, to credit, with the underlying assumption that each stage was more ‘primitive’ than the following. For example, in their vast documentary collection of documents concerning medieval Mediterranean trade Lopez and Raymond argued that with the commercial revolution «money economy [...] gained a complete victory» and that if payments in kind continued in loan contracts, for other types of settlements they «were now exceptional in commercial transactions; merchants used them only in underdeveloped regions of southern Russia and darkest Africa». Sometimes spices would be used but «merely [as] a temporary substitute for

silver and gold» (Lopez and Raymond 1990<sup>2</sup>, 143; 145). The examples I am showing today demonstrate that this assumption is far too strong, and that in fact, even the merchant-bankers who played a prominent role in the *repubblica internazionale del denaro* (international republic of money, as defined by De Maddalena and Kellenbenz 1984) were extensively using commodities – and not cash or precious metals – to pay for the goods that they were buying.

This discussion is closely linked to the debate on the ‘rise of money’ and the implicit idea that the increasing use of money was one of the explanations for (or at least one of the characteristics of) an uninterrupted evolution of society, characterised by a sequence of ‘stages’ from a natural economy (based on barter) to a money economy, to a credit economy. A further implication of this theory is that people would always prefer to take cash instead of goods, if they could (Gelderblom and Jonker 2018, 224-26). These ‘classical’ ideas, however, have long been criticised by many. Postan (1944, 134), for example, discussed the various meanings attached to the concept of ‘rise of money’, and concluded:

The rise of a money economy does not mean the rise of money. It may mean an increase in the relative volume of money payments, as distinct from the increase in money itself. Yet even in this sense it is not a continuous process of human evolution. Increases in the relative volume of money transactions could reflect a whole variety of economic changes and were little more than passing, and sometimes recurrent, historical phenomena, which combined with other phenomena to create unique and unrepeatable historical situations.

This paper will show evidence that demonstrates that even merchants who were trading at the highest international level at times preferred to be paid in commodities, rather than in cash.

Anthropologists have discussed barter at large, mainly in reference to modern-day ‘primitive’ societies where ‘direct exchange’ is often performed in communities with limited resources and limited connections with the outside world; however, even in these societies barter might be a choice and not a necessity (most studies focus on the social characteristics of barter) (Humphrey and Hugh-Jones 1992).<sup>1</sup>

As stated at the beginning, in any case, the *baratto* that we find in the documents presented here is something different. In her old but still extremely valid and useful *Glossary of mediaeval terms*, Florence Edler (1934, 43) explains that the expression *di baratto* or *a baratto* means

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<sup>1</sup> In some ancient societies the phenomenon of ‘silent barter’ or ‘silent trade’ existed: one trader would leave his goods in a designed place; the other trader would deposit the goods (or money) that he wish to give in exchange; the former would then decide whether to accept or reject; in the latter case the second trader would have the possibility to adjust the counter-offer. The procedure would be repeated until everyone is happy, without the need of speaking to each other (this clearly allowed exchanges between merchants who did not speak the same language). According to Giardina, already in the antiquity this type of trade evolved «da una fase in cui quel tipo di scambio è inteso, da almeno una delle due parti, come scambio di doni, a una fase in cui entrambe le parti lo intendono, di fatto, come scambio economico [in cui si valuta] attentamente il valore dei beni» (Giardina 1986, 300).

In exchange for (expression used in recording money-barter transactions in Medici account books, where many of the transactions described were for an even exchange of goods [...], not involving any payment of money but still valued in terms of money, or an exchange of goods, plus a cash payment).<sup>2</sup>

That merchants conceived this type of exchange in terms of money and not in terms of goods, is also demonstrated by a 1438 diplomatic document concerning trade between Venice and the Levant: «When *baratto* occurred between Muslim merchants and Venetian merchants for any kind of merchandises, it was customary to declare the price of those goods in [terms of] currency» («Occorrendo tra mercatanti musulmani e mercatanti veneziani baratto di alcuna specie di merci, si soleva dichiarare il prezzo di quelle in moneta», Amari 1863, 188). Moreover, in many of the documents I have analysed, the term *comprare* (buy) rather than *scambiare* (exchange) or *dare* (give) is often used, as a further proof of the way merchants conceived such type of operation.

However, there space for further investigation concerning the semantics of the term *baratto*, in particular with regard to the origins and evolution of its use, and to the emergence of the modern definition, topics that concern the history of economic mentality.

## 2. 'Per danari o per baratto o tempo'

One of the elements that sometimes encouraged *baratto* was the speedy conclusion of the business transaction. Cash was not always at hand and, moreover, cash transactions were rarely paid in one instalment: after the payment of one fraction of the total amount, the rest could be split in small sums to be paid over time (*a tempo*) (Dini 1995, 263-64). This worsened a return on investments that was already extremely slow, especially concerning long-distance trade, where the time of transport (return voyage) had to be added to the time needed to finalise the sale. Cotrugli (1990, 150-56; 2016, 45-52) dedicates Chapter 7 of the First Book of his *The Book of the Art of trade* to the pros and cons of *Del vendere al termine* (*Selling on Credit*).

Brokers could help finalising a sale and could suggest the best way to complete a transaction, as described by Boccaccio (1906, vol. 2, 250-51):

There was, and perhaps still is, a custom in all maritime countries that have ports, that all merchants arriving there with merchandise, should, on discharging, bring all their goods into a warehouse, called in many places 'dogana', and maintained by the state, or the lord of the land; where those that are assigned to that office allot to each merchant, on receipt of an invoice of all his goods and the value thereof, a room in which he stores his goods under lock and key; whereupon the said officers of the dogana enter all the merchant's goods to his credit in the book of the dogana, and afterwards make him pay duty thereon, or on such part as he withdraws from the warehouse. By which book of the dogana the brokers not seldom find out the sorts and

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<sup>2</sup> Sometimes the word *rincontro*, or *rincontro* may be used (Edler 1934, 245-46).

quantities of the merchandise that is there, and also who are the owners thereof, with whom, as occasion serves, they afterwards treat of exchanges, barters, sales and other modes of disposing of the goods.<sup>3</sup>

It is significant that, wherever expenses are detailed in the documents, the *senserìa* (brokerage) was considerably higher when the silks were sold for cash than when they were sold in via *baratto*. Clearly, that indicates that the former was more difficult and burdensome to achieve. For example, in 1515-16 Francesco Zati sold in Pera (Constantinople) *rasi* on behalf of Agnolo Del Caccia, part in cash, part in *baratto*: he charged 2 per cent *senserìa* on the former and 0.5 per cent on the latter (Spallanzani and Guidi-Bruscoli 2023, 250).<sup>4</sup> The same percentages were charged by Ridolfo Lotti to Neri Venturi, *setaiolo*, in 1529 (Spallanzani and Guidi-Bruscoli 2023, 349).<sup>5</sup> Again: in 1527 Paolo Corsini, in Pera, sold two pieces of velvet on behalf of Cristofano Rinieri to a Jewish merchant. The payment was part in rhubarb and part in cash (settlement date: three months after the transaction). In this instance the percentages for *senserìa e messetteria* (both brokerage fees) were, respectively, three per cent and one per cent. Unfortunately, the document does not specify the value of each part, and therefore it is impossible to know whether the velvet was valued at different prices depending on the payment method (Spallanzani and Guidi-Bruscoli 2023, 353-54).<sup>6</sup> In the 1430s the *sensaria* (brokerage) recorded by the Venetian Giacomo Badoer in Constantinople for *baratto* operations was 0.25 per cent, whereas for other transactions was 0.5 per cent (Dorini and Bertelè 1956, 52; 64; 550; 602 for *baratto*, and *passim* for other transactions).

The *baratto* was so common among merchants that most of the times no specific directives were needed in communications between them. The producer or exporter of the merchandise relied on his agent’s wisdom and knowledge for the choice of the type of payment method, be it in cash or via *baratto*. At times, however, some further instructions or specific requests appear.

*Baratto*, as we have already said, was used in every phase of long-distance trade. When the Florentine exporters had to buy in Florence silk cloth to be sent abroad, they often provided their suppliers (mostly *setaioli*, i.e. silk manufacturers who often extended their activity to the export of silks, but also merchants) with merchandises; raw silk (in particular Persian silk, e.g., *stravai* or *legi* and, from the sixteenth century

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<sup>3</sup> «Soleva essere, e forse che ancora oggi è, una usanza in tutte le terre marine che hanno porto, così fatta, che tutti i mercatanti che in quelle con mercatantie capitano, faccendole scaricare, tutte in un fondaco, il quale in molti luoghi è chiamato ‘dogana’, tenuta per lo comune o per lo signor della terra, le portano: e quivi, dando a coloro che sopra ciò sono, per iscritto tutta la mercatantia ed il pregio di quella, è dato per li detti al mercatante un magazzino nel quale esso la sua mercatantia ripone, e serralo con la chiave; e li detti doganieri poi scrivono in sul libro della dogana a ragione del mercatante tutta la sua mercatantia, faccendosi poi del loro diritto pagare al mercatante o per tutta o per parte della mercatantia che egli della dogana traesse. E da questo libro della dogana assai volte s’informano i sensali e delle qualità e delle quantità delle mercatantie che vi sono, ed ancora chi sieno i mercatanti che l’hanno; con li quali poi essi, secondo che lor cade per mano, ragionan di cambi, di baratti e di vendite e d’altri pacci» (Boccaccio 1927, 173-74).

<sup>4</sup> Florence, Archivio dell’Ospedale degli Innocenti (AOI), 12382, fol. 221v.

<sup>5</sup> Florence State Archives (ASF), *Venturi Ginori Lisici*, 2, fol. 91r.

<sup>6</sup> ASF, *Compagnie religiose sopprese dal Governo Francese*, 95, fol. 42v.



onwards, silk from the south of Italy) was an obvious choice, but at times the range of products could be much more varied. In 1491, for example, *Alamanno e Iacopo Salviati e compagni del banco* wished to send silks to Constantinople: therefore, they purchased 2,094 *braccia*<sup>7</sup> of silk cloth and cloth of gold (equivalent to 1.22 kilometres) from various Florentine *setaioli* and merchants for 4,066 *fiorini larghi* (Tab. 1). The suppliers received in exchange the following products: raw silk (Tierì), iron (Morelli), cotton (Andrea di Bonaventura), pearls and cotton (Martelli), pearls and raw silk (Salviati), rhubarb and raw silk (Boni and Iacopi); only Strinati and another Salviati company received cash (the latter in instalments: first instalment one sixth, settlement date 15 months) (Spallanzani and Guidi-Bruscoli 2023, 138-42).<sup>8</sup>

Tab. 1. *Baratto* between *Alamanno e Iacopo Salviati e compagni del banco* and various Florentine suppliers of silk cloth (1491)

Company of <i>setaioli</i>	Amount of silk cloth (in <i>braccia</i> )	Value of silks (in f. <i>larghi</i> )	Merchandise given in exchange
Salviati, Iacopo & co., <i>setaioli</i>	912.50	1772.42	Cash (in instalments)
Martelli, Luigi & co.	284.87	605.81	Pearls and cotton <i>sodi</i>
Morelli, Bernardo & co., <i>setaioli</i>	386.63	493.06	Iron
Boni, Stefano and Iacopi, Alessandro & co.	147.33	491.99	Rhubarb and raw silk
Tieri, heirs of Berto & co., <i>setaioli</i>	138.25	276.50	Raw silk of Castoria
Andrea di Bonaventura & co., <i>setaioli</i>	119.50	239.00	Cotton
Salviati, Giuliano and Iacopo & co.	88.67	170.63	Pearls and raw silk
Strinati, Alfieri	16.50	16.33	Cash
<b>Total</b>	<b>2094.25</b>	<b>4065.74</b>	

Source: Pisa, Scuola Normale Superiore (SNS), *Salviati*, Classe I, 363, fols. 46r-47r; Spallanzani and Guidi-Bruscoli 2023, 138-42.

In 1516 Giovanni Bongiani wrote from Pera to Agnolo del Caccia, in Florence, that he had managed to purchase on his behalf 147 *pezze* of camelots (*ciambellotti*): in exchange he had given 231.3 *picchi*<sup>9</sup> of *rasi* (satin) and damasks, and some cash. He explained that he adopted this «trick» (*spediente*) because otherwise the whole process would have taken much longer, and that would not have been profitable. However, he could not include in the transaction a considerable amount of green damask, because that was in a bad state (*dolenti*) (Spallanzani and Guidi-Bruscoli 2023, 250-51).<sup>10</sup> This presumably forced him to use cash, too, as a part-payment.

<sup>7</sup> A Florentine *braccio*, arm's length, was equivalent to 58.3 cm.

<sup>8</sup> Pisa, Scuola Normale Superiore (SNS), *Salviati*, Classe I, 363, fols. 46r-47r.

<sup>9</sup> The *picco* (pic, or pike) was a unit of measurement used in the Ottoman empire: normally equivalent to 1.12 Florentine *braccia*, i.e. 65.2 cm, it could sometimes vary. Some sources distinguish between a *picco grande* (large) and a *picco piccolo* (small), with a ratio of 1.2/1. See Spallanzani and Guidi-Bruscoli 2023, 9.

<sup>10</sup> AOI, 12382, fol. 220r.

The commodities that were accepted as a payment did not necessarily come from the place where goods were sold. The main commercial hubs were lively marketplaces, where merchandises of various sorts and origins could be found. When the Florentines exported silk cloth to the Ottoman empire (in particular Constantinople and Bursa) in the fifteenth and early sixteenth century, they were keen to receive raw silk that arrived from Persia. At times even more exotic products could be found and accepted, such as pepper coming from India. The account-book kept by the Venetian Giacomo Badoer in Constantinople, where he resided for more than three years between 1436 and 1440, is also testimony of the variety of merchandises that could be exchanged in the city: pepper (and musk) vs cloth, wax vs Majorcan or Flemish cloth, *arcolini* (leather) vs malmsey wine, ginger vs *oricello* (orcein), and so on and so forth. Moreover, in Alexandria and Damascus cinnamon and *verzi* (dyestuff) could be exchanged with copper (Dorini and Bertelè 1956, *passim*; Bertelè 2002, 52-53). When they were sending silks to the western shores of Europe, to Portugal, Florentines exchanged them against the products of the Portuguese expanding world of the late-fifteenth century: sugar from Madeira and melegueta pepper (also known as ‘grains of Paradise’) from Africa.<sup>11</sup>

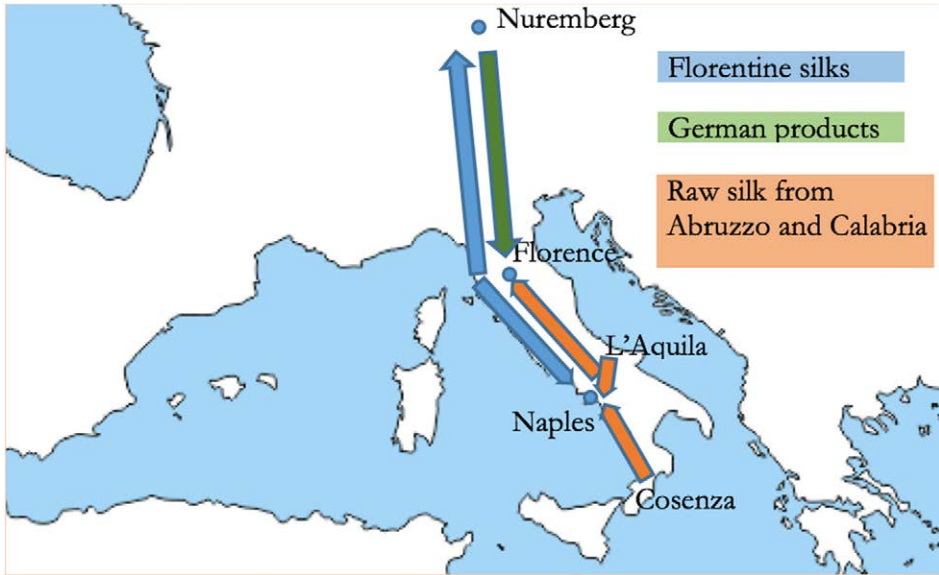
In less international markets, however, it was more frequent to having to deal solely with local products. In Germany, for example, Florentine merchants would obtain leather, furs, or low-quality German cloths in exchange for the precious silks (cloth, or cloths of gold) that they exported. They would then use these products to pay – at least in part – the *setaioli* who had produced the silks in the first place. Unfortunately, the description of the German cloths is not detailed, and they are often indicated as *tele tinte* (coloured cloths), presumably made of cotton, hemp and linen. It is not clear what the *setaioli* did with these huge quantities of cloth: presumably some was used for packaging (i.e., wrapping the much more precious silks), others for accessories, but most of them must have been sold on the local market (Guidi-Bruscoli 2016a, 113-22).

The *setaioli*, however, could also be paid with the raw material they needed to produce the precious silks. In the sixteenth century raw silk reached Florence not only from the more traditional Persian markets, but also from the South of Italy. In the 1540s the Olivieri had companies in Florence, Nuremberg and Naples, the latter with branches in L’Aquila and Cosenza. Products from all these markets could be used in *baratto* transactions to fulfill the needs of the multiple family companies at the same time. For example, the Nuremberg company, when in need of Florentine silks for the German market, could use the services of the Florentine company who would send silks both North (where they were requested) and South (to pay for the raw silk), and would pay the Florentine *setaioli* with both Calabrian or Abruzzan raw silk and German merchandises (Fig. 1).

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<sup>11</sup> See for example AOI, 12688, fols. 2-5; AOI, 12691, *passim* (in 1476 sugar was complemented by «uno occhio di vetro cristallino leghato in uno ghanbo», eighteen pairs of glasses «da ogni vista», one «pietra d’altare»: fol. 24r).

Fig. 1. Multi-market exchange between Florence, Nuremberg and the south of Italy (1540s)



Source: author's elaboration from Guidi-Bruscoli 2016a.

In addition to this, presumably some cash also had to be paid, bearing in mind that among the German products it was also possible to find gold from Cologne which the *battitori* (gold beaters) used to produce the golden thread necessary for the most precious textiles – cloths of gold – as happened in May 1538, when the cost of c. 415 ducats was covered by slightly more than lb. 39 of gold thread.<sup>12</sup>

Tab. 2 shows that the Olivieri company of Florence used the services of many Florentine *setaioli* when they needed to obtain silks for the northern and southern markets. In part they paid with commodities coming from the same areas. However, the existence of the tripartite exchange makes it difficult to find perfect correspondence between the flows of merchandise. In other instances, however, it is striking to see that the value of exported and imported products was almost identical. In 1492-94, for example, the *commissionaria* of Giovanni Salviati sold in Constantinople goods (woollen and silk cloth, and soap) for a total of 512,351 *aspri*<sup>13</sup> and at the same time sent towards Italy goods (raw silk, pepper and wax) valued 508,906 *aspri*, equivalent to more than 10,000 Florentine florins (Dini 1995, 264).

<sup>12</sup> Archivio Bartolini, 246, fol. 372. For many other examples see Guidi-Bruscoli 2016a. It must be said, however, that according to Ugo Tucci «it is likely» that the «oro di Colonia» was in fact some sort of copper alloy («sta ad indicare una qualche lega cuprea»): Tucci 1977, 86.

<sup>13</sup> *Aspro*, in Turkish *akçe* or *akça*, was a silver coin in use in the Ottoman empire. For exchange rates with the Florentine florin in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see Spallanzani and Guidi-Bruscoli 2023, 10.

Tab. 2. Sales of silks and purchases of raw silk and German cloth by Florentine *setaioli* (1544-46)

Company of <i>setaioli</i>	Date	Value of silks (in duc.)	Date	Value of raw silk (in duc.)	Date	Value of German cloth (in duc.)
D. Angiolieri	13.05.45	231.4			15.05.45	363.4
B. Antinori	10.11.44/ 14.02.45	902.5	24.10.45	554.7	21.02.45/ 09.09.46	793.8
F. Antinori	11.12.44	61.3				
G. Barbadori			24.09.45	489.6	16.01.46	157.7
L. and N. Bardi	03.12.44	219.5				
L. Berardi					02.03.46	5.3
C. Bucetti			26.09.45	486.7		
P. Corsini	11.12.44	207.3				
R. Corsini	11.12.44	152.9	23.09.45	488.0		
N. and B. Del Nente	16.12.44	196.9				
C. Dini, A. Michelozzi	14.02.45	101.0				
P. Gondi, P. Velluti	06.06.45	113.0	07.09.45	495.7	07.09.45/ 02.03.46	325.7
P.F. Gucci					16.01.46/ 02.03.46	79.7
B. and R. Machiavelli	09.12.44	134.6				
Heirs of N. Machiavelli	21.07.44/ 16.12.44	822.4				
G. Mormorai			07.09.45	437.3		
R. Mormorai					21.02.45/ 31.07.45	106.2
J. Sangalietti			24.10.45	489.1		
L. and heirs of B. Steccuti	11.12.44	352.9			21.02.45/ 07.09.45	294.9
P. Tolomei	13.11.44/ 05.12.44	157.5	07.09.45/ 23.11.45	1478.4	21.02.45/ 02.03.46	1177.6
		4864.6		4478.5		3304.3

Source: Guidi-Bruscoli 2016a, 122.

Until mid-fourteenth century in the trade with the Levant (be it the *Romania* – i.e., the area of the former Byzantine empire – or Mamluk Egypt and Syria), Italian merchants compensated the deficit in the balance of payment with silver, both in coins (e.g., the Venetian *grossi*, but also others) and ingots. From the late fourteenth century, however, the gradual decline of the Levantine industries implied that the demand for Western products had increased, and that therefore Italian merchants could now pay for the merchandises in agricultural or manufactured goods (especially cloth), although the deficit continued into the fifteenth century as did the need to export silver and gold (Ashtor 1983, 363-69; 374-75; 379). In the second half of the fifteenth century the situation changed. For example, in Constantinople, even before

the Ottoman conquest, Italians often exported more than they imported. In such a context *baratto* became more frequent. Sometimes no coins changed hands, in other circumstances the transaction was part *baratto*, part cash. Overall, anyway, according to Ashtor, Europeans never bought more than one third or half of the Oriental products via *baratto* (Ashtor 1983, 387; 396).<sup>14</sup>

### 3. Profits and losses

Generally speaking, the value agreed by the parties involved for a merchandise given in a *baratto* was higher than the price paid in cash for the same merchandise. As cash was relatively rare, such payment was in a way rewarded, especially when it was made in a lump sum, rather than in instalments. In the above mentioned 1438-diplomatic document concerning trade between Venetian and Muslim merchants (successively also extended to Florentine merchants with the same rights granted to the Venetians), this is stated with clarity: «usually in the *baratto* the merchandise is valued more than when it is paid in cash» («da usanza si è, che nel *baratto* si mette più prezzo alla roba non vale a contanti»; or the similar «è l'usancia le merce se mette più di quel le val a dinari»). The problem is – the Italian merchants complained to the Sultan – that not always all parties complied with the agreement, because after handing over their merchandises, Muslim merchants insisted on being paid in cash the higher price set for *baratto* (Amari 1863, 348; 364).

In a letter of 22 November 1481, a Venetian merchant, Marco Bembo, writing from Venice to his correspondent in Constantinople, Alvise Malipiero, complained because the latter persisted (*infrixar*) to sell his cloth through *baratto* claiming that it was more profitable. Bembo replied that he preferred to sell against cash because even when the price was not high, at least the process was speedy, and cash allowed the purchase of whatever he wished; according to him Contarini (another Venetian in Constantinople) had already sold all the cloth for cash, albeit for a price that Bembo considered too low (Romano and Tucci 1983, xxxi). Two different attitudes were at stake: the cash sale (Malipiero and Contarini) had the advantage of being faster in this circumstance (presumably due to the low prices that was charged) and of leaving the choice of purchasing something else on the local market, on the way back, or even in the hometown upon return. In turn, *baratto* (Bembo), although slower, realised higher profits.

In other instances, however, *baratto* was the fastest solution for the sale of products, although obviously the new products had to be sold as well in order to be able to assess the profitability of the whole operation. Moreover, the correspondence shows that *baratto* could have another advantage: even mediocre products could be sold, an operation that was more difficult in a cash transaction, as clearly stated by Piero Saliti in a 1537-letter: writing from Leipzig to his company in Florence, he had to request that they sent him «better cloths in the future, so that we don't need to

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<sup>14</sup> In the first half of the sixteenth century, and especially from the second decade – as Orlandi 2007 shows – Florentine merchants were importing large quantities of (gold) coins from the Levant as a payment for their exports of silks and wollen cloth.

resort to *baratto*.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, receiving merchandises as a payment implied management costs (transport, warehousing, etc.), an unpredictable time needed to sell them, and risks of various sorts, including the possibility of making a loss on the transaction.

In the end, the choice of resorting to *baratto*, or conversely trying to sell for cash was normally left to the experience and the judgement of the agent who knew the local market, the potential market for merchandises received in exchange, and could ‘sense’ the counterpart in order to assess his own negotiating power.

As Cotrugli (2016, 43) underlines, dealing in *baratto* could be risky:

One needs however to be alert when bartering merchandise as swindles are rife in this field and one can suffer serious losses. Not for nothing do merchants have a proverb ‘He who risks barter, risks himself’. And among other precautions, you need to be quite sure that the goods you acquire by exchange are really more convenient and easy to dispose of than those you part with [...] and in this context you must consider carefully the potential sale value of the merchandise you are taking in exchange, notwithstanding its lower value in the forum where the contract is made. The valuation should refer to the place where you will resell the goods, where the more favourable market conditions will give you greater opportunities for their disposal.<sup>16</sup>

In other words, it was also essential to possess knowledge of other markets, where the sale of the goods received in payment could grant the highest profits. As usual, information was a key asset in commercial relations: on the one side information about the quality and value of the products that were being exchanged, on the other information about the potential market for the commodities that one received. Indeed, surviving correspondence shows the amount of information that was available to merchants. For example, writing from Nuremberg to Florence in January 1537, Alessandro Talani discussed the possibility of selling berets in exchange for other goods: at that date the berets were in Palermo, but they could be shipped to Marseille or to Livorno. In his opinion the most profitable destinations («la morte loro»), were France or Germany, that they could easily reach via Genoa: the moment was favourable, because «the pirates are in the ports».<sup>17</sup> What is impressive is that all these hypotheses were taken into consideration from Nuremberg.

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<sup>15</sup> ASF, *Compagnie religiose soppresse da Pietro Leopoldo*, 2037, fol. 183r, Piero Saliti, in Leipzig, to Francesco Carletti, in Florence, January 1537: «mandarci per l’advenire buona roba che non s’abbi a entrare in baratti».

<sup>16</sup> «È di havere riguardo, però che in questi baracti se ricieve de multi inganni et àssi alcuna volta di gran danni. Et però tra mercanti è nato lo proverbio che ‘Chi baracta è baractato’. Et intra l’altre cose che sono necessarie, è di havere advertencia che la mercantia che tu pigli in baracta sia a te più comoda e più acta a riuscirne che quella che tu dai [...]né in questo caso dèi fare poco conto de la comodità de la mercantia la qual tu pigli in baracta, che non obstante in quello locho dove si contrahe vaglia meno, è da fare respecto ad quello loco dove tu l’aya portare, perché quivi per haverni più conditioni n’arai più ricapito» (Cotrugli 1990, 148).

<sup>17</sup> ASF, *Compagnie religiose soppresse da Pietro Leopoldo*, 2037, fol. 356r-v: Alessandro Talani, in Nuremberg, to Francesco Carletti, in Florence, 9 January 1537.

In 1459 the Neapolitan merchant Antonio Cuomo asked the Cambini of Florence 16 *pezze* of silks as a payment for the Calabrian raw silk that he had sent them earlier. In the instructions he wrote that the Cambini could determine the value (*pregio*) of both the raw silk and the silk cloth and that the difference could be settled later: surely that act of trust was based on the longstanding commercial relation between the two parties but was also due to Cuomo's limited knowledge of the market and therefore his reliance on the Cambini (Tognetti 2002, 145-46).

In order to increase profits – and assuming that their costumers had a limited expertise in the products they were giving them – at times Florentine merchants tried to sell lower quality silks, but as we have seen above that was sometimes tricky. Generally speaking, however, being merchants with extensive experience in long-distance trade, Florentines abroad certainly had arrows at their disposal, but needed to be ready to adjust their strategy to the variable commercial landscape. The availability and value of goods could change in different markets, and what was extremely convenient in one period could generate losses in the following one. As mentioned above, Persian raw silk was an obvious exchange-product for the Florentines who sold silks in the Levant, because they could use it back home to pay the *setaioli* who were producing the cloth they were exporting. The raw silk was normally worth more in Florence than in the Levant, and this generated an additional profit, notwithstanding the cost of transport. However, in the 1520s, due to war between Persia and the Ottoman empire, the amount of raw silk available in Bursa (Turkey) diminished dramatically and therefore its price increased. Consequently, when Girolamo Strozzi sent back to Florence Persian silk that he had obtained in exchange for woollen cloth, his father reproached him, because in Florence even the best quality raw silk was valued no more than 1.5 florins per *libbra* (pound), whereas Girolamo had obtained it at 2 florins per *libbra*: the result was a loss of 60 florins on 100 *libbre* (Dini 1995, 264-65).

The exporting companies, from Florence, needed to rely on the skill, wisdom and experience of their correspondent or agent abroad who, ultimately, was the person responsible for striking the best deal. The seller-agent relation, in other words, was largely based on trust, even though some boundaries on the dos and don'ts could be established. For example, in 1463, Niccolò Federighi entrusted to Antonio Segni the sale of two *pezze* of *zetani* (silk cloth) in the Levant with the following instructions: he could sell them wherever he thought convenient, even during one of the stopover of the galleys, en-route to *Romania*; he could decide whether to sell for cash or «a barato», if he found products suitable for the Florentine market; however, he should not sell them at credit («a tenpo»), nor in exchange for kermes or *polvere di grana* (both red dyes deriving from the cochineal insect). The price of the silks was not pre-established, because Antonio was an expert, and moreover he was a good and loyal merchant (Spallanzani and Guidi-Bruscoli 2023, 123).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> ASF, *Libri di commercio e di famiglia*, 4715, fol. 113righ: «quali drappi detti el detto Antonio debba charichare ho fare charichare in sulle iii galee ch'anno andare al presente in Romania, kapitano Luigi Pitti, e quali drappi finischa per lle schale ho in Romania o dove a lui paressi per gli miglori pregi che potrà ho a danari chonttanti ho a barato, chome a llui parrà che ssieno più utile merchatantia per Firenze, acetuato che 'l detto Antonio non voglamo gli dia a tenpo e non togha chermusi né polvere di grana. E

Similarly, in 1468 and in 1469, Romolo di Andrea stipulated two different contracts for the sale of woollen and silk cloth with Giovanni Bocci and with Salvi di Niccolò, who were about to sail on separate ships (the former to «the Levant» onboard the Florentine State galleys, the latter to Alexandria). Both merchants were free to sell them at any stage of the voyage, in cash or *a baratto*; in the latter case they could also decide whether it was convenient to sell the merchandises they obtained as a payment, at any stage of the return journey, again, in cash or *a baratto*: in other words, each of them could act «in whatever way he finds suitable, as if he was dealing with his own goods» («in quel modo e forma a llui parrà e piacerà e chome di sua chosa propia») (Spallanzani and Guidi-Bruscoli 2023, 124-26).<sup>19</sup>

Similar instructions can be found also at the end of the fourteenth century, in the vast Datini correspondence: writing from Valencia to Maiorca in 1395, the Florentines Guido Caccini & Partners were informing Ambrogio di Lorenzo & Partners that «Giovanni Iacopi sends you one bale of light-coloured Florentine cloth: sell them as you see fit, either *a baratto* or credit or in cash, as if it was yours» («Govanni Iachopi ti manda una balla di panni fiorentini chiari: fane fine chome me’ ti pare, o a baratta [sic] o a tempo o a denari, chome se vostra fosse»).<sup>20</sup>

The merchandises received as a payment during a commercial transaction were given a monetary value, and as such they were recorded in the account-books, as also prescribed by Pacioli. Firstly – Pacioli wrote – the accountant should describe the *baratto* with all the details (*ad litteram*) in the *Memoriale* (waste book) and then he should give the merchandise a monetary value (*e tu poi alla fine ridurralo a contanti, e secondo che quelle tal robe vedrai valere a contanti*). The transaction would subsequently be recorded in the *Giornale* (journal) and in the *Quaderno grande* (ledger). The conversion in money – says Pacioli – is necessary when one wishes to know the profit (or loss) of the operation (Pacioli 1878<sup>2</sup>, 85-88). Long before Pacioli, Fibonacci also explained (*Liber abaci*, Chapter 9) how to record the price of the commodities that were involved in a *baratto* and how to calculate the proportions between price and quantity of each commodity compared to the other (Sigler 2002, 179-86).

A transaction involving a *baratto* or multiple *baratti* could of course generate losses that were then duly transferred to the Profit & Loss account. For example, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Salviati *setaioli* recorded a loss from the account for wool. The operation had involved a movement of raw silk from a Ragusan merchant to a Florentine *lanaiolo* (wool manufacturer) and then to a Florentine *setaiolo*, ‘compensated’ by a movement of silk cloth from the *setaiolo* to a *lanaiolo* and on to a Castilian merchant. At the end, everything was recorded with their values in the merchants’ accounts (Goldthwaite 2020, 358).

In practice, however, the calculation of profits was not always easy, even when the results of a *baratto* were recorded according to their monetary value: that is because the price initially recorded for the exported product (that at times was

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no gli mettiamo pregi a detti dra (sic) drappi in però che ’l detto Antonio crediamo sia intendente e dritto chome buono e leale merchatante, chome crediamo sarà».

<sup>19</sup> ASF, *Canigiani*, 63, fols. 171r-172r., 186r-v.

<sup>20</sup> Prato, Archivio di Stato, *Datini*, 1077, ins. 7, cod. 315731, Guido Caccini e compagni in Valencia to Ambrogio di Lorenzo e compagni in Maiorca, 21 December 1395. The image of the letter has been published in Orlandi 2023, 36-37.



produced in-house by the same exporters, if they were *lanaioli* or *setaioli*) was not necessarily the cost of production, but the market price of the moment (Dini 1995, 266).

#### 4. Conclusion

The theme of this volume is ‘alternative currencies in monetarized economies’. In the pre-industrial world, the development of trade could find constraints in the scarcity of monetary means of payment (cash or bullion). Credit could be a solution to this problem, and the appearance and diffusion of written financial instruments (bills of exchange, letters of credit, etc.) and the development of refined accounting techniques certainly favoured it. In addition to that, however, international merchants often resorted to *baratto*. Especially in the most vibrant marketplaces, merchants from different foreign cities could meet each other’s needs or demands by exchanging goods. Not only could this mechanism facilitate and at times speed up the sale of products abroad, but it also allowed an extra profit when the value of the newly acquired merchandises was higher at home (or in other markets) than in the place where they had been obtained.

Profits, however, were seldom evenly distributed. If one looks at the broader picture, in the past as in the present time, a problem emerges when *baratto* trade involves areas with different level of economic development: manufactured goods are exchanged against raw materials and trade is controlled, in a colonial-like fashion, by merchants coming from the more advanced economies. Less advanced economies become entangled in their role of exporters of raw materials and local manufacturing is disincentivised; as a consequence, the demand of foreign manufactured goods grows even more and the dependence of less developed areas from the more developed areas increases (Tognetti 2002, 142-43).

Both mere barter (direct exchange) and *baratto* (market exchange) are in fact more convenient for those who have a higher bargaining power and/or a better knowledge of the markets: ultimately, for those who possess more comprehensive pieces of information. Florentine (or, more broadly, Italian) merchants who were traversing far and wide the commercial routes of Europe and of the Mediterranean in the late middle ages certainly possessed such precious – albeit immaterial – ‘merchandise’. The ink-stained fingers (*dita macchiate d’inchiostro*) that characterised merchants like Francesco di Marco Datini and so many others before and after him are testimony of the value that they attributed to the flow of information, which was continuously nurtured by the myriad of letters written and received (Guidi-Bruscoli 2016b). In this way international merchants acquired knowledge of many markets: the place where they purchased (in cash or in kind) merchandises, the home market, and even potential markets where they could sell the products that they had acquired via *baratto*. Moreover, the fact that they were keen to accept a variety of goods in exchange for the products that they were exporting, implied that they ended up trading a vast array of merchandises, which they could sell in various markets, both home and abroad. Writing from Leipzig in 1537, Cosimo Bonsi underlined the necessity of having a well-furnished warehouse, that would help keeping a clientele, surely keen to be able

to choose among a variety of products: «And you need to know that whoever wants to take part in this trade cannot deal exclusively with cloths of gold: we need to acquire the reputation of dealing with everything. In conclusion we need to have everything [in stock]». <sup>21</sup> In this case he was mainly referring to the various types of silk cloth. But the comment could be extended, and the myriad of products that we can see listed in merchant manuals is the best mirror of such a situation (Goldthwaite 2009, 210).

All the examples presented here, but also in other articles in this volume (Bernardi, Scherman) and in the existing literature, concern Italian merchants: no matter whether the exchanges took place in Constantinople or in Nuremberg, in London or in Bruges, at least one of the counterparts was Italian, and sometimes both, because not necessarily *baratto* was limited to trading relations with local merchants. For example, in 1408, the Genoese Filippo Lomellini sold 5,500 cantars of alum in Pera (Constantinople) to some Florentine merchants, who paid in cloth (Heers 1954, 35).

Much less is known when Italians are not involved and one is left to wonder how much this type of exchange was practised. In certain places it was the regulations that tried to prevent *baratto* operations: this happened in some cloth centres of the Low Countries, where statutes (*keuren*) were forbidding the *baratto* of woollen cloth with raw wool or dyestuff. However, these prohibitions were often disrespected and local drapers brought their woollens to Bruges and sold them to foreign merchants in exchange for English wool; when this happened, the drapers’ foreign counterpart were, again, mostly Italian merchants (Stabel 2000, 20-22). Therefore, the question arises on whether the scarce attention devoted by the literature to this type of exchange in different milieux derives from the lack of sources, or whether it has something to do with contexts characterised by narrower commercial networks, less refined accounting techniques, and a more limited availability of information.

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<sup>21</sup> ASF, *Compagnie religiose sopresse da Pietro Leopoldo*, 2037, fol. 269v, Cosimo Bonsi, in Leipzig, to Francesco Carletti, in Florence, 8 January 1537: «E avete a sapere chi vuol attendere a queste faccende non può dire mi fondo interamente su’ drappi d’oro, ma bixogna essere a ordine di sorta che s’acquisti nome di tener d’ogni cosa. E in sustanzia di tutto bixogna avere».

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## 1. The whims of the market<sup>1</sup>

The Middle Ages witnessed an increasing commercialization of European societies. Commodities and services that had previously been exchanged in a feudal setting now moved to the marketplace where they were subject to price making. As a result, individuals were increasingly exposed to the whims of the market. Market prices fluctuate because of supply and demand, but also because of monetary factors. Money is not an entirely neutral medium of exchange: it matters greatly whether buyers pay in coin, credit or in kind.<sup>2</sup> In this paper we focus on the costs of using money to explain why annuities in kind continued to exist well into the early modern period and did so alongside monetary annuities. The prevalence of payments in kind is remarkable because this is often regarded as ‘backwards’, and the shift from payments in kind to monetary payments is associated with modernization and the rise of (agrarian) capitalism.

The prevalence of annuities in kind has been explained, for instance, by Peter Spufford, who linked this to coin shortages caused by currency leaking away to other countries, money hoarding and bullion famines. Shortages were frequent and caused the (temporary) demonetization of the economy and an increased use of either credit or payments in kind. Thus, Spufford linked Pope Gregory I’s (r. 590-604) move from money rents to grain rents to a lack of gold. Likewise, and at a much later stage, during the commercial revolution of the thirteenth century, when precious metals became more readily available, «money increased in quantity [so] it could be used more freely for a wide range of activities in which it had previously played a minimal role». As a result, «in the countryside money-rent could oust both labour-rent and rent in kind as the dominant form of peasant rent». But this was not to last, as the late-medieval economy suffered from bullion famines and money shortages: «a consequence of the disappearance and reappearance of money was the growth and decline of barter in trade, in parallel with the growth and decline of rents in kind» (Spufford 1988, 16-17, 240-41, 376).

While it is obvious that a lack of money may have forced participants in exchanges to look for alternative currencies – and Spufford may be correct in this

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<sup>1</sup> All citations of non-English literature were translated by the authors.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the benefits of using money: Lucassen and Zuijderduijn 2014, 7-9.

respect – various historians have demonstrated that payments in kind continued to exist for a long time, regardless of periods of money shortages. Lies Vervaeke (2012, 1136) remarked that in highly commercialized regions in the Low Countries, part of the rents continued to be paid in kind until as late as the eighteenth century. And H.P.H. Jansen (1955, 76) claimed that monetary development could go hand in hand with payments in kind: in the area he studied, more contracts were expressed in kind when the quantity of coins in circulation increased. More recently, the issue of non-monetary components of wages has been raised in the debate on living standards before and during the British Industrial Revolution (Stephenson 2019). Payments in kind were not uncommon in industrializing Britain. Clearly, a lack of cash is not the only reason why non-monetary payments prevailed.

In a recent contribution Matthieu Arnoux (2021, 152) discussed grain annuities in medieval Normandy. These were contracts that gave an investor the right to an annual delivery of grain. He concluded that their use «cannot be seen as a sign of its economic backwardness», and rather ascribes their continued use to the desire for a secure supply of staple foods without having to depend on the market. We agree, but also believe that the rather unstable pre-modern monetary system should be considered as a factor contributing to the prolonged use of annuities in kind. Monetary annuities could lose their value because of ‘market risk’: «the possibility of a change in the value of a particular financial contract or portfolio» (Coppes 1997, 22-35). Put differently: returns on capital might increase or decrease in value over time, either because of monetary interventions or price developments. In what follows we will first explain why pre-modern contracting parties were exposed to market risk (1), and then proceed with a discussion of how monetary annuities exposed investors to market risk, whereas annuities in kind protected them against this. Investors could shift market risk to their debtors by demanding an annuity in kind (2). To further understand under what circumstances investors were able to shift market risk, we discuss one type of annuity in kind: the *corrody* (3). *Corrodies* were in high demand throughout the later Middle Ages and early modern period. They offered investors lifelong food, or food and lodging. These financial instruments should be regarded as life annuities in kind that paid in commodities and services until the annuitant – or surviving annuitant in the case of a two-person *corrody* – passed away. *Corrodies* were used by vulnerable individuals to make provisions, usually for old age and sometimes also to secure the livelihood of physically or mentally impaired individuals. For them it was particularly important to seek protection against market risk.

## 2. Market risk

Two factors contributed to market risk in pre-modern economies: coin manipulation and price spikes. Medieval and early-modern currencies were less reliable than today because a variety of authorities exercised the right to mint coins, and there were various ways for them to capitalize on this right by means of coin manipulation. In large areas of medieval Europe authorities applied periodic recoinage, frequently declaring existing coins invalid and offering the general public

the possibility to exchange the invalidated old coins for new coins at exchange rates that could be as low as four old coins for three new ones – which amounted to a 25% tax on the use of coins (Spufford 1988, 93-95). Roger Svensson (2016, 1110-14) has demonstrated that periodic recoinage was practised by mint authorities in Central, Eastern and Northern Europe in the High Middle Ages. Even though the situation improved over time in some regions, such as in the Dutch Republic (Elgin, Karaman and Pamuk 2015, 6), elsewhere it proved difficult to arrive at a more stable monetary system. Thus, in the Holy Roman Empire, where a vast number of small states held the authority to mint their own coins, attempts were made in the mid-sixteenth century to harmonize monetary policies, but they ultimately failed due to the realm's complicated political structure and the self-interests of its member states (Volckart 2018). A major effect of periodic recoinage was to reduce one of the main functions of coins – as a store of value – because savers faced a loss if they first had to exchange the coins they had saved before they could purchase anything (Svensson 2016, 1110-14).

Participants in exchange also had to keep in mind that authorities could order their minting houses to decrease the weight and fineness of coins. Debasement was usually an emergency measure but could also be a measure to remedy money shortages or to replace worn and defective coins (Svensson 2016, 1108-09). Periodical and incidental coin manipulation contributed to uncertainty about the future value of coins. Notorious episodes of debasement included that of the Burgundy-Habsburgs rulers in the fifteenth century, the Great Debasement of Henry VIII (1544-1551) and the *Kipper- und Wipperzeit* (1618-1623). During the latter period, the silver content of the Augsburg penny dropped dramatically from 0.082 grams to 0.008125 grams (Pfister 2017). Debasements hurt investors specifically. This was already noticed by the fourteenth-century treasurer-general of Navarre, Guilleme le Soterel, who explained that people who have fixed incomes, «especially those who have their rents in money of account... wish one sort of money, that is, money of strong alloy» (Spufford 1988, 290, 305-06). People who lived off returns on capital, as well as those who lived off savings, suffered from coin manipulation: the Burgundy-Habsburg monetary policy in the late fifteenth century, which was characterized by the severe reduction of the silver content of the *groat*, caused *rentiers* to lose up to 25% of the value of the annual returns (Zuijderduijn 2018, 211).

Apart from the monetary issues that were discussed above, participants in exchange faced the question of what the money they would receive would buy. Pre-modern inflation was generally limited, but nevertheless may have hurt investors. And in the short run price spikes could be severe. Prices were most volatile in areas not suited for growing grain, such as the lowest lying parts of the Low Countries, especially when these areas depended on sea-borne imports of grain (Unger 1999, 338). Conflicts – both international and regional – could lead to disruption of trade and price spikes, and there were plenty of conflicts in the Low Countries and Holy Roman Empire, which were in an almost permanent state of warfare until the Treaty of Westphalia (1648). In addition, agricultural production was threatened by privateering – a usual means to add to the treasure chest or to simply feed starving soldiers – and plunder and scorched earth politics aimed at destroying harvests. And of course, natural disasters could destroy crops. The effects of failed harvests and



disruptions to trade were exacerbated by speculators who tried to buy cheap and sell dear. Contemporaries often mentioned speculation as a cause of price spikes: thus, in one of the most notorious years with grain shortages, 1566, an Antwerp merchant allegedly saw his attic collapse under the weight of the stacked grain. Such speculators were widely criticized and even faced threats to their lives (Noordegraaf 1985, 46-47). There was speculation not only in grain, but also in other commodities: in a 1571 decree Philip II, King of Spain (r. 1556-1598) mentions other fruits of the land, and «animals, butter, salt, wood, flax, and other commodities» in addition to grain (Cau 1658, 1484-91). Wildly fluctuating prices, in addition to monetary policy, contributed to uncertainty about the purchasing power of returns on capital.

### 3. Annuities in kind

One way to seek protection against market risk was to negotiate payment in kind. Especially for individuals who were not interested in making a quick buck, but rather wanted a steady and predictable income, it made perfect sense to bypass the monetary system and demand annuities in kind. We believe this is an additional reason for their prolonged existence. In this section we will illustrate how annuities in kind offered protection against market risk, and in the section to follow we will discuss the corrody as an annuity in kind that was widely used in the medieval and early-modern economy.

Imagine a widow living in Antwerp in 1400, who recently lost her husband and has the opportunity to invest a modest inheritance. Let's call her Anna. The widow of a craftsman, she is used to a 'middle class' living standard and she would like to maintain this even after losing her husband. The economic historian Robert Allen has constructed a commodity basket reflecting the consumption of social middling groups. This 'respectable basket' or 'respectability basket' is used by economic historians to measure whether people could achieve their desired standard of living. Anna wants to make an investment that would allow her to earn the respectability basket. To this end she can decide to invest in real estate or a variety of financial instruments. And she has to decide whether she wants to receive her annual return in money or in kind. In figure 1 we first of all illustrate the impact of price fluctuations if she opts for a monetary return.

In 1400 the commodity basket cost 153.6 *deniers groats Flemish*. If we assume Anna would have managed to get a return of 10% – a common return on a single life annuity – she had to invest ( $10 \times 153.6 =$ ) 1,536 *deniers groats Flemish* to afford the respectability basket. Whether the annuity would suffice depended on the development of the prices of the items in the commodity basket. Figure 1 indicates that Anna had to cope with four years of shortages; the worst was 1408 with a 15.50% loss. On the other hand, there were also years when the annuity was more valuable than the commodity basket: in 1410 she would have had an excess of 8.07%. Altogether our annuitant would have suffered a negligible shortfall of only -0.13% over the period 1401-1411. Provided that Anna managed to smooth things out by saving in years with excesses in anticipation of years of shortfalls, she would have succeeded in living off the annuity.

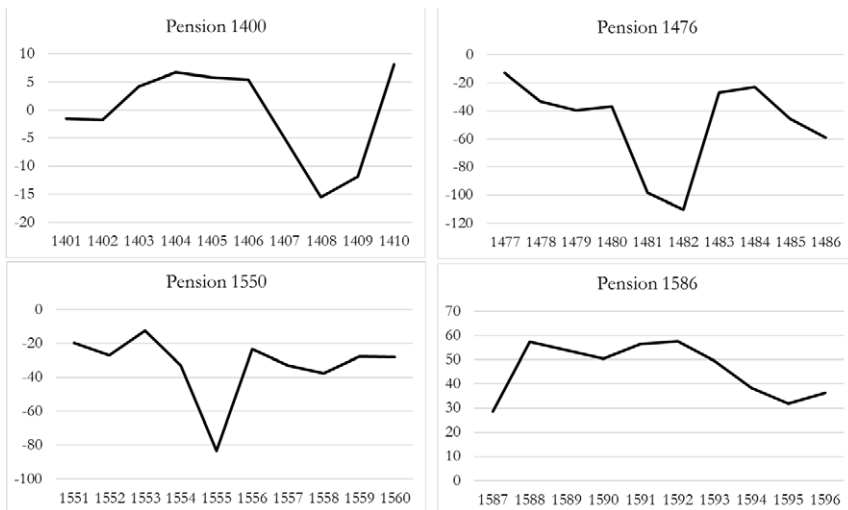
Of course, there were annuitants who fared less well than those investing in 1400. If we indulge in a bit of cherry picking, we can, for instance, present the reader with the particularly grim scenario of Anna buying a life annuity in 1476. At that time she would have been completely unaware of the upcoming political turmoil following Charles the Bold's death on the battlefield (1477) and his daughter Mary the Rich's demise after falling from her horse (1482) and the subsequent decades of financial turmoil. Figure 1 indicates that Anna would have suffered structural losses and a peak loss of -110.12% in 1482, which would have meant her falling well below the poverty line. Equally difficult times awaited investors during the height of the Price Revolution of the sixteenth century: purchasing a corrody in 1550 would have led to structural shortfalls and a peak loss of -83.32% in 1555 – a year of severe grain shortages. But then much more positive scenarios also existed: when we look at the period 1400-1690, best off were investors buying an annuity in 1586, and enjoying excesses throughout, peaking at 57.48% in 1592 (figure 1).

Which brings us to the main problem: Anna would have been unable to foresee whether her annuity would suffice to live off in the years to come. The results varied considerably: figure 2 provides aggregate figures for every starting year between 1400 and 1690. The unbroken line indicates whether the monetary annuity sufficed to pay for the commodity basket in the ten years following the purchase. Thus, the first data point indicates how an annuitant investing in 1400 fared over the period 1401-1410 and gives the shortfall of -0.13% we already discussed before. The graph indicates that gains and losses smoothed out over the ten-year period. Yet, although most hypothetical annuitants would have had an experience resembling the 1400 scenario, most experienced losses over the ten-year period because of the tendency for money to lose its value over time. In fact, 46 starting years yielded losses of more than 20%<sup>3</sup> and it is easy to see this may have posed a threat to investors looking to secure a steady income to live off.

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<sup>3</sup> In the long run more annuitants would have incurred more losses than gains: out of 291 years in which to make an investment, 205 yielded losses (70.5% of all years). Of these, 107 (36.8%) yielded losses in excess of 10% and 46 (15.8%) in excess of 20%.

**Graph 1. Scenarios for annuities starting 1400, 1476, 1550 and 1586**

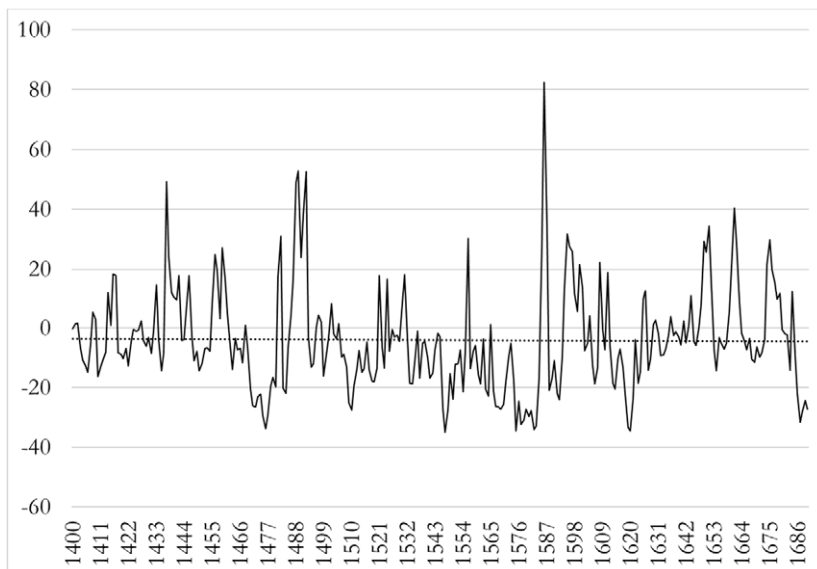


Source: John Munro’s reworked version of Herman van der Wee’s dataset

(<https://memdb.libraries.rutgers.edu/munro-prices-wages>).

Note: we used a basket of goods in d. gr. Flemish.

**Graph 2. Scenarios for monetary annuities, 1400-1690**

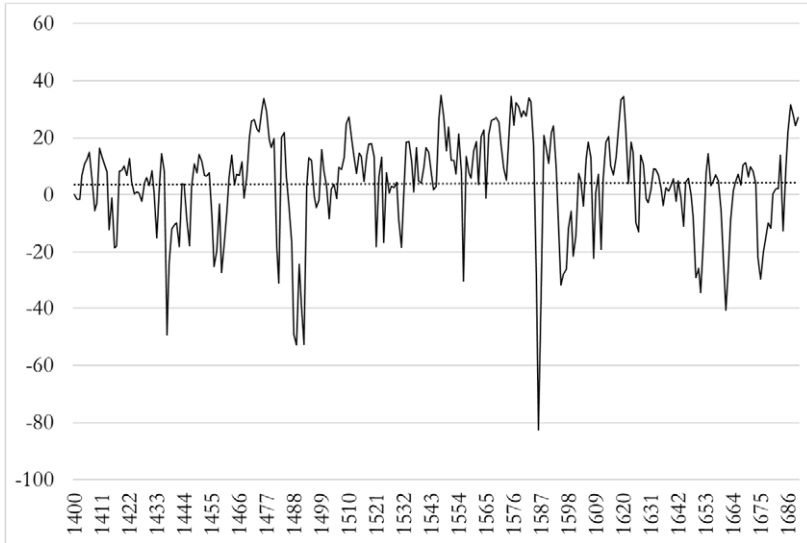


Source: John Munro’s reworked version of Herman van der Wee’s dataset

(<https://memdb.libraries.rutgers.edu/munro-prices-wages>).

Note: we used a basket of goods in d. gr. Flemish.

Graph 3. Scenarios for annuities in kind, 1400-1690



Source: John Munro's reworked version of Herman van der Wee's dataset (<https://memdb.libraries.rutgers.edu/munro-prices-wages>).

Note: we used basket of goods in d. gr. Flemish.

This long-run tendency for annuities to lose their value could be solved by expressing annuities in kind. When this was done, their profitability in terms of currency is the exact opposite of the previously-discussed graph. Thus, in the 1400 scenario, expressing the annuity not in money (153.6 d. gr. Fl.) but in the commodity basket has one important consequence. First, starting in 1401 Anna received the commodities and considering that her goal was to be able to get food on the table, she did not have to take further action. Second, if she ever wanted to get her hands on money by selling the commodity basket, she was more likely to gain (or at least break even if we take transaction costs into account) than if she had invested in a monetary annuity. The difference is clearly visible in the trend line for annuities in kind in figure 3, which is consistently positive; in contrast, the trend line for monetary annuities, in figure 2, is consistently negative. So, for investors it made sense to demand annuities in kind to seek protection against market risk.

The previous discussion focuses on price fluctuations over the course of years. But commodity prices also changed during the year, and these are also likely to have had an impact on *rentiers*. If our Anna received a sum of money annually and went to the marketplace every week for groceries, she would have been exposed to seasonal fluctuations. In the late-medieval Low Countries seasonal fluctuations were usually limited to less than 10%: not dramatic, but again potentially difficult for annuitants on a tight budget. Seasonal volatility may have been particularly problematic in the later Middle Ages: it has been suggested for England that price volatility was initially

high and only decreased after the fourteenth century because of improvements in markets (Dijkman 2011, 294-295). Whether the same happened in mainland Europe, which was politically much more fragmented and experienced many more conflicts, is difficult to estimate.

Up to this point we have mainly discussed annuities in kind in terms of reducing market risk. But there were other reasons to avoid being paid in money as well. First, because of its very nature as a medium of exchange, currency is highly liquid, and it has been throughout history a popular item to steal: the monetary equivalent of the commodity basket fits in the palm of a hand. Our Anna would therefore have had to keep her money carefully hidden out of sight. Second, she would also have had to plan ahead to avoid spending too much before her annuity was due and would have to resist the urge to treat herself to things she could not afford. Today human beings have great difficulty acquiring financial discipline and there is no reason to assume this was different in the past. Anna would not be able to indulge in any luxuries and simply go to the market every week or so to purchase commodities. Third, especially for ageing individuals, going to the marketplace, negotiating prices, keeping track of quantity and quality, and making sure they were not defrauded in any way may have been exhausting.<sup>4</sup> In addition, preparing food may have been a challenge. Today meals-on-wheels programmes provide elderly people with a hot meal, and the annuities in kind we will discuss in the next section – *corrodies* – did precisely this.

Before we continue, we should think about Anna's counterparty: why would they agree to offer an annuity in kind and, as a result, take on market risk? If annuities in kind protected annuitants against market risk, it followed that debtors would be exposed to monetary policy and inflation. We see three possible reasons for counterparties to agree. First, it may well be that the question of who ran market risk was part of the negotiations, and that investors demanding to be paid in kind simply compensated their counterparty by paying a relatively high principal sum. Another option would have been to share the risk by using a price cap. A sixteenth-century legal handbook explains that debtors could avoid suffering too much from price spikes by putting in writing that they would only deliver a fixed amount of wine as long as the wine did not exceed a certain price (Hermann 2018, 21).

Second, some counterparties may not have been exposed to market risk. For a grain-producing peasant it would have made sense to sell an annuity in kind because he could simply hand over part of his harvest without having to go through the market. In such cases both debtor and creditor profited from not having to expose themselves to market risk and avoided having to first sell commodities to be able to make monetary payments. Both parties stood to gain from cutting out the middleman (Vervaeke 2012, 1136). Likewise, for institutions – both in the countryside and in towns – that owned land it may also have made sense to sell annuities in kind because of their steady supply of foodstuffs. Urban religious institutions such as hospitals and monasteries usually had good access to foodstuffs because they usually owned large estates.

Third, even if institutions lost out on selling annuities in kind in the short run, for instance because of market risk, eventually they would have been able to profit

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. transaction costs: Davis 2012, 215-22.

from the accumulated capital. Gunnar Pettersen pointed out that institutions could ‘play the long game’: some annuities in kind, such as the corrodies we will discuss shortly, would dissolve within decades, whereas the capital the institutions acquired by selling corrodies would continue to yield profits for centuries (Pettersen 2007, 51).

#### 4. Corrodies

For Anna’s purposes, investing in a corrody was probably the best option: it protected her against market risk and provided her with the necessities of life. The usual approach in later Middle Ages and the early modern period was for the investor – the corrodian – to enter into a contract with an institution and thus obtain the right to lifelong food and lodging (Begon 2002, 177). Corrodies were initially contracted with monasteries but over time hospitals began to specialize in selling these retirement packages (Stunz 2005). They were usually sold to individuals looking to secure their livelihood, but also to couples. Sometimes contracts even included a live-in servant. Naturally, every additional individual on a corrody contract raised the price and there is even evidence that the ages of the investors – and hence the likelihood the institution would have to support them for a shorter or longer period – were taken into account.<sup>5</sup>

Corrodies differed widely. Some retirees only managed to be accepted if, in addition to a sum of money, they also promised to continue to work as much as they could. Others retired with a spouse and servant to a splendid institution where they were served abundant and luxurious meals. Corrodies reflected the consumption patterns of the various social groups in pre-modern societies: the social stratification that existed outside the institutions was replicated inside the walls. In general, three types can be distinguished: poor, middle-class and rich corrodies. Poor corrodies are known as *Armenpfründe* in German; these were either completely free of charge, or very inexpensive (Kruse 2007, 493, 495). Elsewhere we have argued that the ability to pay even small sums was important for both corrodians and the institutions they entered: by demanding payment the institution rewarded people who had demonstrated that they embraced such civic values as *prudentia*, *temperantia* and *fortitudo*. Investors in *Armenpfründe* may not have been able to hand over sufficient capital to cover the cost of a corrody, but by handing over at least something they became more ‘deserving’ of admittance (Pelzl and Zuijderduijn 2022, 343).

One step up the social ladder we find the *Mittelpfründe*, which was attractive for middle-class investors. These corrodies provided simple food and lodging, often on condition the corrodians would also work as much as possible. This condition allowed for this contract to be quite affordable, as it meant the investor could pay partly in kind by providing labour and could gradually transition into old age, taking on lighter or simpler tasks with the passing of the years, at a guaranteed living standard. And then there were the rich corrodies (*Herrenpfründe* in German), which were more expensive than the middle-class and the poor corrodies. To give an example, Ulf Dirlmeier (1978, 489) reports that in late-medieval Germany

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<sup>5</sup> According to Reicke (1932, 199-200) ‘the price of a corrody fluctuated based on age, social standing, and demands by the buyer’.

*Armenpfriinde* would cost up to 50 guilders, *Mittelpfriinde* 50-100 guilders, and *Herrenpfriinde* 100-200 guilders. Even though prices varied from one institution to the next and could also increase over time, generally the better-off groups of corrodians carefully safeguarded the retirement package they had a right to by protesting against any transgressions by lower classes of corrodians in terms of food and lodging.

#### 4.1 Lodging

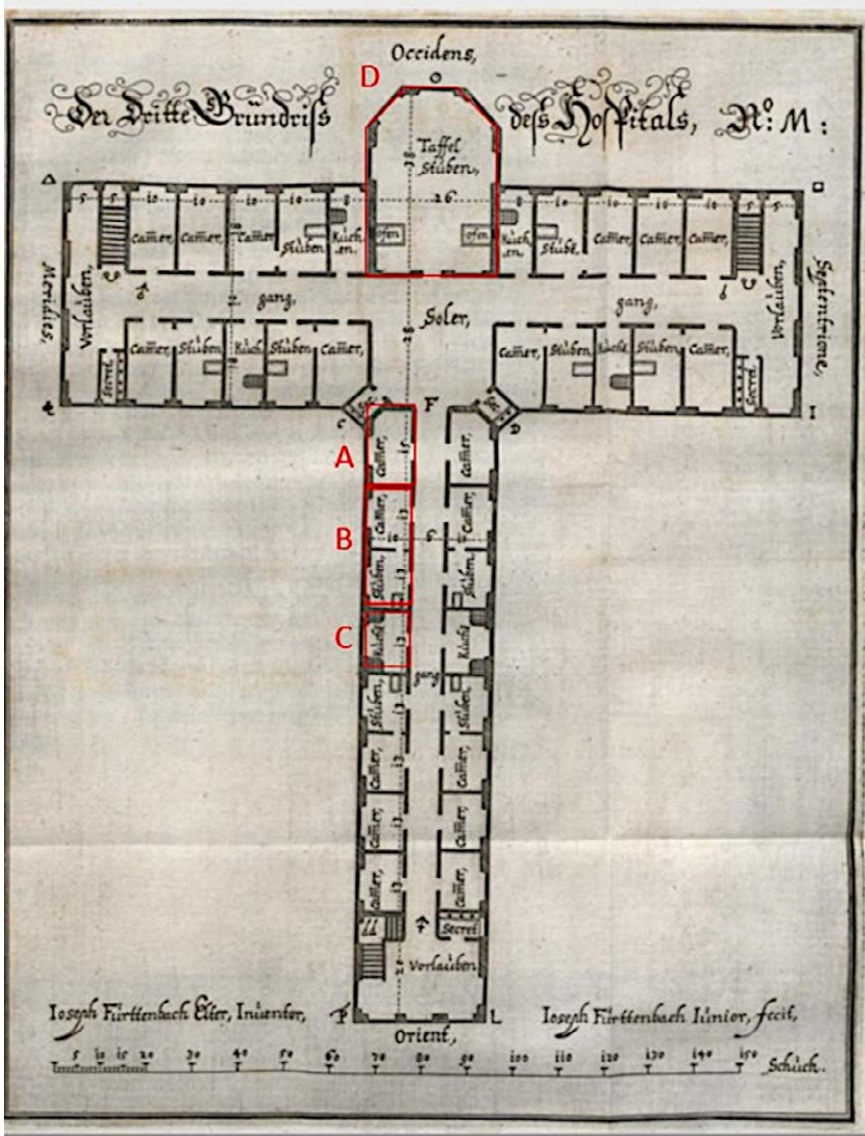
Corrodies came in a variety of types. In their simplest form their recipients did not have a right to lodging but could only come to the institution to receive a meal. This was for instance the practice in Diest, modern-day Belgium, where the hospital at some point had so many mouths to feed of corrodians who lived *ex-situ* that the sale of these annuities in kind was prohibited.<sup>6</sup> In Bergen op Zoom, the Netherlands, two of the ten corrodians lived 80 kilometres to the south, in Brussels, but still received daily meals. Presumably they sent locals to pick up the food, which the latter either consumed or passed on to others. When this came to the attention of the authorities the two were immediately replaced by former employees who did require old-age support (Zuijderdijn 2020, 82). In Leeuwarden, the Netherlands, *maalbaalders* (meal collectors) were allowed to come to the hospital to eat even though they lived independently. Some of them had paid for this privilege, while others had received it out of charity (Eekhoff 1854, 54-55). Some institutions could expect dozens to show up to receive food: the hospital in Regensburg, Germany, handed out food to 60 corrodians living outside the hospital walls (Reddig 2009, 15).

Such corrodies were probably useful for homeowners who wanted to continue to live independently but feared they would not be able to make a living. Most corrodies also included lodging though, usually in an institution. Corrodians lived in monasteries and hospitals that also accommodated the poor, the physically and mentally impaired, and people who suffered from leprosy. With the emergence of paying retirees, hospitals came to include a variety of social groups and as a result it was necessary to create separate living spaces. When the architect and theoretician of architecture Joseph Furttenbach (1632-1655) published a treatise on the ideal hospital, in 1655, he tried to arrive at a synthesis of religious symbolism and an efficient layout (image 1). On the first and second floors of his ideal hospital, poor people were housed in large halls full of long rows of beds, with no privacy. «On the third floor, one can find old and frail citizens who seek tranquillity [and] who in return for a payment have their life-long maintenance [...]». Here Furttenbach designed two types of private apartments: a single-room one (A), and a more luxurious double room (B) including a private stove. In small kitchens (C), shared by four or five apartments, corrodians prepared their own meals, which they could consume in a large *Taffelstube* (D), equipped with two stoves and with light coming through large windows (Furttenbach 1655, 28-29).

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<sup>6</sup> Alberdingk Thijm 1883, 229. Cf. *ex-situ* corrodians in Ghent's Sint-Anna hospital: Marechal 1966, 40.

Graph 4. Third floor of ideal hospital designed by J. Furtttenbach



Furtttenbach's ideal hospital contained elements that were found throughout Europe. Corrodians who paid for their stay usually got the best position, generally the top floor. Thus, in Namur, Belgium, corrodians lived on the first floor of the hospital, and were distinguished from the poor who lived on the ground floor (Pauli 2007, 254). The distinction between more and less luxurious rooms was also quite common. *Herrenpfriindner* who had invested relatively large sums lived in private



apartments or small houses in or close to the institution. *Mittelpfründner* often lived in smaller apartments, in bed boxes, or simply in a bed in a hall. Thus, the wealthier corrodians of St Hieronymus hospital, Leiden, which was housed in a former monastery, were allowed the privacy of a cell that had previously been occupied by monks. The less-well-off shared larger living spaces such as the monastery's former church and refectory, where they would have their beds (Zuijderdijn 2016, 200).

Rich corrodians did not only receive better housing because they paid more, but also because they needed to be able to distinguish themselves from middle-class corrodians. When the hospital in Arnhem, the Netherlands moved to a new location in 1636, it became possible to «distinguish between “decent” (*degelijke*) old citizens who want to pay for their upkeep and the others who are poor and of lower standing (*geringer conditie*)». The rich would live in the citizens' house (*borgher-huijs*), the others in the hall for men (*manscamer*) or for women (*vrouwen camer*) (Leppink 1996, 185). The rich could be quite protective of their living quarters: in the hospital in Leeuwarden they are known to have chased away middle-class corrodians who had wandered into the living quarters of the rich (Eekhoff 1854, 49).

Yet another distinction concerned where to eat meals. Furttenbach had the corrodians eat amongst themselves on the third floor, so they did not have to mingle with the other inhabitants. In hospitals in French-speaking areas a distinction was made between *frères et soeurs du haut pain*, who received their food on the first floor, and those who received their meals on the ground floor (*bas pain*) (Pauli 2007, 254). In Arnhem, the rich were served at the «burghers table» (*burger taeffel*) (Leppink, 1996, 178-179). And in Frankfurt, corrodians negotiated the right to dine at the *Spitalmeistertisch*, side by side with the hospital directors.<sup>7</sup> In contrast, middle-class corrodians often had to sit with the staff: in some cases, their corrodies were even named after the place they were served, such as with *Knechttschpfründner* (named after the servants' table) and *Gemeine Kesselpfründner* (named after the cooking pot) (Reddig 2007, 13). The *Geborsamenpfründe* (servants' corrody) we encounter in Esslingen, Germany, also suggests these corrodians would have been considered part of the same social group as the hospital's employees – and likely ate at their table (Holzwart-Schäfer 2005, 15).

## 4.2 Food

Rich corrodians usually received better food and larger portions of food than middle-class and poor corrodians. The difference is for instance seen in mid-sixteenth-century Nuremberg, Germany, where hospital officials calculated that the yearly maintenance of a rich corrodian cost 140% of the rations of a middle-class corrodian and 200% of the rations of a poor corrodian.<sup>8</sup> In Leiden, the Netherlands, the rich corrodians received 22.6% more butter, 18.7% more cheese, and 67.0% more beer than middle-class retirees (Pelzl and Zuijderdijn 2022, 337-38). For social

<sup>7</sup> Stadtarchiv im Institut für Stadtgeschichte Frankfurt am Main, Findbuch zum Heiliggeistspital, Rep. 712, 343 and following pages.

<sup>8</sup> Stadtarchiv Nürnberg (SN), D2/II Nr. 18, fol. 64-66.

middling groups it was of crucial importance to maintain their ‘middle class’ consumption pattern during old age. Willem Frijhoff, writing about a retirement home in Rotterdam that specialized in selling corrodies, indicates that «quality was essential to the recruitment of the home» and that «bad or insufficient food was prejudicial to its [the institution’s] reputation». Although this institution’s meals were ‘never luxurious’, it was ‘superior in both quality and variety to that of the orphanages, hospitals, and almshouses in Rotterdam’ (Frijhoff 1998, 194-95). Servings of meat were for instance very common, and this has also been noted by Robert Jütte (1987, 123-24), writing about similar retirement institutions in Germany. Fruits, such as apples and pears, were also served frequently in Rotterdam (Frijhoff 1998, 200-21). Other institutions were not as posh as the one in Rotterdam but came close: Amsterdam’s Sint-Jorishof served meat at least three times per week (Commelin 1726, 566). The Hague’s hospital offered a varied menu including meat, fish and vegetables, and served a different meal every day. Menus also changed with the seasons. In addition, there were four feast meals per year, including at Christmas and Easter, which were attended by corrodians, personnel and directors. On such occasions, corrodians received a jug of beer – or tea for those who did not care for beer – and candles (Serneé 1919, 218-219).

The hospitals discussed above specialized in corrodies for retirees coming from relatively wealthy cities. Other hospitals did not serve such lavish meals, especially not for middle-class corrodians. Thus, when a couple purchased a corrody in late-medieval Amsterdam, the contract stipulated they had the right to food ‘as good or bad as the hospital’s kitchen prepares’ (Zuijderduijn 2015, 36). In Haarlem a corrodian was admonished for exclaiming that the butter served was fit for coating the mast of a ship (Kurtz 1979, 71). Should the corrody prove a disappointment, it was usually possible to make adjustments: anyone willing to put in some extra money could improve their diet. Thus, a couple in Leiden’s St. Hieronymus hospital with some money to spare negotiated ‘a good piece of beef’ every Sunday (Zuijderduijn 2016, 200). In this city’s St. Catherine’s and Ceciliae’s hospitals many retirees were willing to pay extra to avoid having to eat the hospitals’ home-baked bread (*huysbacke*), which apparently was not to everybody’s liking.<sup>9</sup> There was also a tendency to pay extra for higher-quality beer. And it was also possible to pay for specific meals: in Leiden a corrodian paid extra to get ‘breakfast in the morning on top of the ordinary provisions of the house’.<sup>10</sup> In Haarlem corrodians were willing to pay an additional sum for milk to pour in their coffee or tea, porridge or biscuits at breakfast, and a maid to clean their rooms and make their beds (Kurtz 1979, 43). And even though the vast majority of the corrodians were elderly men and women, there were sometimes complaints that the food was unsuitable for seniors. In the eighteenth century the corrodians of Würzburg demanded more warm soup and less beer, which they could not stomach because of their old age. Somewhat later they demanded that

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<sup>9</sup> Thus, Jillis van den Heuvel arranged for two loafs of white bread per week ‘and the rest home-baked [bread]’ (Erfgoed Leiden (EL), Archief van de gasthuizen, inv. nr. 58-2 f. 155 (contract from 1743). Cf. EL, Archief van de gasthuizen, inv. nr. 58-1 f. 137 (*gebouwd brood* instead of ordinary bread).

<sup>10</sup> EL, Archief van de gasthuizen, inv. nr. 37-1 f. 42 (contract from 1687).

the hospital officials should take into account that certain types of food were less digestible for old people and should not be served.<sup>11</sup>

Clothing could also be part of a corrody. Some institutions provided repair services, such as in Nuremberg where the hospital paid for repairing corrodians' clothing.<sup>12</sup> Other hospitals mandated their inhabitants to wear clothing that made them recognizable as members of the institution. Another Nuremberg foundation, for example, forbade the resale of an inmate's clothing after their death as it did not want outsiders to wear their attire and possibly be mistaken for corrodians.<sup>13</sup> For rich corrodians it was important to be able to distinguish themselves and therefore they demanded not to be clothed in similar fashion to middle-class corrodians: they could negotiate permission to bring their own clothes to the hospital so they could express their distinct social status.

Corrodies could also provide medical services. When Leiden's St. Hieronymusdal hospital advertised it would be selling corrodies, the expert medical attention investors would receive was highlighted (Zuijderdijn 2016, 195). More directly related to the problems of old age were medical expenses. Retirees sometimes arranged for this, benefitting from the comparatively low labour cost. Thus, one corrody contract explicitly stated: «in the said hospital one will clean and wash him [the rich corrodian] and all that belongs to his body [...] and when sick, one will turn him around, put him to bed, wash him [...] and other related manual services and cures, as often and as much as his ailments require».<sup>14</sup> Not all hospitals covered medicine though: when the local lord paid a visit to their hospital, the hospital officials in Würzburg explicitly denied that they would cover any medical bills, as this was regarded as too expensive.<sup>15</sup>

### 4.3 Protection

Corrodies provided investors with lifelong food and lodging and should be considered as life annuities that were paid out in kind. Because investors entered into a contract with an institution that thereby took on the responsibility for providing food and lodging, market risk was transferred from the investor to the institution. To what extent did corrodies protect corrodians against the whims of the market? First, it is important to realize that hospitals privileged their paying customers over the poor. The latter were the first to have their rations cut. Thus, when the Saint-Laurent hospital of Liège, Belgium, was heavily indebted, in 1414, its abbot did not suggest cutting the rich and middle-class corrodies, but instead proposed reducing

<sup>11</sup> Stadtarchiv Würzburg (SW), Bürgerspital Abteilung II Nr. 8; idem, nr. 463, protocol of 1722.

<sup>12</sup> SN, D15 L1/33 or for example the account books repeatedly name expenses for this, such as SN, B 35 B 766 1765/66.

<sup>13</sup> SN, D 15 L1/121 A.

<sup>14</sup> Hermann 2018, 22, citing a 16th-century corrody contract template: «Man sol im auch in dem bemeldten Spittal allwegen seübern und weschen/ alles das zu seinem leib an under und über gehöret/ und in in seinen krankheiten versehen mit heben/ legen/ zwagen/ wüschien/ weschen/ und andern getreüwen handtreichungen unnd pflagen/ so oft unnd dick sein notturfft das erfordern wirdt».

<sup>15</sup> SW, Bürgerspital Abt. II Nr. 463, see visitation protocoll of 1722.

handouts to the poor (De Spiegelers 1987, 14). Likewise in Bergen op Zoom, the Netherlands, the poor only received food after the corrodians had been fed, probably because they did not have the same rights as paying customers.<sup>16</sup> Some hospitals even had distinct financial administration systems for the corrodians: in Namur, Belgium, the finances of the *sani* and *infirmi* – retirees and sick – were handled by different directors, who even got into a conflict in 1377 about who was to use what resources (Pauli 2007, 256). That corrodians crowded out the poor was not lost on contemporary commentators: in Germany, complaints and criticisms about the righteous poor being supplanted by idle and well-to-do elderly surfaced repeatedly, and commentators pointed at the moral obligation of hospitals to prioritize the wellbeing of the weakest members of society (Reicke 1932, 286-91). Thus landgrave Charles I of Hesse-Kassel (1654-1730) feared that the large number of corrodians in hospitals would result in «particularly wretched and infirm people» not getting the necessary care while waiting to «die helpless in their misery» (Gray 2001, 48). In Ghent, Belgium, the sick issued an official complaint in 1349: ‘their bread weighs less than it should’ and they received less meat on Pentecost than before, ‘even so little that it sufficed for an eight-year old child’. It seems that the hospital’s sick suffered from the admission of corrodians, who were accused of taking the best clothes and living in nicely-furnished quarters, while the sick did not even have a toilet. The city government agreed to install the latter, but for the rest it was unwilling to take any serious measures. In fact, it sided with the corrodians and suggested that the plaintiffs «could leave the house and go their own way, for the love of God» (Alberdingk Thijm 1883, 171-72).

Yet even for the corrodians there was always a risk of cutbacks. In Germany corrodians were aware of this and recorded in their contracts that bread loafs had to have the customary size and could hence not be shortened when resources were scarce. Hospital directors also knew too well they were not always able to live up to corrodians’ expectations: the statutes of the Wenemaergasthuis in Ghent, Belgium suggest that retirees could take complaints about any wrongdoings to the hospital directors or the urban court (Alberdingk Thijm 1883, 298-299). Leeuwarden’s corrodians took their case even further when they complained to the high court about not having a fire and breakfast in their rooms.<sup>17</sup> When its revenues became depleted, even the posh retirement home in Rotterdam had to economize: its pampered corrodians had to accept slightly less luxurious food (Frijhoff 1998, 195). We should not feel too sorry for them as they could probably do without. In general, it is unlikely that corrodians who saw their rations cut would have starved to death because many retirement homes fed their corrodians such large quantities that the recipients sold off part of their rations. In some hospitals, this could in fact lead to disputes between the hospital officials and the residents: the sturdy elderly corrodians of the Canstatt

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<sup>16</sup> De Mooij 1998, 215. Cf. Eekhof 1854, 15: ‘those who brought any property or money... obviously had more rights and privileges...’.

<sup>17</sup> Historisch Centrum Leeuwarden, 1153 Sint Anthony Gasthuis I te Leeuwarden, 1425-1813, inv. nr. 800.

hospitals in South Germany sent a protest letter to the local lord in the late sixteenth century when officials forbade them to sell the excess parts of their bread rations.<sup>18</sup>

The main threat corrodians faced was bankruptcy of their host institution. In Oudewater, the Netherlands, the hospital's income declined dramatically after an outbreak of rinderpest killed cattle in the surroundings and farmers stopped renting hospital lands. By 1717 the financial situation had deteriorated to the point that the 55 corrodians went to a public notary to record an official complaint that they had not received any food for ten days. When it turned out that the directors and town government were unwilling to step in, the seniors started litigation, eventually ending up at the high court in The Hague. It ruled in their favour: the hospital directors and town government should pay for their upkeep. It seems that one wealthy director eventually had to take personal responsibility for feeding the corrodians; if and how he was compensated for this is unclear (Stoppelenburg 2012). This example underlines that annuities in kind were official contracts that could not be easily terminated. It may have been possible to cut back on rations because of financial difficulties, but stopping altogether with providing food and lodging was clearly a step too far.

## 5. Conclusion

The example of Oudewater's hospital demonstrates the attraction of corrodies. Even though its elderly inhabitants had to put up a fight, eventually the food and lodging they were entitled to were resumed. The judges of the high court did not care about rinderpest and the difficulties the hospital experienced leasing out its landed property: the financial risks were to be borne by the institution and its directors, not the corrodians. The latter were largely shielded from the whims of the market, in particular if they retired to larger institutions that were well-integrated in the regional agrarian economy and, hence, had a steady supply of foodstuffs. Annuities in kind offered greatest protection against market risk if they allowed the investor to become part of the 'natural economy' involving transfers of commodities between farmers and institutions, without any market exchange, and without any involvement of money.

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<sup>18</sup> Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart, A 206 Bü 1428.

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Jean-Luc De Meulemeester, David Kusman

*Honour, social capital and alternative currencies: the «leisting» custom in the cities of the Late Medieval Low Countries and Rhineland\**

## 1. Guaranteeing debts with pledges: the *leisting* custom

In this paper, we discuss a system of guaranteeing the repayment of debts by putting financial and social pressure on debtors and/or their network of pledges – the custom of *leisting*. This custom led the creditor to believe that a quick debt repayment – even if partial – would follow. *Leisting* was quite widespread in the Low Countries (both North and South, despite some regional differences we highlight below) as well as in the Rhineland from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century. The widespread practice and persistence of the custom indicate that it might have been quite efficient at ensuring debt repayment. It relied mainly upon risks to honour and social prestige, though more objective financial risks could likewise be at stake. In the Southern Low Countries, the practice was first and foremost developed among prominent members of the high nobility and powerful rulers. The traditional scenario was one where a territorial prince needed access to a capital market to raise a considerable amount of money at short notice, for instance to fund territorial expansion. He could ask his Estates (the nobility, the clergy and the cities) to help him, but he would have had to enter difficult political negotiations and concede some new political rights. It was therefore viewed as more advantageous to rely on foreign bankers such as the Italian financiers (Piedmontese and Tuscan bankers) in the Low Countries. This proved to be the case for the Count of Guelders at the end of the thirteenth century and for the Duke of Burgundy Philip the Good around the middle of the fifteenth century. Among other studies illustrating this strategy, two classical case studies are those of Van Schaik 1993 and Haemers and Lambert 2009.

Alongside more traditional forms of surety such as the pawning of movables or immovable real estate, personal sureties, or pledges, guaranteed the loan contract. The pledges were generally listed at the end of the loan contract: family members, vassals, princely councillors, and members of the local elites or urban landlords. Once the main debtor defaulted on the set date of repayment, the pledges agreed to go and

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stay at an inn, where they had to eat and drink conspicuously as representatives of the debtor(s). The accommodation costs were usually charged to these “hostages” before being reimbursed by the main debtor. All these stringent conditions provided incentives to repay the debt as quickly as possible to avoid even greater indebtedness. Social reputation was also at risk with this custom.<sup>1</sup> In a few cases, as we will see, pledges proved unable to pay off their accommodation costs and had to pay with alternative currencies such as silver plates or horses.

Of course, today, money is a commonly socially accepted means of buying something. It is usually referred to as «The means of facilitating the exchange of goods and services and the accumulation of financial wealth, commonly recognizable as banknotes, coins and bank deposits» (Bannock and Manser 1988, 208). But this clear-cut definition does not apply to society in the Late Middle Ages where (quasi-) money could take multiple forms: properties, houses, land and its products, annuities, furniture, raw materials, inventories, clothes, jewels, arms, kitchenware, household provisions, domesticated animals, credit titles, and silver or gold coins. The habit of merchants of paying their taxes with silver plates or silver ingots, for instance, hints at what today we would call an alternative currency, exactly as horses were for indebted knights.<sup>2</sup>

In this paper we first analyse the legal framework surrounding the *leisting* custom before turning to three different case studies. The first one involves a prince needing capital to fund territorial expansion. The second one deals with high-profile Brussels innkeepers as multi-faceted intermediaries and auxiliaries of princely justice relying on this custom to expand their business. The third one sheds light on the possible regulatory use of the *leisting* custom by town authorities to control the real estate market in a period of public works. Last, we propose concluding remarks on the differentiated use of this custom in the cities of the Low Countries and on the place of alternative currencies within this debt-enforcement mechanism.

## 2. The legal framework of the *leisting* custom

The practice of *leisting* or *inliggen* in medieval Dutch (or *einlager* in German, *tenir hostage* in middle French or *obstagium tenere* in medieval Latin) involved compliance with a debt-enforcement clause inserted into a significant proportion of loan contracts in many cities of the Late Medieval Low Countries and, more broadly, within the Holy Roman Empire that included the territories we examine here. The *Sachsenpiegel*, a moral and legal treatise written by the German vassal of the

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<sup>1</sup> As shown by Zuijderduijn 2019, 13, who mentions the case of two Utrecht financiers lending huge sums of money to territorial princes and urban communities around the end of the thirteenth century, suggesting that they gambled on the reputational risk of their debtors, should they not pay back the lent sums. For an older but still valuable analysis of the function of honour and reputation in this process, see Hermesdorf (1957) 1977, 188-89, 203-04 and 211.

<sup>2</sup> See for instance, among other works, Howell 2010, 79, and Spufford 1988, 62, 137 and 140-41: in 1270, German merchants registered at the *Fondaco dei Tedeschi* in Venice are liable to a tax of a fortieth on the value of all their goods, including silver and silver plates.

Archbishop of Magdeburg Eike von Regow in the first quarter of the thirteenth century mentions its use (Kellenbenz 1971 and Bertelsmeier-Kierst 2019, 66).

When the need arose for the creditor to rely on forms of sureties other than pawning movable or immovable properties – he could resort to a specific form of personal surety: the *leistung*. Using a ‘soft’ hostageship of the debtor’s pledges, and sometimes the main debtor himself, the creditor hoped to exert strong moral pressure on the main debtor.<sup>3</sup> This debt-enforcement mechanism meant that, should the main debtor default on the set date of reimbursement, either he himself or his pledges (or both) had to go and stay as hostage(s) in an inn at the debtor’s expense until the debt was paid off. As a risk to their reputation, should they fail to comply, the creditor might even publish “name and shame posters” of the debtor or his pledges (Kellenbenz 1971, 902), although we found no evidence for this in our case studies.

The contractually required stay in an inn would involve conspicuous consumption: the debtor or his pledges (or both) had to follow a model of conspicuous consumption with costly meals and drinks. According to Godding (1971) and Kosto (2012, 130)<sup>4</sup>, the roots of the medieval saying: «festin d’otage, festin coûteux» [hostage’s feast, costly feast], or in German, *Geiselmahl köstliche Mahl*, comes allegedly from the intensive use of the *leistung* custom in the late medieval Low Countries. Pledges often had to come, if they were from aristocratic stock, with their horses and squires, thus providing additional sureties for both the creditor and the innkeeper.<sup>5</sup> The accommodation costs had to be advanced first and foremost by the pledges themselves. This form of personal surety was deemed a strong incentive to speed up the reimbursement of the main debt: in most cases, the length of the stay at the inn was not specified, which could lead to excessive costs for the personal sureties, hence the limitation to a fifteen-day stay in some texts of urban legislation from the first half of the fourteenth century. However, this was often the exception.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> We lack any thorough survey of the statistical importance of the *leistung* custom in loan contracts in the cities of the Late Medieval Low Countries: my own investigations on its use within Piedmontese lending societies for loans concluded with members of the high aristocracy of the Southern Low Countries and in the Rhineland show figures of 5 to 23% of their loan contracts with a *leistung* clause (Kusman 2023). In the city of Kampen, in the bishopric of Utrecht, the oldest town register of the city administration (1302 onwards) registering all private dealings drawn up before the aldermen – the *Foliant* – records a total of 94 credit transactions, from rent sales to simple debt recognitions. Of these 94 credit transactions, 33 transactions record the use of the *leistung* provision: about 35%, see Kossmann-Putto 1955, ad word *leistung*. For these figures, we excluded the forward contracts such as grains sold in advance.

<sup>4</sup> Of course there is a wide array of scholarly works devoted to the topic of contract-enforcement agreements and to our subject, debt contracts. See *inter alia* North (1990) 2003, 55 (exchange of hostages) and Greif 2005.

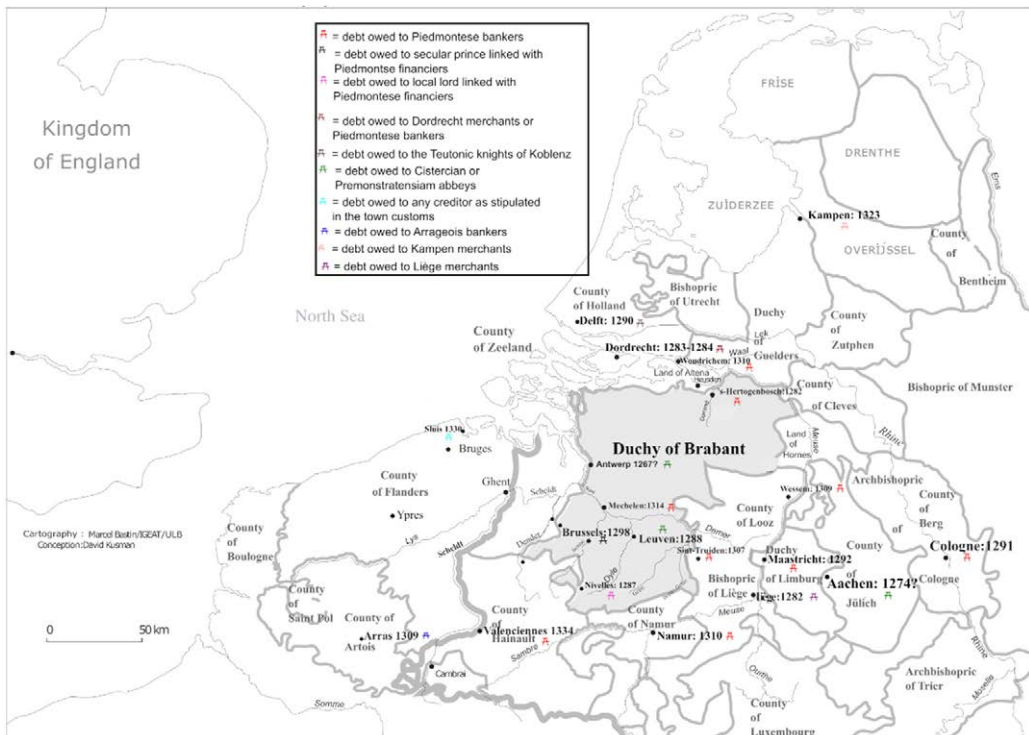
<sup>5</sup> Kellenbenz 1971, 902: in 1472, two indebted territorial princes, the Prince Elector Ernst of Saxony and Duke Albrecht of Saxony promised their creditor, Duke Johann of Silesia to come with twenty horses. Additionally, their pledges would come with four horses and three squires, without taking into consideration other pledges (burghers and town magistrates that also came with more than twenty horses).

<sup>6</sup> Such as in the custom of the city of ‘s-Hertogenbosch at the north end of the duchy of Brabant in 1325 (Godding 1971, 326 note 178); for the lack of a precise time limit for how long the *leistung* could last, see Hermesdorf (1957)1977, 205-08.

Finally, it is worth underlining that the *leisting* custom admitted the seizure of the pledges' goods if the pledges proved unable to pay the accommodation costs (Godding 1971, 327).

These *conditional hostages* – in the words of Adam Kosto – for monetary debts lay bare multiple networks of fealty and trust between an overlord and his vassals when the latter acted as pledges for the debts of their suzerain. The example of ransoms for royal or princely hostages springs to mind. That a sovereign could convince several high-ranking vassals, barons, and counts, as well as their squires, or city magnates and their valets, to be conditional hostages for him was a powerful demonstration of his power and trustworthiness towards his creditor.<sup>7</sup>

Fig. 1. The use of the *leisting* custom in the Late Medieval Low Countries: the first fifty years (first mentions)



Unsurprisingly, the custom gained ground first among prominent members of the high aristocracy of the Low Countries (both Northern and Southern) and the Rhineland. This hinted at the feudal roots of the *leisting* custom: during the eleventh

<sup>7</sup> Kosto 2012, 151-62, 178-82 who cites the example of the Aragonese King Alfonso III and King Edward I of England in a peace treaty dated 27 October 1288 wherein a huge ransom had to be paid to release the heir to the throne of Naples, Charles of Salerno. The release of the prestigious heir taken hostage by the Aragonese admiral Roger de Llúria required 159 hostages in return.

and twelfth centuries, it was commonplace to exchange hostages to seal a peace treaty between two princes or a simple agreement, and for the winning camp after a battle to take numerous hostages and keep them for ransom. Until the end of the twelfth century, the use of hostages remained limited to increasing the trustworthiness of political agreements with monetary clauses (negotiation for a peace treaty, a truce, a matrimony, etc...). Later, the custom began to be integrated into pure credit agreements (Ogris 1971, 8-26; Duby 2002, 515; Kosto 2012, 41-77 and 157-62) (see Fig. 1).

We observe the relatively early appearance of these *leisting* agreements from 1267 onwards for monastic creditors (Sint-Michiels abbey of Antwerp and Val-Dieu abbey in the bishopric of Liège): we suspect that Cistercian and Premonstratensian abbeys used sales contracts of property rights (such as tithes) from secular lords to conceal loan schemes, explaining therefore their pioneering role in spreading the practice of the *leisting* custom. The role of these monastic communities as credit establishments is as well-known as their market-oriented strategies of commercialising their products to towns in the vicinity of their estates.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the custom was accepted by the canon law with respect to the enforcement of debt contracts (Kellenbenz 1971, 901).

As the practice of taking pledges as conditional hostages in loan contracts spread extensively within the Low Countries, inns began to play a pivotal role in the *leisting* debt-enforcement procedure as it was always more honourable for a debtor and his pledges to remain in a high-end inn rather than in a prison. As testified by the sixteenth-century city attorney of Sas van Gent, who shared unambiguously his views on the topic in a legal treatise on urban justice, when it came to cases in business and financial matters, inns were *loci* of civility whereas prisons were deemed as hideous places, for those devoid of any trustworthiness.<sup>9</sup> Kosto, in our opinion, generally underestimates the pivotal role of inns for the *leisting* custom as he discusses their role only in the context of the legal framework of the *Einlager* or conditional hostage institution (Kosto 2012, 130).

Far from the *topos* of ‘bad inn’ wherein naïve knights attending tournaments would be robbed by greedy hostellers – spread by chivalric literature – inns played a pivotal function in credit agreements with aristocratic borrowers.<sup>10</sup> Noble lords did not shy away from entrusting their funds to hostellers in their absence, so that the latter would play the role of their bankers when they arrived in the city: this was the case of Gérard of Luxembourg, lord of Durbuy, who entrusted 200 Leuven pounds

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<sup>8</sup> Godding 1971, 321, n. 161 and n. 163; Goetschalckx 1909, nr. 181, 212-14 (sale of tithes for the sum of 229 Leuven pounds by the secular lord Petrus of Meer, 1st February 1269) and Ruwet 1955, nr. 191, 180 (sale by the knight John of Frankenberg of his freehold estate in Housse with all its attached tenures in the county of Dalhem, 26th of May 1274). On the rent-seeking and market-orientated strategies of the Cistercian and Premonstratensian abbeys: Despy 1975; Van Bavel 2010, 38-39; Aerts 2012, 73-76.

<sup>9</sup> Van Aller 1721: the original text is from 1580, 55 cited by Hermesdorf (1957)1977, 211, n. 43. The original text from Willem van Aller devoted to the topic *berberghe* reads, p. 55, art. 31: «Dit is om de civilitet te oeffenen, ende dat de apprehensien in de gevangenhuyzen odyeus zijn, de welke nogtans, in cas van quade trouw, eyndenlyck gebruykt werden».

<sup>10</sup> Reyerson 2002, 174; Murray 2003, 205 and 210-215, Van Bruaene 2018. On the “hellish” side of the inn, see for example: Clamote Carreto 2014, 164, n. 29.

to the hosteller Alard in 's-Hertogenbosch in 1285. It is worth noting that in the last quarter of the thirteenth century, this city, with its numerous tournaments, attracted a lot of prominent members of the high nobility of the county of Flanders, the duchy of Brabant, and the county of Holland, keen to engage in those typically chivalric encounters (Vale 2001, 188; Kusman 2013, 40 and 105).

From the outset, the chosen inns were thought to be honourable places to stay and had to be high-end hostels to accommodate the high-ranking vassals belonging to the entourage of the main debtor, usually a territorial prince. This condition was formulated as early as the end of the thirteenth century by the expression *more bonorum fidejussorum*, used for the pledges named by the main debtor: they would go to stay in an inn, eating and drinking conspicuously as good pledges were accustomed to doing. In 1274, in Aix-la-Chapelle (Aachen), the idea of an honourable inn appears associated for the first time with the respectable behaviour of the pledges who, after being summoned by the creditor (the Cistercian abbey of Val-Dieu in the bishopric of Liège), were bound to follow the good habits of pledges: (...) *a quis in uno honesto hospitio, ad jus et consuetudinem bonorum fidejussorum pariter iacebunt et non desistent nec recedent*(...) (Godding 1971, 321 note 163).

Having pointed out the expected conspicuous consumption pattern, we should not be surprised by the luxurious character of the chosen building hosting the debtor's pledges: it was usually adorned with galleries and had multiple storeys. At the very least, inns had a hall, various chambers, offered the innkeeper's accommodation, a kitchen, stables, and storage spaces (Hare 2013, 480 and Picherit 2002). High-end inns often had an impressive porch giving access to the stable or a courtyard. The most selective ones had a quadrangular courtyard, a major block along the street front, with subordinate buildings and a sign bearing its identity, visible from afar. For example, a local hosteller managed the luxurious hostel of the Duke of Brabant in Cologne, around the 1290s, available also for commercial purposes and credit agreements; guests of the inn were provided with many private chambers, several kitchens, gardens, and a vast inner courtyard with stables; a great door closed the courtyard. This idyllic setting opened the door to negotiations on the rescheduling of a debt repayment. That palatial properties later became inns is a well-known pattern in later medieval cities (Kusman 2013, 182, n. 41; Hare 2013, 480 and Zuijderduijn 2019, 23).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Schofield and Vince 1994, 71 mention the example of Ralph Neville, Bishop of Chichester's hostel becoming in the second half of the thirteenth century an inn nicknamed Lincoln's inn.

### 3. Three case studies on the *leisting* custom: county (and duchy) of Guelders, duchy of Brabant, and bishopric of Utrecht (1282-ca. 1450)

#### 3.1. Credit and reputation: the use by the counts of Guelders of the *leisting* custom to gain access to capital markets (1282-1440)

##### 3.1.1. Funding territorial expansion: the choice of the Count of Guelders

We begin our survey with a classic example of the use of the *leisting* custom within the context of princely finances.<sup>12</sup> The Count of Guelders Renaud I (1271-1326) aimed at territorial expansion on the Duchy of Limburg where he confronted the similar interests of the Duke of Brabant. At that time, Limburg was situated on an important commercial route between Flanders, Brabant and Cologne. Since the death of his wife (legal heiress to the county), the Count of Guelders Renaud I had ruled over the Duchy of Limburg, having managed to obtain the support of the German King Rudolf of Habsburg. The Duke of Brabant had no such credentials, but succeeded in buying the succession rights of the Count of Berg – a parent of the house of the Limburg dukes – on the Duchy. The conflict between Guelders and Brabant would last and take on a military dimension (1284-1288). In the end, the Count of Guelders lost control (after the defeat at Worringen, 1288) of the Duchy of Limburg and faced enormous indebtedness.

It is hard to imagine that a *leisting* loan contract might have contributed to the princely finance's bankruptcy but, in fact, to finance war, the count of Guelders needed money that he could hardly have found in a negotiation with his – at that time non extant – Estates or *Staten*. The development of a structured political representation (with Towns, the Church and the Nobility) would not take place before the fourteenth century. Besides, the prince lacked any advanced financial administration that relied on specialized receivers who could handle the task of collecting extraordinary or non-domainial revenues, such as was already the case in Flanders or in England (Van Schaik 1993, 257-258 and Lyon and Verhulst 1967, 93). Unfortunately for him, there were no Italian bankers settled in Guelders at the time (on the mediocre development of the capital market of Guelders at that time, see Kusman and Demeulemeester 2015, 86). Thus, the Count of Guelders had to turn to his vassals and family to obtain information on possible credit sources. He relied on, among others, the Lord of Cuyck, who navigated through various and often blurry allegiances between the Duke of Brabant and the Count of Holland.

Credit for the Count of Guelders would finally be provided by a Piedmontese moneylender, Tadeo Cavazzone, who was certainly acquainted with the entourage of the Lord of Cuyck. The latter collected annuities in 's-Hertogenbosch (Bois-le-Duc) in the Duchy of Brabant, and Cavazzone himself resided in the city, where he operated an important lending society. He had many links of patronage with the Duke of Brabant and the Count of Holland. He was an international merchant well versed in complex financial techniques and Roman law.

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<sup>12</sup> On Renaud I's debts see Kusman 2009 and more recently Bosch 2019, 92-94. We give here only a short overview of the political side of these events.



### 3.1.2. Borrowing capital with personal sureties: the two *leisting* loans of 1282

In 1282 the Piedmontese banker concluded two loan contracts with Count Renaud I of Guelders. The conditions of the first contract appeared to be rather benign and bore elements of a patronage link. Sealed on 15<sup>th</sup> January 1282, it stipulated a loan of 900 Leuven pounds; at that time the Leuven pound was a very strong money compared to the local weak currencies, as evidenced by the dominant position of the Leuven coins in tithes levied between 1276 and 1281.<sup>13</sup> In this first contract, no movable or immovable properties were required as sureties. Only personal sureties acting as conditional hostages were at stake. The contract mentioned no less than fifteen pledges agreeing to go as hostages to an inn in 's Hertogenbosch, should the main debtor default, at first notice of his creditor or his attorney. The pledges could substitute someone else in case they proved unable to go themselves. They were vassals or princely servants. The contract also contained friendly words towards the creditor («my dear Tadeo...») suggesting a patronage relationship. But the needs of the Count of Guelders grew steadily, and on 5<sup>th</sup> April 1282 a second loan contract was sealed, with more sureties and predominantly domanial incomes, signalling a loss of confidence between the creditor and the debtor. The loan now amounted to 3,000 Leuven pounds. The date of repayment was deliberately vaguer as the loan was refundable "*ad voluntatem*", that is, at the will of the creditor or his attorney, at first notice. This made any reimbursement plans extremely difficult for the Count of Guelders and his officials. Movable and immovable properties were now pawned, such as the toll revenues on Guelders' rivers as well as incomes from fines and from landed estates. Personal sureties were more numerous: twenty-four pledges now agreed to go as hostages to an inn in 's Hertogenbosch, within eight days of the first notice of the creditor and remain there until repayment of the debt. The pledges were also of a higher social status. They came from all over the county of Guelders. A high-ranking pledge such as the Lord of Valkenburg could substitute two squires in his place. The terms of the contract were also less friendly. The financial framework thus seemed to prevail over the feudal one.

### 3.1.3. Gaining access to capital markets with social capital: the financial policy of the Counts and Dukes of Guelders

Nonetheless, the social capital of the Count of Guelders played a key role in these credit agreements, so that he could show his importance and prestige, while reassuring the lender; the name of such powerful members of the high aristocracy of Guelders as William of Hornes, Gérard of Batenburg or Otto of Buren should have

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<sup>13</sup> Kusman and Demeulemeester 2015, 86: in the cities of Deventer, Zutphen, Utrecht and in the deanery of Betuwe, the Leuven pound gained an overwhelming position and in some cases, the use of the currency rose by a factor of twenty compared with local currencies.

impressed the creditor, at least in the mind of Renaud of Guelders (Kusman 2009, 83 note 20).<sup>14</sup>

However, the debt would be reimbursed to Cavazzone only ten years later, in 1292. Meanwhile the private debt of Renaud had increased threefold and been sold by Tadeo Cavazzone, the Piedmontese moneylender, to his father-in-law, the Count of Flanders, Guy de Dampierre (1277-1305), who was very skilled at making political use of such financial constraints (Kusman and Demeulemeester 2015, 88-89). Again, in 1298, Count Renaud I asked pledges belonging to the high nobility of the Rhineland, Count William of Jülich and Count John II of Spanheim, to go as conditional hostages for his debt to Count Guy de Dampierre. Both registered such high debts with their Brussels innkeepers that they had to pawn their gold and silver wares: in one extreme case, the debts of the Count of Spanheim ran so high that he pawned one golden glass, ornamented with the arms of the King of England, valued at 60 pounds of new sterlings, or 240 pounds black tournois at the exchange rate applied in Brabant at that time. The length of their stay may be estimated at three months. The pledges' gold and silver wares (several plates and glasses and some jewels belonging to the English crown that had been lent to these allies of King Edward I) were in turn sent to Cologne by the innkeepers and Brussels financiers, to be pawned at various pawnbroker's shops in the city. Cologne was a leading centre at that time for goldsmiths working to meet the demand of princely courts in the Low Countries and it is thus unsurprising that an expertise in estimating the value of pawned silver items existed in the city.<sup>15</sup> The pledges were finally reimbursed from their expenses by the Count of Flanders.<sup>16</sup> This is an obvious case of the use of silver and golden wares as quasi-currency.

That the counts of Guelders repeatedly used their social capital to gain access to capital markets by way of *leisting* contracts is also demonstrated at length by several credit agreements during the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries.

In 1309 and 1314, loan contracts concluded with Piedmontese moneylenders to the Count of Guelders all had a legal clause of conditional hostageship. In 1314, the Lord of Valkenburg sent the account of his inn-stay expenses to the Count of Guelders and was duly reimbursed by the latter. The costs registered by Renaud of Valkenburg amounted to 365 [Brabantine] marks, 3 shillings, at an exchange rate of three Heller pennies for one Brabantine shilling.<sup>17</sup>

In 1340, in the context of war financing during the Hundred Years War between France and England, Duke Renaud II of Guelders – having agreed to borrow money for his brother-in-law, the King of England, Edward III – again resorted to the same

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<sup>14</sup> We understand here social capital as a set of resources embedded in a social network, used by members of a defined group to reach goals and based upon shared trust, norms, and values. (Bourdieu 1980, 2-3; Durlauf and Fafchamps 2005, 1642-44).

<sup>15</sup> Nijsten 2004, 291 (goldsmiths selling gold and silver items to the court of the dukes of Guelders around the end of the fourteenth century); Escher and Hirschmann 2005, vol. 50/2, 319.

<sup>16</sup> Rijksarchief Gent (RAG), Charters of the Count of Flanders, Supplement nr. 251, edition and comment of this accommodation cost account registered in Brussels and in Flanders (between January and March 1298) in Kusman 2006, 31-32, 45-46.

<sup>17</sup> Nijhoff 1830, n.117, 121 (14 June 1309), n.158, p. 156-157, 19 July 1314 and Gelders Archief-GA), Chartersverzameling Gelderland, 158).

technique, turning to the capital market in Brabant, notably Brussels, Leuven and Malines<sup>18</sup> where patricians and cloth-merchants could loan substantial sums (Bosch 2019, 99). Such prestigious guests as the Earl of Derby, Henry of Lancaster or Thomas Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick had to go as hostages to an honourable inn in Malines, while the Duke of Guelders, the regent of Flanders, Simon de Mirabelle and the Duke of Brabant were all held hostage in a Brussels inn for a debt in the region of 22,000 little Florentine florins, paid in Brabantine gold *écus* at the local exchange rate of two gold *écus* for three little florins. At that time, the gold florin was worth 3 English shilling sterlings. This must have been a highly complex source of profits derived from exchange rates controlled by local moneychangers and innkeepers.<sup>19</sup> One of the selected inns was probably the quite luxurious *In den Spiegel* (the Mirror) inn, at that time owned by Philippe van den Spiegel, a hosteller who had earned, thanks to his services to King Edward III of England, the privilege to receive in 1340 five sacks of wool from the next wool deliveries at the wool staple of Antwerp.<sup>20</sup> Several payments to Italian creditors of the English King were indeed made in 1340 in this inn, including a very substantial payment of 5,500 gold florins.<sup>21</sup>

In 1344, the Duke of Guelders, Renaud II, had sent no less than twelve high-ranking aristocratic pledges as hostages to stay at an inn in Gorinchem held by the innkeeper Sophie de Hoogstraten for debts incurred with the Piedmontese financiers of the same borough. That the costs of a week-long stay, amounting to 450 l. 5 s. 4 d., were actually paid by the prince is evidenced by the fact that the account is still kept in the princely financial archives today.<sup>22</sup>

That the financial practice underpinning *leisting* persisted is shown by the fact that, again, in the period 1431-1439, Duke Arnold of Guelders asked his high-ranking officials – among them his general receiver – to go as pledges to several inns for debts incurred with Jewish financiers so that he could retain his creditworthiness, his honour, and his reputation. The fact that all accounts and receipts pertaining to the accommodation costs of the pledges of the Duke of Guelders were all kept by the receiver-general of Guelders, and actually paid off, underlines the importance of this custom in the credit practices of the counts and dukes of Guelders (Cluse 2000, 166).

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<sup>18</sup> Nijhoff 1830, annex, cxxxiii, accommodation expenses for the pledges of the Count of Guelders in Malines are estimated at 470 l. 6 s. 8d.

<sup>19</sup> The royal debt seems to have given rise to endless financial transactions resulting eventually in a final reimbursement of circa 8,300 pounds sterling to a group of Brussels creditors belonging to the top urban elite: Fryde 1967, 1142-1216, 1155 and 1158 and Fryde 1988, 143 and 183. On the massive golden coinage of mints in Brabant, Hainault, Cambrai and Guelders from 1336 onwards (struck in local gold *écus*), to sustain the payment of allies to the English King: Spufford 1988, 278-282 and Bolton 2012, 165-166.

<sup>20</sup> We owe this information thanks to the files of the late Claire Dickstein, former archivist of the Archives du Centre Public d'Action Sociale and specialist of the Brussels cloth industry: see Archives du Centre Public d'Action Sociale de Bruxelles (ACPASB), Fonds Claire Dickstein, file on the cloth industry and De Sturler 1936, 370, n. 304: Van den Spiegel was a creditor of King Edward III for 47 pounds petits tournois.

<sup>21</sup> Archives Générales du Royaume (AGR), Bruxelles, Fonds de la Chambre des Comptes, nr. R 3017 Roll account of military expenses, 1338-1339.

<sup>22</sup> GA, Arnhem, Gelders Archief, nr. 3059.

### 3.2. Brussels: high profile innkeepers as middlemen for princely justice and their speculative use of the *leisting* custom under Duke Philip the Good (1430-1467)

We have already observed in the preceding section how some Brussels innkeepers, from the end of the thirteenth century, became essential actors in the *leisting* debt-enforcement practice. In this section, we will demonstrate how some of the most influential Brussels innkeepers enlarged the scope of their activities to the sphere of princely justice by playing the role of attorneys for the Council of Brabant. In doing so, they could build on their experience as financial and trade intermediaries and their impressive network of business connections among moneychangers and merchants as well as urban elites. This new function took advantage of the growing role of Brussels as a princely residence and administrative centre.

#### 3.2.1. Institutional developments and their effect on the innkeeper's trade

Since the reign of the regent Antoine of Burgundy (1404-1415), the city of Brussels had witnessed an increasing concentration of financial and juridical institutions: from 1404, a Chamber of Accounts had its seat in the city, to oversee princely accounts and exert control on ducal officers, on the model of its counterparts in Dijon and Lille. And in the period 1418-1420, a ducal council benefited from a delegation of power from the Duke of Burgundy to exert power in his absence; soon, this council had the power to take decisions without referring to him if those decisions did not pertain to the princely domain or to the princely high justice. But it is during the reign of Duke Philip the Good, from 1430, that this ducal council would regularly carry out administrative duties and justice tasks within a specific council chamber (*raicamere*). From then on, the Council of Brabant, as a court of princely justice would hold its hearings predominantly in Brussels and less often in Antwerp or Leuven.<sup>23</sup>

These institutional developments must have had sizeable beneficial effects on the profitability of the business of innkeepers as hostellers and financial intermediaries (Godding 1999, 74-78 and Put 2000, 147-59). During his stay in his Low Countries estates, Duke Philip the Good spent 39% of his time in Brussels, shared 25% of his time between Bruges and Ghent in the county of Flanders, and 20% of his time in Lille (Blockmans 2013, 789). That the Duke and his guests could not all be lodged at the ducal palace speaks for itself. This could only stimulate the hospitality economy in the city since courtiers and members of the princely entourages had to be lodged at all costs in high-end inns when the princely residence and other aristocratic dwellings proved insufficient. Fiscal incomes, in turn, were positively affected by the beverage sector in Brussels: during the fifteenth century, the two most important excises fell on beer and wine consumption, which constituted roughly 75% of the

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<sup>23</sup> The prominent role of Brussels as political and administrative centre for the dukes of Burgundy at the expense of Leuven went on a par with its growing population size: in 1437, Brussels numbered around 32,500 inhabitants, which ranked the city first among the big cities of Brabant and well ahead of Leuven which numbered only 18,200 inhabitants: Van Uytven 2004b, 173.

total urban income derived from indirect taxation (Dickstein-Bernard 1977b, 50-52). The importance of the city as a production centre for fine cloths of the highest quality, and the function of its nearby Soignes forest for hunting, also played its role in attracting wide princely entourages at least from the end of the thirteenth century.<sup>24</sup>

### 3.2.2. The pivotal role of Brussels innkeepers as multi-faceted commercial intermediaries and legal actors

The invaluable role of Brussels innkeepers in the rulings of the Council of Brabant derived from their strong economic and legal position. To begin with, the most elite Brussels innkeepers were members of the cloth guild, a regulatory civic body that oversaw the norms of cloth production. Guild brothers (which hints at a confraternal structure), as they called themselves, often belonged to the top families of the city and were often involved as merchant-suppliers of the princely court. The De Mol and Boote families, having invested in the business of innkeepers, were buying or purchasing wine in their relations with the court of the dukes of Brabant in Brussels (Dickstein-Bernard 1981, 74).<sup>25</sup>

The Brussels innkeepers had gained the right to host foreign merchants who imported raw materials needed for cloth production: wool and dyeing products. They were also allowed to host foreign merchants exporting Brabantine clothes (Dickstein-Bernard 1981, 74-75 and Favresse 1946, nr. I, [4] and [14]). Additionally, at least from 1365, they could fulfil the function of broker at the cloth hall of the main town market. They could buy local cloths for their merchant hosts in their presence. Conversely, Brussels innkeepers could broker deals for their hosts if they were traders in wool and dyeing materials. This is best illustrated by the innkeeper Everard Boote, who welcomed in his inn in 1390 three English merchants with their wool (Dickstein-Bernard 1981, 75, nr. 75).<sup>26</sup> That the trade of broker-hosteller of the cloth hall was no small business may be deduced from the capital that these intermediaries had to advance in guarantee to the Brussels cloth guild when they wanted to enter the trade: 400 pounds groten of *Accijns geld* as Vranck van den Spiegel did for his eponymous hostel in 1416-1417; this was eight times the sum that licensed cloth dealers at the cloth hall had to disburse to the cloth guild as guarantee.<sup>27</sup>

As pointed out in section 3.1.3., the *Spiegel* was throughout the fourteenth century a favourite place of accommodation among prominent members of the high nobility

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<sup>24</sup> Already in 1293 the Count of Flanders Guy of Dampierre came with his hostel for a wild boar hunt in the company of the Duke of Brabant with an entourage with 200 horses. The purchasing of Brabantine cloths in Brussels by Tuscan merchants provisioning foreign princely houses took place from 1304-1305 (example for the hostel of the Count of Savoy): Vale 2001, 130, 150 and 183; Kusman 2013, 162-163.

<sup>25</sup> In 1332, the Brussels innkeeper Godefroid Stoutecraen sold no less than 26 horses to the Count of Hainault for 119 s. 2 d. tournois (Archives départementales du Nord, Lille, B. 3275, roll account, excerpt of an hostel account of the Count of Hainault, f°6r°).

<sup>26</sup> See also AGR, Chartes de Brabant, nr. 6630.

<sup>27</sup> The *Accijns geld* (or Excises money in English) was an account currency used for recording incomes and expenses of the cloth guild in connection with the indirect taxation of the cloth hall: see Peeters 1992, 80, 101 and 108.

and continued to be owned by the well-off eponymous family, whose roots were from urban landlord stock. The Van den Spiegel family had indeed been present on the aldermen's benches several times since the beginning of the thirteenth century.<sup>28</sup> In 1391-1392, Michael Van den Spiegel, son of Philippe, innkeeper and town receiver, had loaned money to members of the high nobility of Hainault and Holland en route to Prussia to take part in the crusade. When these aristocrats proved unable to reimburse the credit, they had to lodge with him as conditional hostages (Paravicini 1995, II, 231, 259-260 and Dickstein-Bernard 1981, 75). The mention of Jan Vrient van Zaventem as clerk at the same inn in the second half of the fourteenth century hints at the financial function of the establishment. Jan Vrient was undoubtedly needed in his capacity of keeping accounts of credits and debts passing through the Spiegel inn. Both Van den Spiegel and his clerk belonged to the Saint-James brotherhood of Overmolen whose members represented a diverse sample of Brussels' urban dwellers, from craftsmen to well-off top patricians, of lay or ecclesiastical status (Dickstein-Bernard 2005, X, nrs. 1284, 54 and 1852, 78).

Let us note that in stark contrast with Bruges, the trade of the hostellers in Brussels was more lightly regulated and regulated later, as there was no constituted guild of brokers and innkeepers.<sup>29</sup> Still this did not stop hostellers from maintaining their involvement in the cloth trade throughout the fifteenth century. Under Philip the Good, the *In den Catte* owner, Willem van Schadewyck, was one of the eight members of the cloth guild board of administrators in 1447 as well as an alderman of the city for two different periods. This was also the case for the former owner Jan van Coudenberg, a member of the patrician elite, who sat among administrators of the cloth guild in the period 1372-1373.<sup>30</sup> The bargaining power of those high-ranking innkeepers was strengthened by a legal clause stating that whenever one of his clients defaulted on a payment, the innkeeper was dispensed from bringing any other proof than his oath. Moreover, he had the right to take in pawn the movable items brought by their indebted guests. He could seize goods and enforce their sale to recover his debts without any preliminary judicial sentence of a local court (Godding 1995-1996, 130).

It speaks for itself that innkeepers worked hand in hand with town moneychangers. The *In den Valke* and *In den Spiegel* innkeepers had ties with the town moneychanger Jan Elsaer or Elsaier: noble debtors had to pay their debt in

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<sup>28</sup> The *De Speculo* – Van den Spiegele – family has owned properties (plots and houses) in the *Berchstrate* (Bergstraat in modern Dutch: Hill Street) at least since the end of the thirteenth century: Godding 1959-1960, 5, 100-101.

<sup>29</sup> From 1303, Bruges brokers could collect fees on goods, for which they offered their services as middleman to merchants, mostly as subordinate employees of hostellers and more seldom as independent brokers. In 1323, brokers and innkeepers were integrated into the same guild (van Houtte 1983, 183 and Nicholas 1992, 297) whereas the first fee-tariff of Brussels brokers-hostellers, with respect to the cloth trade, was published only in 1385 (Favresse 1947, nr. 15, [9], 4-5).

<sup>30</sup> For the functions fulfilled by Schadewyck: see *Wie is wie* 2020. He was an alderman of the city in 1442 and in 1463 (Henne and Wauters, 491-92).

Elselaer's exchange. As Murray has shown, innkeepers must have had multiple accounts with diverse moneychangers, depending on their clients.<sup>31</sup>

Other important actors for circulating trade as well as financial and legal information were the clerks of the city chancery. Town clerks played the role of credit intermediaries, as notaries did in the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Montpellier commercial network studied by Kathryn Reyerson: broker-innkeepers were at the other end of this credit network since debt contracts were often drafted in their inns (Reyerson 2001, 143-56). In the first half of the fifteenth century, the *Berchstrate* indeed hosts the private houses of a few town clerks. As clerks, they worked in the town chancery and were responsible for writing down the town regulations with respect to the indirect taxation of drinks and food.<sup>32</sup> Of course, all property transactions (renting and sales) had to be recorded before the city clerks to provide the parties with sufficient validity (Godding 1960, 299-303). In Brussels, town clerks were also responsible for recording debt contracts with *schepenbrieven* – aldermen's letters obligatory – so that the creditor could enforce his rights before the aldermen's court (Godding 1954).

Innkeepers could also act as general attorneys for their guests with a lawsuit before the Council of Brabant; their role was a prominent one, at least under Duke Philippe the Good. In such a position, they could be entitled to fulfil the general task of contacting members of the Council on behalf of their hosts, carrying out payments or being sureties for their hosts, whether the latter were residing in the city or represented by attorneys. The parties in a lawsuit had to come to the ducal palace on the evening to present themselves before the chancellor of Brabant, and then, on the following morning, go to the first hearing before the Council. The hearings took place within the ducal palace. Because of the length of some cases, parties could appoint hostellers as general attorneys alongside professional attorneys with in some cases a university degree. Due to its highly technical nature, the procedure could not have functioned without the intermediation of attorneys living in Brussels: suits could last for months with parties exchanging their complaints files so that they could better prepare their case and provide further testimonies (Godding 1999, 124-26 and 390).

We must stress here that our evidence is of a qualitative rather than a quantitative nature: we seldom know how lawsuits ended and we know next to nothing about the costs that were effectively charged by the Brussels hostellers involved in the *leisting* custom, given the lack of any surviving private accounts of theirs, contrary to the case of hostellers in Bruges (Godding 1999, 448-45 and Murray 2003, 194, n. 65).<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Archives de l'État à Bruxelles (AEB), CB, 528, f°109r°v° (10 March 1457) and CB 527, f°181r° (24 August 1454) and Murray 2003, 168-170.

<sup>32</sup> The following town clerks owned a house in this street: Arnould van Eycke and Wouter van de Bulst, ACPASB, PSG, B 215, f°1 v° (around 1406), f° 14v°. Besides the need to access information and neighbourhood relations, credit could of course strengthen links between town clerks and hostellers. In 1392, Michael van den Spiegel recognised a debt of five gold florins to Arnold van Eycke that he planned to repay by way of a mortgage rent assigned to one of his properties located near the Zenne-river: ACPASB, PSG, 204, f°213v°.

<sup>33</sup> Of course, we depend upon the scanty evidence of quantitative data in Brabant at that time, compared to, say the Exchequer accounts during the stay of King Edward III's pledges in the Low

Having laid out the strengths and the weaknesses of our legal sources, let us keep in mind that the rulings of the Council of Brabant do provide information about the financial and legal functions of the most famous inns of the city. As in our previous case study, innkeepers accommodated conditional hostages for a main debtor, but here having a debt litigation case before the Council of Brabant.<sup>34</sup>

### 3.2.3. The geography of *leisting*-inns in the city and their material culture

The location of the inns in our study was within walking distance of the ducal palace and the Council of Brabant. Moreover, our *leisting*-hostels were also quite close to the cloth hall, hosting the exchange tables of the moneychangers and the main town market as well as the town hall: this hints at their ideal position for accessing trade information. In the vicinity of most *leisting*-hostels, in the *Berchstrate*, as said before, lived a number of town clerks, whose activity was of paramount importance for the innkeeper's trade.

Thanks to the fiscal census of 1496 (Table 1), we may gain an insight into the total number of houses in the respective neighbourhoods that hosted our studied inns and in the relative wealth of their immediate environment (Cuvelier 1912, 263-264, and 278).

We should however keep in mind that the figures of the 1496 census reflect a period of severe economic downturn for Brussels. The city town magistrate had to deal with grain scarcity in the period 1480-1483, which was mirrored in prices that increased between 20 and 40% in the Duchy of Brabant. In addition, between 1437 and 1496, the percentage of poor people benefiting from poor relief (thus not only the fiscal poor) increased from 10.5% to 17.11%. The wages of textile workers could not keep pace with the price increases (Dickstein-Bernard 1977a, 393-395; Van Uytven 2004, 237-238, Barla 2022, 131-147). Still, even during that period of economic crisis, these low numbers of poor people contrasted with other neighbourhoods situated in the lower part of the city, for instance near the Saint-Nicolas church, where out of a total of 122 houses, 30 were inhabited by poor people, representing 24.5% of the total amount of houses. In the *Berchstrate* (Hill Street), we estimate that 60% of the known inns were involved in the lodging of conditional hostages, whereas only one out of six known inns close to the Sint-Jans Hospital was involved in the same debt-enforcement practice – roughly 17% (Billen and Thomas, 1997, 11-16). These figures underline the dominant position of the *Berchstrate* inns in this lucrative business: those inns seemed to be more susceptible than others to being

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Countries in the period 1338-1340. For instance, the Earl of Derby was detained as hostage in Malines for 239 days as well as four of his knights during the same time span in Louvain, and the total accommodation costs amounted to 1,057 l. 17 s. 4 d. (Fryde 1967, 1164, n. 2). When we compare these costs with the wages that were paid to the 12,263 sailors, constables, clerks and pages who accompanied the King in the Low Countries in 1338-1340, amounting to 4,797 l. 11 s. 6 d., we conclude that these accommodation costs were huge, representing 22% of the wages paid to all the civil servants of the King! (For these figures, we refer to Ziegler 1983, 811-812 and Lyon 1995, 695).

<sup>34</sup> AEB, Conseil de Brabant (CB) (Rulings of the Council of Brabant), nrs. 525 f°122v°; 527 f°172r°, f°185v°; 529, f°33v°; 527 f°137r°; 528, f°118v°; 528, f°109v°; 528, f°21r°-v°.



selected as accommodation for the pleading parties, due to their reputation and luxury, hence their pivotal function in hosting conditional hostages. (see Fig. 2).

Tab. 1. Inns mentioned in *leisting* contracts or loans contracts with innkeepers as sureties in connection with rulings of the Council of Brabant (1456-1460)

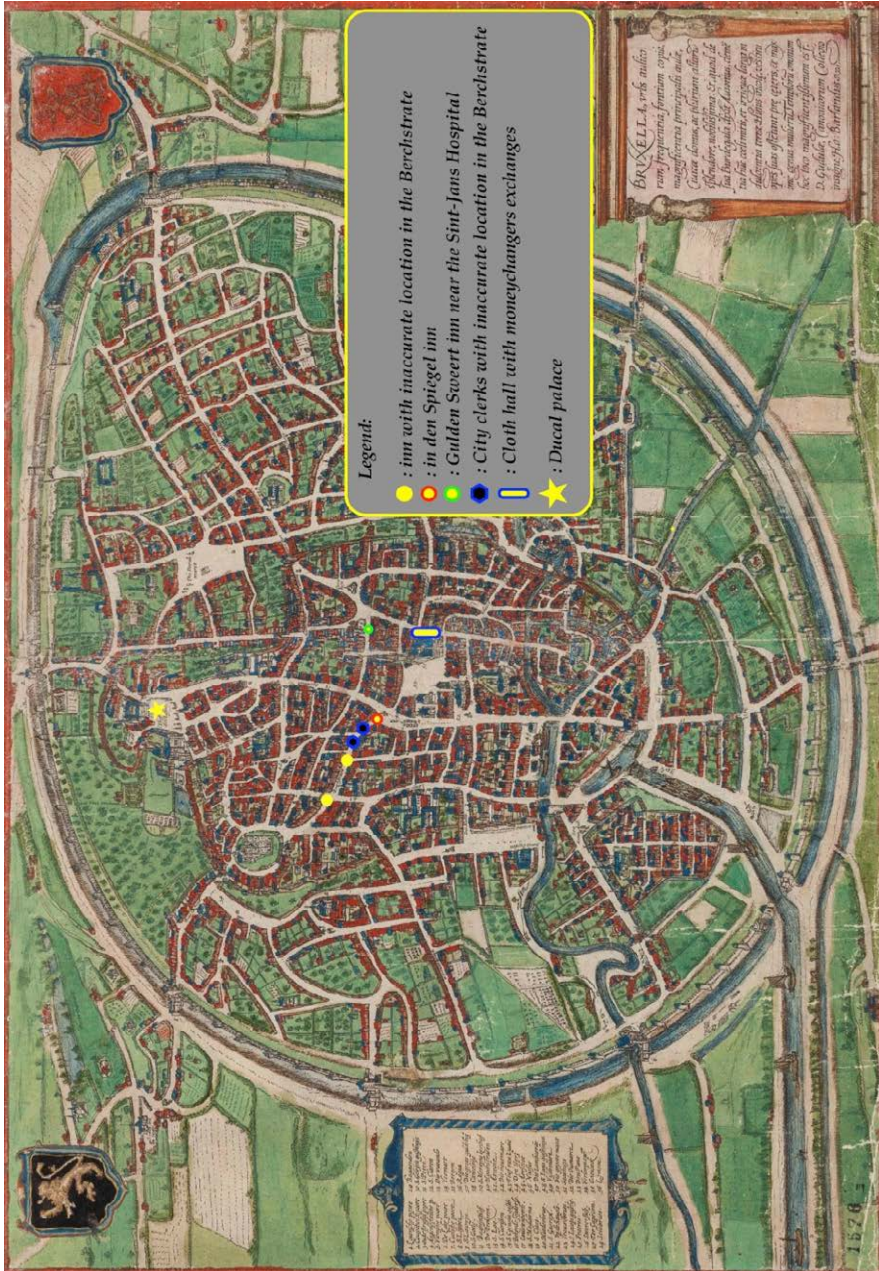
Name of the inn	Mentions	Street	Ratio of houses inhabited by poor estimated per total number of houses in the neighborhood of the inn in 1496	Ratio of inns estimated per total number of houses in street
<i>Den Catte (The cat)</i>	3	<i>Berchstrate</i>	No mention. <sup>35</sup>	3.8%
<i>Gulden Sweert (Golden Sword)</i>	1 (only surety)	Near the Sint-Jans hospital	1.2%	7.6%
<i>In den Valke (The Falcon)</i>	2	<i>Berchstrate</i>	No mention.	3.8%
<i>In den Spiegel (The Mirror)</i>	1	<i>Berchstrate</i>	No mention.	3.8%
<i>Den Helm (The Helmet)</i>	1 (only surety)	<i>Berchstrate</i>	No mention.	3.8%

Alongside fiscal and legal sources, we may also gain insights into the material culture of those inns on the basis of landholding archives<sup>36</sup>: from the beginning of the fourteenth century, an increasingly massive body of documentary evidence – mainly rent registers of parish churches and poor relief institutions as well as an inquiry dating back to 1597-1598 – supports our knowledge of the material disposition of high-end inns servicing the *leisting* custom in the city.

<sup>35</sup> “No mention” should be interpreted as an absence of houses inhabited by fiscal poor, i.e., those who were exempt from taxes because their income was deemed too low to be taxed as pointed out by Lambrecht and Ryckbosch 2020, 210.

<sup>36</sup> Mentioned inns are located mostly with reference to rent registers of the Brussels charitable institutions (tables of hospitals and poor tables) such as the Brussels Saint Gudule Poor Table: ACPASB, Pauvres de Sainte-Gudule (PSG), B 216 (written around 1433), f°15r° and f°18v°. Further references are to be found in Godding 1995-1996, 132-133. Of course, our study could only benefit from results of an archeological survey on the urban environment in Brussels; for example, the ongoing archeological survey of Paulo Charruadas on medieval cellars in Brussels: Blary, Charruadas and Sosnowska 2019.

Fig. 2. Brussels inns participating in the *leisting* custom or offering financial services (1430-1467) (adapted from Braun and Hogenberg map of 1572, Archives Générales du Royaume, Brussels)



The luxury of the hostels chosen for the *leisting* custom is illustrated, for instance, by the inn called *In den Catte* which had several kitchens and dining rooms during the first half of the fifteenth century. It had a massive porch entry, probably bearing a sign, that made the inn a distinctive landmark in the *Berchstrate*.<sup>37</sup> The clientele of its hosteller, Willem van Schadewyck, belonged to the highest strata of the urban elites and courtiers of Brussels (Dickstein-Bernard 1981, 75).

The high number of horses demanded in guarantee by the *In den Catte* hosteller in 1455 (see 3.2.4.) undoubtedly hints at the huge size of the establishment, since at least twelve horses could be lodged in the stable. The size of the stables of some high-end inns finds a distant but vivid echo in the inquiry of the Lord of Chassey, appointed by the King of Spain, Philip II, to locate additional lodgings for the members of his court and his servants in the city in the period 1597-1598.<sup>38</sup> This testifies at the same time to the long-term existence of the *In den Spiegel* and *In den Valke* inns (see Table 1 and Map 2). At that time, *In den Spiegel* had a huge stable that could keep 64 horses while the *In den Valke* inn probably had two kitchens and seven private chambers with a stable that could keep ten horses (Van Belle 2017, 177, nr. 1077 and nr. 1071). The already mentioned *Gulden Sweert* below the Sint-Jans Hospital had at that time four rooms with fireplaces, as well as two separate private rooms (Van Belle 2017, 212, 1601b).<sup>39</sup>

That de *Berchstrate* had gained a high density of inns by the end of the sixteenth century is confirmed by the inquiry of de Chassey: we arrive at a minimal and rough estimate of 15% of inns out of the total number of houses visited by the courtier in charge of finding lodgings (Van Belle 2017, 173-180).<sup>40</sup>

### 3.2.4. *Leisting*-hostels and the use of alternative currencies

The *In den Catte* inn was a high-end establishment as it may be deduced from the following event; in 1455, three members of the Brabantine high-nobility, Aert van Stryen, knight and Lord of Zevenbergen, Jacob Jonggreve (the young count) of Salm, and Henry of Hornes, knight and Lord of Perwez, agreed the following before the Council of Brabant: should they default on their debt of 100 pounds of Flemish groten (groats) to their creditor, Roland Gheryts Coxzoen van Oppynen, to be paid in the town exchange of Antwerp, then they should go as conditional hostages to stay in the *Catte* inn. They should remain there, Aert with six warhorses or “destriers” and five squires, and his two companions each with three warhorses and two squires.

<sup>37</sup> ACPASB, PSG, B 216, f°15r°.

<sup>38</sup> Van Belle 2017: caution, however, should be exercised in the use of this source when identifying owners of the houses: see Charruadas and Vannieuwenhuyze 2019, 577-589.

<sup>39</sup> For the location near the Sint-Jans Hospital from the first half of the fifteenth century: ACPASB, PSG, B 216, f°18v°.

<sup>40</sup> A word of explanation on our method: we know that in well-off neighbourhoods, de Chassey would not have hesitated in also mentioning houses that were not suited for lodgings (Charruadas and Vannieuwenhuyze 2019, 580). This gives us a somewhat reliable estimation, so we considered all houses seen by the official. We selected only establishments that had at least a sign bearing its identity and a stable. Some are described as also having kitchens, private rooms and dining rooms; for others, we have less details, depending on the interest of de Chassey in the establishment.

They should pay the innkeeper every two weeks. If they failed to do so, the innkeeper was entitled to sell the horses, which the three hostages should then replace with new ones. Additionally, a default interest of three golden lions (*gouden leeuwen*) – to be shared equally between the Duke of Burgundy and the creditor – was incurred for every day of delay in the repayment of the main debt.<sup>41</sup> In specifying the possible seizure of warhorses, the hosteller clearly had in mind their market value, since warhorses were more valuable than simple riding horses. Moreover, saddles and harnesses were frequently richly adorned. Suffice to say that from the thirteenth century saddles often bore heraldic decorations and were adorned with costly textiles such as silk and velvet for horse-trappers as well as golden decorations (Vale 2001, 123 and 277). The importance of the horse trade in the city should not be underestimated: in 1321 a horse market is mentioned outside the first city wall, in the vicinity of the wheat market (Dickstein-Bernard 1979, 56). Last but not least, the fame of the city of Brussels for hosting jousts, from the middle of the fourteenth century, undoubtedly played a prominent role in the monetisation of horses. In 1465, a jousting area was set up in the *aula magna* – the great hall of the ducal palace – and drew the attention of the brother-in-law of the King of Bohemia who, visiting the Burgundian court, took part in a joust against a knight in his entourage.<sup>42</sup>

In 1455, the sum loaned by Roland Gheryts Coxzoen van Oppynen had to be paid in two installments, the first one on the upcoming Saint-Martin's feast and the second one on the Pentecost's fair at Antwerp, belonging to the important Brabantine Fairs Cycle (Gelderblom 2013, 26). The lender, Roland Gheryts was clearly a capital-strong businessman: in 1444 he had farmed for three years the toll of Yerseke in Zeeland for the sizeable sum of 1 850 *clinkaerts* a highly-valued Holland golden currency of widespread use in the Low Countries at that time (Spufford 1970, 58-60 and 107-08). The Yerseke toll controlled the trade to and from Antwerp (Thielemans 1966, 249-50). That Aert van Strijen, Lord of Zevenbergen, had to come first at the inn within three days of having been summoned and then his two companions, within fourteen days after this first three days-term suggests that Aert was the main debtor (hence the greater number of costly horses that he had to bring at the inn); Henry and Jacob acted more as pledges of the former. All in all, we have to deal with a wide-reaching credit network, linking a moneylender with business ties in Antwerp to a known Brussels innkeeper. Finally, should the main debtor and his pledges fail to go in the *In den Catte* inn, the creditor or his attorney were entitled to claim before the Chancellor and the Council of Brabant the immediate execution of the debt's payment that was to take place in the inn in presence of witnesses; the debt had to be paid with the movable and immovable properties of the main debtor and his pledges (on this practice see Godding 1999, 268).

Although we cannot state with certainty that the innkeeper actively took part in the drafting of the loan contract, there are enough elements that do provide us with

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<sup>41</sup> AEB, CB, nr. 528, f°21r<sup>o</sup>: the horses are called in medieval Dutch *reijseghe perden* which indeed had this meaning of war horses («cavaleriepaard»). See Verdam 1949, 490. Additionally, the loan contract also required the main debtor and his pledges to provide properties as sureties.

<sup>42</sup> A more traditional jousting area was usually set in the ducal park before the entry porch: Dickstein-Bernard 1977b, 30; Smolar-Meynart 1998, 23; Vale 2001, 197-198; Dickstein-Bernard 2014, 95.

hints on his influence on the terms of the hostages' sojourn at the inn. Both the moneylender and the innkeeper followed their own interest in the *leisting*-business: the creditor aimed at being repaid with interest; as for the innkeeper, he hoped to be reimbursed through the possibility of seizing highly valued horses of the aforementioned knights.

### 3.3. Kampen: the *leisting* custom within a merchant environment

#### 3.3.1. Kampen at the crossroads of regional and international trade

Although not exceptional in the late medieval Northern Low Countries, the use of the *leisting* custom in credit agreements between burghers is particularly well documented in the city of Kampen, a rather small city (5,000 inhabitants around 1400) by population standards in the late-medieval Low Countries.<sup>43</sup> An important seaport in the Zuyderzee region, Kampen was connected to the Ijssel region and to the thriving trading centres of Deventer and Zwolle. Kampen harbour had facilities to ensure the transfer of goods from river barges to sea-going vessels, hence the paramount importance of the shipping sector. In addition, the city of Kampen had won the fishing rights on the Ijssel distributary from its prince, the bishop of Utrecht, already in 1284 (Bosch 2019, 349). Albeit less importantly than Cologne, the trading city acted as a regional gateway to the Ijssel region, just as the city of Deventer did. From the beginning of the fourteenth century, Kampen merchants visited the Cologne fairs and were simultaneously active in commerce with the Baltic towns. The participation of Kampen in Hanseatic trade was a key factor for the prosperity of the city. Between 1286 and 1289, the city of Kampen concluded a commercial treaty with the kingdom of Norway and in 1294, merchants from Kampen won a privilege that allowed them to trade in Bergen, alongside their counterparts from Lübeck. Although not a formal member of the Hanseatic league of towns before the first half of the fifteenth century, the city of Kampen enjoyed similar trade privileges and Kampen ships began to regularly visit Bergen, transporting grain to the city and exporting stockfish to England (Weststrate 2008, 26-27 and 267; Weststrate 2015, 61-80, 63 and Wubs-Mrozewicz 2008, 37-49). The importance of the grain market for the city of Kampen can be deduced from several *leisting* contracts regarding rye bought on credit with three forward contracts in July 1322 and in April 1326 and one credit purchase of rye bought in 1319 (Kossmann-Putto 1955, nr. 71, 121-22, nr. 139 and nr. 142, 132, nr. 258, 162-63).

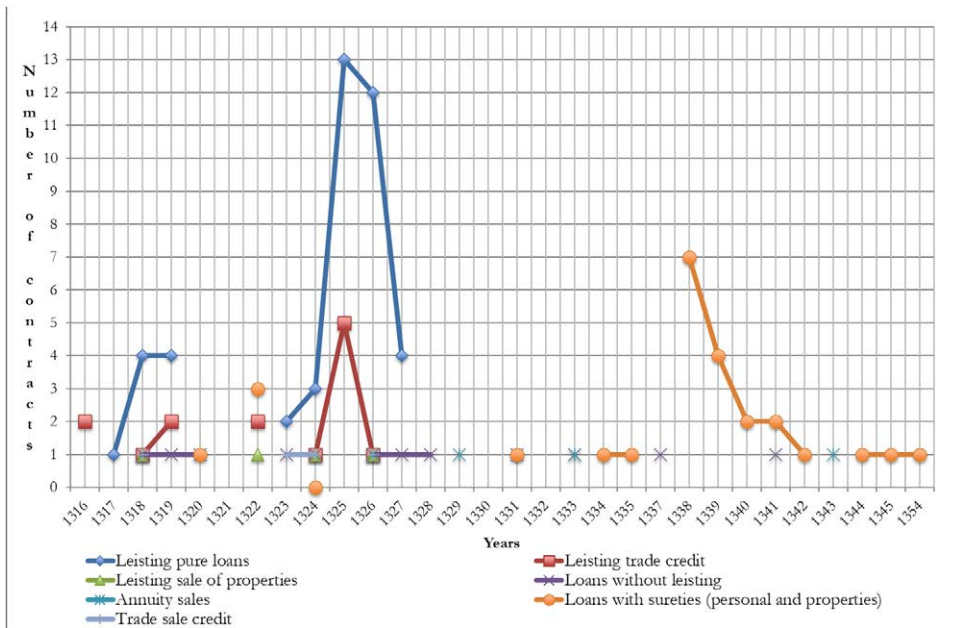
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<sup>43</sup> For Dordrecht, see Zuijderduijn 2019, 16-19 and for Kampen Hermesdorf (1957) 1977, 183-84; Visser 1985, 20: the city population numbered 5,000 inhabitants around 1400. Big cities such as Arras, Brussels or Saint-Omer numbered 30,000 inhabitants, Bruges, Ypres and particularly Ghent in Flanders dwarfed these population estimates with 60,000 inhabitants already in the fourteenth century while an average city would have numbered 15,000 inhabitants: Van Bavel 2010, 280-281.

### 3.3.2. The growth and the decline of the *leisting* in commercial and credit agreements

In Kampen, creditors used the *leisting* custom in their personal consumption loans as well as in their commercial loans between 1316 and 1328 (see Graph. 1). The use of *leisting* peaked between 1325 and 1326. It was, most of the time, a credit contract without any guarantee other than the personal sureties listed in the contract. However, in 1332, the urban authorities decided to forbid any recourse to this custom. In 1338, an urban ordinance stated that someone being found guilty of using the *leisting* custom for a trade agreement was liable to a penalty of 80 little pounds<sup>44</sup> The town authorities must have discovered excesses, so that personal sureties as conditional hostages did indeed give way to other forms of sureties (that is, movable and immovable ones), and in fact from 1339 onwards, we see a sudden increase in credit agreements asking for these sorts of sureties.<sup>45</sup>

Graph 1. Number of *leisting* credit contracts versus other credit contracts between 1316 and 1354



<sup>44</sup> See Kossmann-Putto 1955, 39. The custom survived in private credit contracts; see for instance a *leisting* credit contract asked for by a Kampen burgher in 1466 for his noble debtor mentioned in Van Schevichaven 1910, 132.

<sup>45</sup> Already between 1328 and 1335, six mortgage credit contracts were drawn up on the surety of immovable property, usually a share in a house, as shown in Kossmann-Putto 1955, 48.

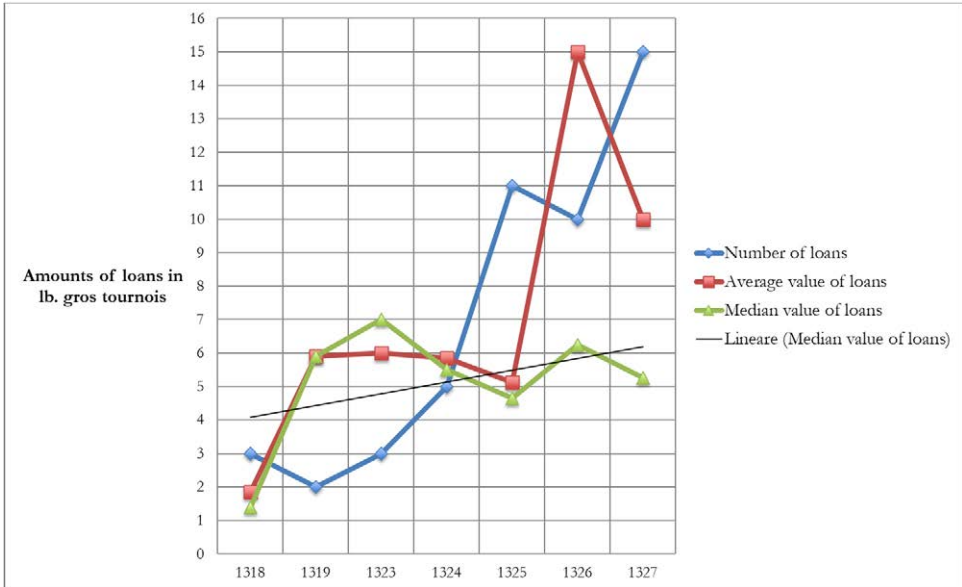
The peak in the use of the *leisting* custom in the years 1325-1326 coincides with increasing activity in the building sector. Indeed, during the years 1325 to 1330, the town authorities carried out important urban public infrastructure works: dikes were erected all around the city. The aim was to improve the accessibility and the safety of the sea harbour (Fasel, 1963, 282 and 286 and Kossmann-Putto 1955, nr.10, 109). In addition, in 1335, the second city wall was completed.

### 3.3.3. Leisting as a regulatory tool for the local real estate market

Such substantial urban public infrastructure expenditure could possibly have involved speculative purchases of land and properties at the expense of the city finances. One gets the impression that town magistrates may have wanted to avoid any loan using landed properties as sureties. This might explain the drastic surge in the use of credit contracts with personal sureties and a *leisting* clause. Indeed, the Kampen aldermen recorded a significantly higher number of credit agreements with a *leisting* clause between 1324 and 1326 than in any other period, with 15 non-specified *leisting* loans, presumably consumption loans. Even commercial credit was affected, with 5 trade credit agreements with a *leisting* clause. The average amount of the loaned sum with a *leisting* contract was above the 10 pounds gros tournois between 1325 and 1327, significantly higher than for loan contracts without a *leisting* clause (see Graph 2 and Kossmann-Putto 1955, 38). This amount represented a sizeable sum: three times that of a partnership in a merchant *cogge* (trading ship) for example (Kossmann-Putto 1955, 138, nr.178 (25 March 1324)).

By contrast, the more classical debt-recognizances without a conditional hostage clause indicated that the main debtor was fully responsible for the debt. If he defaulted on the set date of repayment, he could still have fourteen days' respite to try to find the money owed. If he proved unable to do so, his creditor could seize his goods, provided their value was higher than the monetary value of the debt. If after a month the debtor still failed to pay the debt, the creditor was entitled to sell the goods to compensate for the outstanding debt. Any additional profit from the sale exceeding the value of the debt was to be given back to the debtor. Immovable properties were only seized if movable pawned goods – as alternative currencies – did not properly cover the debt. Immovable properties did not go directly into the creditor's hands, but were mortgaged to match the value of the debt at a yearly interest rate of 20%. If, after one year, the debtor was still in default, the creditor could sell the property (Kossmann-Putto 1955, 40-41 and 50). This shows how far the town authorities wanted to control the seizure of properties in debt litigation.

Graph 2. The size of *leisting* loans in Kampen between 1318 and 1327 (only loans in ponds gros tournois taken into account)<sup>46</sup>



A further feature that suggests that the private credit sector was kept under close scrutiny by the town elites at that time is the modest place of perpetual annuities in the credit contracts: this traditional way of finding fresh capital for owners of a property in exchange for the perpetual payment of a rent is illustrated by only three sales of perpetual annuities occurring between 1328 and 1330, while the bulk of annuity sales is recorded between 1333 and 1351.<sup>47</sup> In Kampen, as in most cities of the Southern Low Countries, perpetual annuities were sold on the surety of immovable property. As such, perpetual annuities were also deemed to be immovable. That meant practically that if a burgher sold annuities on his house and fled afterwards (provided he had paid all rent arrears), the rents remained attached to the house or the landed estate: it was a non-personal financial obligation. This led to an endless body of debt litigation for town authorities, related to houses or landed estates falling into decay because no one would be willing to purchase real estate encumbered with perpetual rents (Godding 1981 91-95; Howell 2010, 78).

One is tempted to think that in those years the town authorities may have wanted to control sales of perpetual annuities secured on immovable real estate as a tool to finance urban public infrastructure works. This technique was used by several cities

<sup>46</sup> The number of loans with local currencies that were excluded from our dataset is too low to have an influence on our conclusion.

<sup>47</sup> Kossmann-Putto 1955, 57, nr. 303, 350-351 and 355 for the subject index with seventeen mentions from 1333 onwards.



in the late medieval Low Countries.<sup>48</sup> There are indeed allusions to the fact that the city of Kampen also financed its dike extensions by using perpetual annuities secured on unmovable city properties.<sup>49</sup> This policy of Kampen's urban elites is an additional example of the strength of socio-institutional agreements within sea-bordering communities shown by Van Bavel (2010, 388).

### 3.3.4. The specific use of *leisting* in a mercantile environment as opposed to the aristocratic milieu

The aforementioned practices of Kampen's élites illustrate how the influence of the highly commercialised profile of the city is translated in specific ways that we do not find in the more aristocratic setting that set the tone of most of the *leisting* contracts in the Southern Low Countries. But there are other specific features. In Kampen, in contrast to the common practice among aristocratic circles, the main debtor had to go alongside his pledges into an inn. In a minor number of cases (only 3%), pledges would only be liable for a part of the total debt, for instance for three parts of the debt, implying that the risk could be spread between several pledges.<sup>50</sup> This clause likely hints at a pre-extant partnership structure between those pledges. It was expected that merchants in a partnership could be entitled to personal surety according to the size of their respective shares. Also, pledges were only personal sureties, and their goods were not liable to seizure.

Other clauses were written more in the spirit of the traditional *leisting*-custom. It was stipulated that should a pledge prove unable to come at the inn, he had to be replaced by someone else of equal social standing and respectability. Further, if the pledges did not display a conspicuous consumption pattern, they had to invite a servant to lodge with them. The honourable and high-end character of the inn – usually chosen by the creditor – was also an essential component of these contracts. Two different inns are explicitly mentioned: the inn of Ludekinus Parvus (once) and more frequently, Boldewinus Scelewerd's inn (7 times), the latter representing more than 10% of cases (Kossmann-Putto 1955, 37).

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<sup>48</sup> For example, the city of Brussels sold perpetual annuities in 1360 to finance the building of its second city wall and again in 1444 to extend a wing of its town hall. In 1360, perpetual annuities were given to owners of properties in exchange for their expropriation: Dickstein-Bernard 1977b, 201-216. The scheme was used to fund public infrastructure works in Guelders, in Zutphen, where, on the occasion of the building of a new extension of the town hall, between 1450 and 1453, perpetual rents and life-annuities were sold. Previously, between 1444 and 1445, new parts of the city wall were financed with a similar sale of rents (Bosch 2019, 501)

<sup>49</sup> Kossmann-Putto 1955, 109, nr.10 (around 1326): «De stat sal graven an den dike, de van der Ijsle up eweliker side van den vote van den dike te metene ses roden ende een ewelike rode van seesteën vote. Ende dit erve dat se dit graven moghen, dat hebben se bitalet mid anderen erve, dat der stat tohorde, denghenen de it tohorde ende mid ghelde(...)». This hints at an expropriation procedure by which city properties were used to secure perpetual rents for landlords whose property was expropriated. This technique was used in three different locations of the city where the digging of dikes were to take place.

<sup>50</sup> Kossmann-Putto 1955, nr. 282 (5 February 1327), 168 and nr. 288 (6 March 1327), 169: loans with two of five pledges agreeing to be sureties for three of five pounds (first case) or every pledge for his respective part (second case).

### 3.3.5. Boldewinus Scelewerd, a key multi-faceted figure of the *leisting* business

The figure of the innkeeper Boldewinus Scelewerd (see Tables 2 and 3) stands out as an impressive middleman whose high-end hostel – on the fish market and very close to the interior harbour – welcomed a high number of conditional hostages.<sup>51</sup> Scelewerd was appointed a local bailiff in 1331 and farmed the *gruit* tax (a bittering constituent in beer brewing) for the city in 1317, between 1321 and 1324. This additional income could complement his innkeeping business. We also see that Scelewerd appears as co-surety in an unusually high number (10) of credit agreements, undoubtedly because of his business connections: he must have been an influential deal-broker (Kossmann and Kossmann-Putto 2000). Finally, Scelewerd's interest in international maritime trade is evidenced by his appointment as an alderman for the Kampen merchants on the Swedish Island of Skänor (south of Malmö) around 1326 where he participated in important meetings with Hanseatic merchants (Kossmann and Kossmann 2000, 95).

Tab. 2. Boldewinus Scelewerd's mentions in *leisting* contracts between 1317 and 1328

Date	Scelewerd's inn as place of hostageship	As pledge	As sole creditor	As co-creditor	As co-debtor and conditional hostage	Total mentions for the year
1319		1				1
1323	1	2				3
1324	1		1			2
1325		1	1	2	6	10
1326		1	2		3	6
1327					1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>TOTAL mentions for the period: 23</b>

Tab. 3. Boldewinus Scelewerd's economic and financial activities (by number of mentions) between 1315 and 1328 without the use of *leisting*

Type of activity	Farmer of the gruit excises	Farmer of the dike works (with others)	Personal surety for a loan	Surety of a loan: immovable goods as sureties	Loan to the city among wealthiest citizens	Borrows money	Annuity holder of the city	Fiscal exemption from the bishop of Utrecht	Will executor
<b>N. of mentions</b>	5	1	1	1	1	4	1	1	1

<sup>51</sup> Kreek, 2020: recent archeological findings in Kampen show the importance of the interior harbour and point to the strategic position of Scelewerd's inn near the harbour infrastructure.

#### 4. Concluding remarks: the *leisting* custom: a stimulus to the use of alternative currencies?

In this contribution, we have observed how a custom originally rooted in feudal relations evolved into a technique used for financial agreements. First and foremost, the *leisting* allowed territorial princes to access capital markets, by mobilising their network of kins, allies and vassals as personal sureties. This practice originated probably in Rhineland and was already strongly codified in the first quarter of the thirteenth century with mentions in von Reggow's *Sachsenspiegel*. The custom was rapidly taken over by Cistercian abbeys as creditors towards aristocratic milieus. It was indeed well adapted to aristocratic ethos. The reimbursement of a debt, for a knight, as shown by Malcolm Vale «was part and parcel of knightly assumptions and style of life»; even in this financial matter, honour and loyalty were at stake (see Vale 2001, 187-88 and North 1990 (2003), 55 on the importance of loyalty and kinship ties providing incentives for parties to live up to agreements during the preindustrial era).

It is within this feudal framework grounded on loyalty and knightly virtues that alternative currencies come to the fore: given their privileges, our high-ranking hostellers could seize whatever valuable goods of their hosts they judged marketable to ensure the repayment of their advances. We have already pointed out the strong links of innkeepers with the wine and cloth trades. Payments in cloth must also have been common practice; again, we rely on scarce sources on the financial portfolios of hostellers in Brussels, but we know that the Brussels hosteller Jan Vinke, who had hosted noble pledges of the Count of Guelders in his inn around 1298, did not shy away from having his credits paid in cloths. In 1306, Vinke, undoubtedly in his role of surety for credits, reimbursed a princely debt to a German creditor of the Duke of Brabant with six cloths (probably from Brussels). Vinke likely combined the activity of pawnbroker with hosteller from the end of the thirteenth century.<sup>52</sup> In the first half of the fifteenth century, Willem Everaerts, innkeeper of the *Gulden Sweert*, was at the same time a sword maker, and his establishment was probably named after his craftsmanship. In this capacity, he could, if needed, estimate the value of weapons such as swords that could be pledged by his indebted noble guests.<sup>53</sup>

Between the high nobility and the class of town landlords of the big cloth-thriving cities of Brabant, social rank distinctions were not clear-cut. In the context of the Hundred Years War, in the period 1338-1340, Brussels' patrician innkeepers probably put to good use their hosting of powerful pledges, such as the Earl of Derby, to foster their interests in the cloth trade, while Flanders suffered from an initial wool embargo. They had enough social capital and capital *tout court* to connect

<sup>52</sup> Archives Générales du Royaume (AGR), Chambre des Comptes (CC), registre nr. 1, f°77r°: the cloths were worth 182 pounds of money *Payment Brabant*, and Kusman, 2006, 98. We already alluded to a payment in wool for advances made to the King of England, Edward III, by Philippe van den Spiegel, see above, our page 266. For the importance of cloths as alternative currencies during the late Middle Ages, see the papers of Francesco Guidi-Bruscoli, Julie Mayade-Claustre and Mathieu Scherman in this volume.

<sup>53</sup> ACPASB, B 216, f°18v° and ACPASB, Fonds d'Archives Claire Dickstein and AEB, CB, 525, f°122 v° (24 October 1446).

English aristocrats with cloth merchants keen to sell their high-quality scarlet cloths. According to Ziegler, a sizeable proportion of loans to Edward III were paid or reimbursed in English wool.<sup>54</sup> The financial assets of hosteller-brokers allowed them to grant long-term credits to their hosts before being reimbursed for their lodging costs.

The sojourn at the inn of the pledges, as shown above, implied conspicuous consumption. The practice of dining and drinking together was always of paramount importance to advance the affairs of town elites at the princely court, through their good relations with princely courtiers (Wubs-Mrozewicz 2008, 139-43; Scholliers, 2001, 8-12; Paquay 2008, 222-23 and 259). Through the *leisting* custom, social capital was thus also mobilised for the interest of town elites as demonstrated by the case study of Brussels. We should not forget that innkeepers entertained also strong ties with moneychangers. Thanks to these ties, they were also experts in exchange rates, which gave them favourable asymmetric information vis-à-vis their noble pledges.

The late medieval Low Countries were of course fragmented territories with diverse currencies used in the cities and boroughs of Brabant, Flanders and Guelders, for instance.<sup>55</sup> For example, Renaud of Valkenburg had asked the receiver of the Count of Guelders to reimburse his accommodation expenses registered in 1314 probably in Brabantine marks at an exchange rate of three Heller pennies for one Brabantine penny.<sup>56</sup> One may assume that Heller coins (from the Schwäbisch-Hall imperial mint) were dominant in the Valkenburg estates, whereas the Brabantine marks were more often used in Wessem, in the inn where Renaud of Valkenburg stood hostage for this debt. This inconvenient situation, at least for some aristocratic pledges, could have favoured the use of alternative currencies such as silver plates or horses whose value was in their eyes more obvious. Here again we find an example of what Bellehumeur (1973, 3) stresses when he wrote that quasi-currency could, in certain circumstances, advantageously replace part of the money in the portfolio of economic agents («la quasi-monnaie peut dans certaines circonstances remplacer avantageusement une partie de la monnaie dans le portefeuille des agents économiques»). The late medieval urban society was a society where the circulation of commodities (including silver money) and their value was split into micro-economic regions with their own set of rules, exchange rates and taxes wherein local moneychangers, brokers and innkeepers played an instrumental role. Within these micro-regions, local financiers could use different currencies at the same time to their advantage. Moreover, the use of an inn to host *leisting* credit arrangements was

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<sup>54</sup> Ziegler 1983, 813 and Lyon 1996, 704-705. Ziegler's figures of more than 50% of Edward's total loans of 90,000 sterling pounds paid or reimbursed wholly or partially by or to his creditors in wool have not been challenged, but we have not been able to check these figures.

<sup>55</sup> Orléan 2011, 176-177: Orléan writes of a fragmented market structure where no common currency exists: "Ainsi, notre situation sans monnaie légitime certifiée n'est-elle aucunement une situation de troc mais une configuration où coexistent des représentations concurrentes de la liquidité qui fractionnent l'espace de circulation des marchandises. Dire qu'il y a fractionnement, c'est dire qu'il existe une pluralité d'unités de compte, sans liens stables entre elles, le taux de conversion entre ces unités étant absolument flexible, laissé au libre jeu des rapports de force entre sous-groupes marchands, chaque agent pouvant à tout moment modifier sa conception de la liquidité."

<sup>56</sup> See above p. 265.

certainly a capital-intensive business practice. Therefore, its use seems to have remained in the hands of the well-off merchant and town elites, as evidenced by the examples mentioned in our case studies in Brussels and in Kampen.

In Kampen, our third case study, we have observed how the town authorities tried to regulate the real estate market in a period of dynamic urban development (public works linked to the city walls and the sea port infrastructures) by favouring the use of *leisting* credit contracts involving only personal sureties instead of immovable ones.

In doing so, they tried to avoid at all cost the speculative use of immovable properties that could endanger public infrastructure works – the building of dikes and the extension of the interior harbour. This could have had negative effects on the prices of the plots that were to be used for these extensive public works.

All in all we have to deal with a differentiated use of the *leisting* custom depending on the socio-economic environment under scrutiny.

Whereas on a macro-level, in a domanial state, the custom allowed for an easier access to advanced capital markets, in a highly commercialised city such as Kampen, the custom was deemed to have a regulatory effect on the property market.

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*Les Salviati et le troc monétarisé: des pratiques courantes au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle entre la Méditerranée et le Nord-Ouest de l'Europe*

Dans une lettre de mai 1462, Jacopo Pandolfini écrit de Barcelone à Florence à Pierfilippo Pandolfini et frères pour les prévenir de ne pas faire de troc, *baratto*, de draps car la ville est en proie à l'agitation.<sup>1</sup> L'information est envoyée peu de temps avant l'entrée officielle de la Catalogne en guerre civile et démontre la pratique courante du troc entre les places sur lesquelles les grandes familles marchandes de la péninsule détenaient des positions privilégiées. Quelques décennies auparavant, en 1396 c'était la situation en Toscane qui posait problème à l'envoi de draps depuis Barcelone: le Lucquois Accetanti informait la filiale barcelonaise de Datini qu'il n'était pas possible d'y envoyer des draps d'or et de soie en raison de la présence de soldats: *E d'ancho qui siamo in tribulazione per giente d'arme* (Soldani 2007, 103). Ce sont des modes d'échange courants que rendent compte avec fréquence les manuels de marchands des XV<sup>e</sup> et XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles. Dans son œuvre Luca Pacioli présente neufs façons de commercer et le troc en fait évidemment partie (Pacioli 1994). Reinhold Mueller a d'ailleurs analysé la partie sur le troc du manuel (Mueller 2021, 533-534). Un autre manuel de comptabilité, du début du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, probablement œuvre d'un petit marchand vénitien, n'en énonce que cinq et il laisse aussi une place au troc pour lequel il distingue deux façons de l'inscrire dans les comptabilités. Il prend l'exemple du troc de vin contre une autre marchandise, des draps, et l'autre exemple concerne la réception de marchandises (toujours des draps) d'un troc de vin. Bien que l'opération soit la même, celle-ci est inscrite de deux différentes façons dans son grand livre fictif (Scherman 2015): *Quando tu baratasi vini a qualche altra roba k 10 n° 22* et voilà comment il inscrit d'une façon différente le même type d'échange *Quando tu rezevessi robe de qualche barato k 11 n° 23*. Ces pratiques, comme le relève le manuel de Pacioli qui prend des exemples d'opérateurs importants de la Giudecca, se rencontrent avec fréquence dans les comptabilités de grands marchands, notamment toscans. La place prise par le troc dans leurs affaires démontre que son utilisation n'est pas un signe de « primitivisme ». Dans un autre contexte et à une échelle différente, Catherine Verna fait le bilan des manuels qui mentionnent une telle pratique au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle dans les environs du Vallespir et note que le troc « s'inscrit dans le cadre d'un marché fortement monétarisé » (Verna 2017, 259-60), c'est évidemment le cas aussi pour les opérateurs internationaux que sont les grands marchands de la péninsule italienne. Il

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<sup>1</sup> British Library, Add MS 28272, *la città sta chon assai tribulazione*.

s'agira de se poser la question de l'utilisation du troc monétarisé dans leurs opérations commerciales.

Les grands marchands-banquiers de la péninsule italienne, notamment les Florentins, sont réputés pour leur savoir-faire comptable et technique. La partie-double qu'ils utilisent afin de tenir leurs comptabilités est une preuve de leur 'modernité'. Il est donc intéressant de s'interroger sur la pratique qui consiste à faire des affaires en échangeant des marchandises et non en réglant en numéraire ou en utilisant des écritures comptables comme moyen d'équilibrer les comptes, une pratique d'ailleurs de très longue durée dans tous les espaces du commerce et du négoce (Demont et Wegener Sleswijk 2018, 187). Pour analyser les échanges marchands, la famille Salviati de Florence constitue un observatoire privilégié grâce à la conservation d'une importante comptabilité, notamment pour leur agence ouverte à Londres en 1445 et, dans une moindre mesure, pour celle de Bruges ouverte à peu près au même moment. Les techniques mettent en lumière l'organisation commerciale instaurée par les grands marchands et la façon dont ils utilisaient leur position géographique afin de négocier au meilleur prix les différents produits. Le troc monétarisé fait partie des possibilités de négociation des grands marchands et il s'agira de percevoir quelle est la logique de son utilisation et quelles sont les réflexions économiques qui conduisent à y avoir recours entre grands marchands. L'observatoire du Nord-Ouest européen offre une vision de la pratique du troc des «Italiens» dans ces régions et rend compte du caractère structurel de celui-ci, tandis que la documentation, notamment les *ricordanze*, permet d'obtenir des informations précises sur les modalités des différents trocs et des réflexions autour de ladite pratique.

## 1. Les mots du troc

Avant de rentrer dans le détail des opérations, il convient de s'arrêter rapidement sur les mots et les expressions employés par les marchands lorsque sont mentionnées les opérations de troc. Dans la documentation Salviati, les mots utilisés sont les mêmes que ceux qui apparaissent dans les manuels, le troc monétarisé est référencé comme étant un *baratto*. À l'image des manuels de marchands cités plus haut, une distinction est faite entre le troc monétarisé proprement dit, c'est-à-dire une opération commerciale consistant à échanger une marchandise contre une autre mais selon un accord précis fixant en amont les modalités, notamment les prix et les équivalences monétaires entre l'une et l'autre marchandise, et le paiement en marchandises. Pour les acteurs économiques, le *baratto* n'est pas le paiement en nature qui peut advenir après la conclusion de l'affaire, le paiement étant exprimé en numéraire et non en marchandises. Ainsi, dans un compte de laines anglaises envoyées pour l'agence de Bruges en 1457 il est précisé que le paiement de certaines laines a été reçu en marchandises. Il est ainsi noté dans le compte reçu de Bruges qu'ils ont été payés en draps d'Hollande par des Hollandais qui fréquentaient les foires d'Anvers et de Bergop-Zoom. Bernardo dei Bardi, un de leurs correspondants sur place, a reçu ces draps

comme paiement des laines et ils évaluent cela à £. 35 s. 18.<sup>2</sup> Lors de la conclusion de l'opération en 1459, la perte se monte à s. 8 d. 2.<sup>3</sup> Il n'est donc pas question de troc mais de paiement en marchandises. La différence de perception tient dans l'intention et le moment de la conclusion du contrat ou de l'affaire. C'est pourquoi il est possible de compléter la définition de Florence Edler rappelée dans l'article de Francesco Guidi Bruscoli dans ce volume, en y ajoutant la notion d'accord préalable conduisant au *baratto*, ce dernier correspondant à une négociation complexe et ardue entre deux acteurs. Concernant le vocabulaire, on peut ajouter une petite note culturelle: la documentation anglaise permet de rendre compte de la lente intégration de ces marchands à l'étranger. La progressive accoutumance des marchands florentins sur place et le bilinguisme se perçoivent, ou en tout cas une connaissance de la langue anglaise. En effet, des marchands installés pour un temps à l'étranger finissent par italianiser le mot anglais en mentionnant souvent le *bargaïno* plutôt que le *baratto*.

## 2. La pratique «italienne» du troc entre les différentes places européennes

La pratique «italienne» du troc s'insère dans un système construit par les marchands de la péninsule depuis plusieurs siècles. La présence italienne est pluriséculaire et ce sont quasiment toujours les mêmes familles qui prennent position dans les espaces en question. La pérennité de leur présence permet de les définir à la fois comme des institutions de fait incluant d'autres institutions établies, comme les nations avec leurs règles, leurs modes d'organisation et leurs consuls élus à leur tête, mais aussi comme un ensemble complexe, traversé de facteurs d'hétérogénéité (concurrence, oppositions et conflits divers). Ce qui l'unifie représente au contraire un socle formel très solide (les pratiques commerciales) reconnues par tous, au-delà des Italiens, et qui s'impose comme norme. Cette «quasi-institution» est composée de toutes les compagnies ancrées dans les différentes places européennes et méditerranéennes; le tout forme la «quasi-institution» de la présence italienne. Les Italiens sont capables de se fédérer pour avancer des revendications communes, comme lors de la présentation de leurs doléances au monarque anglais en 1457 en raison de la multiplication des actes hostiles à leur égard par une partie du peuple londonien. À cette occasion, les Vénitiens, les Florentins, les Génois et les Lucquois s'unissent pour menacer le roi de quitter sa capitale et d'installer leurs agences à Winchester, à quelques kilomètres du port de Southampton; n'est-ce pas là un trait propre à une institution que de se présenter comme un ensemble cohérent face à l'extérieur?<sup>4</sup> Cette revendication formulée auprès du roi prouve leur importance économique et politique sur le sol anglais; elle démontre aussi les capacités de ces grandes familles à faire entendre leur

<sup>2</sup> Archivio Salviati (AS), registro 342, c. 225v-226v. *E abbiamo per debitori pezze XI di panni d'Olanda ebbe Bernardo de' Bardi in Anversa e a Berga in pagamento di dette lane vendute agli Olandesi*, £. 35.18.

<sup>3</sup> AS, registro 344, compte des laines, c. 275.

<sup>4</sup> Voir le regeste d'un décret du Sénat vénitien, ASV, *Senato Mar.* <<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/venice/vol1/pp74-92>>, numéro 339 du 23 août.

voix lors des moments de tensions intenses, exposant de la sorte la puissance qu'elles ont réussi à construire au fil des siècles.

L'historiographie italienne a utilisé avec efficacité le concept de *quasi città* établi par Giorgio Chittolini au début des années 1990. Cela a permis de caractériser des territoires à la démographie et l'économie solides mais qui n'avaient pas le nom de *città* car ils étaient dépourvus d'un siège épiscopal et d'une prédominance politique (Chittolini 1990). Néologisme qui me semble intéressant et opérant d'un point de vue heuristique. La prégnance des réseaux génère cette «quasi institution» que forme la présence italienne à l'étranger et qui les positionne comme des acteurs dotés de pouvoirs particuliers. Pour examiner cette «quasi institution», le Nord-Ouest de l'Europe est un terrain révélateur de l'intégration, de l'insertion et du maintien dans une terre étrangère d'éléments de l'élite économique et financière des principales cités-États italiennes. Je propose de parler de «quasi institution» car la présence de marchands à l'étranger s'appuie sur des éléments formels, mais surtout non institutionnalisés qui, en quelque sorte, structurent la société et participent à son organisation, aussi bien sur place qu'à l'extérieur sans avoir une consistance juridique. A la suite de Jacques Revel, on peut définir une institution comme «toute organisation fonctionnant de façon régulière dans la société, selon des règles explicites et implicites, et dont on présume qu'elle répond à une demande collective particulière» (Revel 2006, 85). Je me distingue en ce sens des historiens et des économistes de la «New Institutional History» qui, à la suite de Douglas North ou Avner Greiff, voient dans l'institution un moyen de diminuer les coûts du commerce et de favoriser le développement économique. De la sorte, le troc monétarisé semble une bonne entrée en matière pour percevoir le fonctionnement et les permanences du «système italien» à la fin du Moyen Âge.

Les archives conservées pour la branche londonienne des Salviati (1445-1465 environ) rendent compte d'une grande partie de leur activité. Sont ainsi conservés quatre grands livres, trois livres de caisse et d'entrée et sortie du numéraire, trois journaux, un livre de *ricordanze* et un livre d'une cargaison de laine en anglais de 1451 (Holmes 1993; Tiddeman 2022; Scherman 2020). La place de Londres bénéficie aussi des archives de la firme Borromei arrivée à Londres avant les Salviati. Les documents permettent de considérer le troc de marchandises comme un élément structurel du système économique, avec des marchands italiens à la manœuvre qui rendent possible, pour leur plus grand profit, la circulation des marchandises méditerranéennes et européennes.

La succession des registres permet de voir quand le troc monétarisé est mis à profit par les Salviati. Pour la première raison sociale, la A entre 1445 et 1448, les comptes de marchandises sont peu nombreux, moins de vingt en tout. Le troc n'est pas utilisé pour payer ou échanger les marchandises de ces premières années d'activité à Londres. Lors de la raison sociale suivante, 1448-1451, les comptes de marchandises s'étoffent. Ils sont plus d'une trentaine, les quantités échangées augmentent et les Salviati échangent une plus grande diversité de produits, signes d'une implantation réussie. Un premier troc est enregistré en juin 1450 entre un drap écru contre un drap

de soie.<sup>5</sup> L'affaire est conclue avec « un ami » de Tomaso Alberti, ce dernier étant positionné comme facteur dans le port de Southampton. Cet Alberti est un correspondant régulier de l'agence londonienne des Salviati depuis l'ouverture.

Les textiles font partie des objets les plus échangés les uns contre les autres, notamment la matière première. Les acteurs du marché des laines sont nombreux et concentrés, on peut alors s'interroger sur la possibilité de s'y introduire. Ce sont toujours les mêmes compagnies italiennes qui sont sur les marchés londoniens et anglais. De fait, Girolamo Biscaro a analysé le système en place entre les Borromei de Londres et d'autres familles de Milan, notamment les Ruffini dans les années 1430 qui échangent des marchandises des Flandres, en particulier des toiles, contre de la laine d'Angleterre (Biscaro 1913). Les documents de la firme Borromei ont fait l'objet d'un important travail par la suite (Guidi Bruscoli et Bolton, 2007). Les comptabilités Salviati enregistrent un système en tout point similaire et impliquant les mêmes acteurs du côté de Bruges. Deux ans et demi après l'ouverture officielle de l'agence Salviati à Londres, ils commencent à faire des affaires avec les Ruffini de Bruges, *Ambrugio e fratelli di Brugia*; les premières opérations remontent au mois de juillet 1448 et concernent l'achat de laines pour les Ruffini, qui sont envoyées à Milan. La collaboration commerciale ne cessera plus par la suite et les Ruffini sont en affaires avec les Salviati de Londres jusqu'à la fin de leur présence. Les Ruffini disposent de plusieurs comptes ouverts dans tous les grands livres suivants de l'agence londonienne. Ils deviennent aussi des partenaires réguliers de toutes les agences Salviati: celle de Pise (Carlomagno 2009, 156), celle de Florence (un compte est par exemple ouvert dans le registre 322) et bien évidemment celle de Bruges, dans laquelle des comptes sont ouverts pour les Ruffini de Bruges et ceux de Milan (registre 24).

Les laines sont dans un premier temps payées par lettres de change et par d'autres pratiques comptables comme l'assignation.<sup>6</sup> Ce n'est que quelques années après leurs premiers échanges commerciaux que les partenaires italiens installés dans le Nord-Ouest décident de pratiquer le troc monétarisé en exploitant les productions des deux régions. Au départ, probablement pour jauger la qualité des partenaires, les Ruffini commencent à confier en commission des marchandises des Flandres, bien évidemment les toiles mais aussi des *armadure bianche*. Dans le même temps, les Ruffini leur demandent d'être fournis en une diversité plus ample de produits. De la sorte, des draps anglais sont achetés par les Salviati pour le compte des Ruffini. Tout cela s'effectue entre les années 1451 et 1453. Lors de la dernière raison sociale conservée, la D, qui couvre les années 1453-1458, les Salviati et les Ruffini commencent à pratiquer le troc monétarisé en échangeant des laines d'Angleterre contre des toiles de Flandres, à l'image de ce que les Ruffini effectuaient avec les Borromei durant les années 1430. Cela démontre que le troc est une affaire où la confiance entre les deux partenaires doit être importante et consolidée: les deux compagnies décident de le faire lorsqu'elles ont acquis la conviction que leur partenariat est fiable et que cela permet

<sup>5</sup> AS, registre 336, c. 174 *Uno panno bianco grosso avuto in baratto di domascho buogio de' dare a di xxviii<sup>o</sup> di giugno 1450 £. due s. vi d. viii di sterline, che tanto ce lo chontamo in detto baratto chom'appare de chontro de sopra da uno amico di Tomaso Alberti posto drappi di seta e altre robe di uno chonto a pparte segnato B, gli debbino avere in questo a c. 174.*

<sup>6</sup> AS, registre, 333, c. 122.



d'obtenir de meilleurs prix dans leur espace respectif. L'intérêt réside dans les modalités des pratiques: les deux entreprises installées à Londres, les Salviati et les Borromei, disposent d'agences aussi bien à Bruges qu'à Londres. Or, ils profitent de ces échanges pour se fournir en toiles auprès d'une autre famille présente à Bruges. Il est vrai cependant que la compagnie Rabatta/Salviati de Bruges est partie prenante dans les opérations. Toutefois, les Ruffini ont dû au fil du temps obtenir une expertise fine du secteur des toiles en obtenant des rapports de confiance avec les opérateurs régionaux; les Salviati profitent en quelque sorte de cette expertise.

### 3. Une diversité de produits échangés

Il n'y a pas que les laines qui sont échangées contre d'autres produits. Des draps produits en Angleterre font aussi partie des marchandises objets des trocs. Ce sont d'ailleurs toutes les marchandises et toutes les matières premières qui peuvent faire l'objet du troc. De la sorte se perçoit la diversité des économies qui ne sont pas uniquement des économies spécialisées: ainsi des draps sont échangés contre d'autres draps. Tous les espaces participent à ce type d'échange. Par exemple, dans le Bordelais, les draps apparaissent à plusieurs reprises en paiement de livraisons de vin ou de pastel dans des opérations de troc (Bochaca 1998, 51-53). De la même façon entre la péninsule italienne et l'Angleterre, les draps d'Essex peuvent aussi faire l'objet d'un troc contre des draps toscans, notamment de soie. Il est ainsi question de quinze draps de plusieurs couleurs envoyés par l'agence de Florence par l'intermédiaire de l'agence de Pise contre des draps étroits d'Essex.<sup>7</sup> L'affaire est conclue avec un partenaire commercial récurrent de l'agence de Londres: William Cantelowe, mercier et *alderman* de Londres. Or ce dernier finit par changer d'avis et refuse les draps de soie en guise de paiement des draps d'Essex. Pour payer la marchandise anglaise, les Salviati de Londres se chargent finalement de vendre directement les draps toscans sur la place de Londres. Il s'agit probablement d'un contretemps inattendu pour eux et un retournement de la part d'un partenaire commercial. Ce changement d'attitude de la part du mercier anglais prend place au moment où des émeutes anti-italiennes sont menées notamment par les employés des merciers. Or ces merciers londoniens avaient de nombreuses affaires avec les marchands italiens, notamment ce William Cantelowe (Sutton 2005, 226-34). L'opération était pourtant planifiée depuis longtemps puisqu'elle est inscrite dans les registres florentins de la famille Salviati en novembre 1454.<sup>8</sup> Les *garbugli*, comme ils définissent les soulèvements de violence xénophobes, ne sont pas propices au troc monétarisé en ne permettant pas des échanges sereins. Par la suite, cela se perçoit aussi à propos de toiles au moment où des troubles sont toujours en cours, en 1458. Il est question dans une lettre concernant un troc entre des toiles et des laines, toujours avec les Ruffini de Bruges, des dépenses faites en raison de l'obligation de déplacer les toiles de leur maison pour les placer en lieu sûr, *in llogo sichuro al tempo de' gharbugli*. Ces toiles avaient été troquées avec le fils de William Cantelowe, Thomas, mercier lui aussi, en mars 1455 avec

<sup>7</sup> AS, registre 344, c. 178, registre 342, c. 205v-206.

<sup>8</sup> AS, registre 322, c. 54.

l'accord des Ruffini et de l'associé des Salviati à Bruges, Piero da Rabatta. L'exemple fait écho aux difficultés mentionnées au début du texte, les troubles sont peu propices à l'usage du troc, rendant les affaires encore plus incertaines qu'en temps plus calme.

Le troc permet aussi de se fournir en matières premières indispensables au processus de production. Ainsi des draps sont échangés contre du kermès, ces insectes qui servaient à faire de la teinture provenant du Maghreb, *grana barbaresca* et de la péninsule ibérique (Cardon 1999; Tognetti 1999, 169; Giagnacovo 2014, 236). Toutes les teintures ont transité par la péninsule ibérique avant d'arriver en Angleterre. Comme souvent, il est nécessaire de tirer plusieurs fils pour obtenir une image précise de toutes les étapes nécessaires à la transaction. La matière première, propriété du Florentin Gherardo Gianfigliuzzi installé à Valence, est troquée à Londres contre des draps de différentes natures. Les Salviati agissent en commission pour le compte du dit Gherardo. Les teintures sont arrivées en août 1449 et elles sont tout de suite vendues contre des draps à un tailleur de Londres, Riccardo Ruccho. Lors de l'opération des draps de Montivilliers sont échangés contre les teintures. La production de ces draps a fait l'objet ces dernières années d'études renouvelées (Arnoux et Bottin 2003; 2001). Le tailleur a de la sorte acquis du kermès *barbaresco* et de Valence. Les matières tinctoriales sont aussi vendues au même moment à un Génois présent à Londres, Andrea dei Fornari, contre des draps. On sait seulement qu'il s'agit des draps larges, la provenance n'étant pas indiquée.<sup>9</sup>

L'examen des registres de l'agence de Bruges met en lumière le fait que les Salviati profitent de leur position dans ce hub commercial du Nord pour se procurer d'autres matières premières et produits issus d'autres régions. Ainsi, à Bruges, ils échangent avec différents partenaires commerciaux, dont l'agence sœur de Londres, des produits reçus dans l'entrepôt brugeois venant d'autres parties d'Europe. De la sorte, les produits de la péninsule ibérique comme l'huile et le fer, celui du pays basque, sont échangés pour obtenir des draps d'Angleterre ou encore de la laine de Cotswolds. De la même façon, ils échangent des draps de soie florentins contre la fourniture de soie.

Un dernier exemple permettra de comprendre les stratégies entrepreneuriales de la compagnie Salviati. Une opération qui met en lien plusieurs agences: l'agence de Bruges envoie de la soie d'Espagne (en passant par Venise et Bologne) à l'agence de Florence. Cette dernière vend la soie contre des draps de soie à une compagnie de *setaioli* à Florence et les draps florentins se retrouvent à Bruges par la suite. Dans les différents registres de la compagnie, l'histoire se dévoile et la comptabilité de Bruges permet de suivre la suite des opérations. Il est ainsi question de draps de soie de différentes sortes fournis par les Salviati de Florence à ceux de Bruges contre de la soie. La première écriture du compte est un renvoi à la précédente raison sociale, la F. Malheureusement, les registres de Bruges sont moins bien conservés et il n'est d'ailleurs pas certain qu'ils aient eu les premiers livres dans leurs archives puisque l'agence est au nom de Piero da Rabatta *e compagnia*. Seules deux raisons sociales font

<sup>9</sup> AS, registre 336, comptes c. 106 et 107.

partie du fonds Salviati: la G et la I, lorsque de *Piero da Rabatta e compagnia* de Bruges, l'agence change de dénomination pour devenir l'agence *Giovanni Salviati e Piero da Rabatta e compagnia*. Malgré le désagrément du registre F disparu, le début de l'opération peut être retracé grâce aux registres florentins. Dans le grand livre des années 1454-1471, l'opération est détaillée.<sup>10</sup> Ainsi, la soie arrive en 1460 d'Espagne à Florence tandis que, grâce aux registres de Bruges, il est possible de percevoir la commercialisation des draps de soie confectionnés à Florence. Les Salviati habillent, par exemple, l'ambassadeur du duc de Milan Francesco Sforza et l'opération se conclut par un petit profit de £. 13 s. XII d. I renvoyé au livre secret en 1463. La soie espagnole est aussi une marchandise qui permet aux Florentins Neroni, famille alliée des Salviati (Scherman 2021, 32-34), de se fournir en draps de Londres.<sup>11</sup> Les opérateurs florentins opèrent de la même façon sur tous les espaces avec la soie: à Naples, les draps florentins sont échangés pour obtenir de la soie originaire de la Calabre (Tognetti 2000). Dans l'exemple pris de la documentation Salviati, la circulation de la soie espagnole est permise par le dynamisme des marchands florentins: elle transite ainsi de la péninsule ibérique à la Toscane pour finir dans les territoires du Nord-Ouest de l'Europe. Grâce à leur présence et à la mise en place précoce du système des galées à Gênes et à Venise, puis à Florence, les grands marchands de la péninsule italienne jouent un rôle fondamental dans la définition et l'animation du système économique et commercial européen de la fin du Moyen Âge (Stöckly 1995; Judde de Larivière 2008; Mallett 1967).

#### 4. Les calculs nécessaires à la conclusion des trocs

Un autre aspect intéressant de la documentation londonienne des Salviati est qu'elle contient un registre de *ricordanze* qui clarifie les intentions des marchands.

Le troc permet aussi de procéder autrement aux paiements. On l'a vu, Thomas Cantelowe et sa famille sont des interlocuteurs fréquents de l'agence de Londres. Le solde des comptes n'est alors pas linéaire puisque les affaires entre les deux partenaires sont multiples. Par exemple, les Salviati lui achète des laines Buckingham de seconde catégorie pour une montant total de £474 s. 7 d. 6. Comme aux autres négociants en laines, du numéraire lui est versé lors de la conclusion de la transaction. Comme les autres également, trois années sont nécessaires pour solder la transaction. Or, cela n'apparaît pas dans le journal de caisse, ni dans les sorties en numéraire comme c'est le cas pour les transactions avec des opérateurs plus ponctuels. Si tout n'apparaît pas dans la caisse, c'est que les paiements sont effectués par compensation. Ainsi, dans le même temps, Thomas est client pour le fer envoyé par les Ruffini en février 1454. D'ailleurs, il se montre exigeant puisqu'il refuse de payer avant d'avoir été livré davantage et, pour régler les paiements, Thomas tire des lettres de change sur Bruges. De surcroît, les Salviati ont acheté une partie des laines en

<sup>10</sup> AS, registre, 324, c. 204, *Seta spagnola di ragione da Rabatta mandataci per lui da Venezia Filippo Rucellai per man di Nicolaio da Meletto da Bologna c. 227, Druppi di seta di più ragioni auti a baratto di sete spagnola di Piero da Rabatta*

<sup>11</sup> AS, registre 22, c. 170, 254.

effectuant un troc monétarisé portant sur des toiles de lin flamandes fournies par les Da Rabatta et les Ruffini. Ce troc monétarisé est d'ailleurs discuté à la taverne comme cela est enregistré dans un compte de dépenses: le vin acheté au moment de la négociation commerciale est comptabilisé parmi les dépenses du compte. Le troc des toiles équivaut à £248 s. 9 d. 1 inscrit au crédit du compte des toiles de Ruffini. Les affaires précédentes avec Thomas suffisent pour que l'ensemble des achats de laines soit remboursé. Au demeurant, le troc toiles/laines était souhaité par les Salviati de Londres alors que les Ruffini y étaient opposés. Les Salviati écrivaient justement qu'ils pouvaient obtenir un meilleur profit si des toiles étaient vendues contre des laines. Ainsi, les Salviati informent les Ruffini en 1454 sur le fait que des toiles provenant de Bruges seront difficiles à vendre en comptant, *a denari*, alors que les troquer serait plus commode. Il s'agit-là d'une explication au fait que le troc monétarisé a mis du temps à se mettre en place entre les Salviati et les Ruffini, ces derniers faisant montre d'une défiance envers ce mode de transaction, en tout cas selon les propos tenus dans les lettres.

Les correspondances indiquent aussi les calculs économiques qui font préférer le troc au paiement en numéraire: la perspective d'engranger plus de profit est clairement mise en évidence. Les sources font donc entrer pleinement au cœur du processus de formation des prix. Dans les *ricordanze* toujours, en 1454, une lettre envoyée en novembre à l'agence de Bruges est résumée. Il y est question du troc des toiles contre des laines et de la rapidité avec laquelle il faut répondre.<sup>12</sup>

Toute une mécanique intellectuelle est à l'œuvre pour mettre en adéquation les prix entre les marchandises objets des transactions, notamment lorsqu'ils sont exprimés en unités de mesure différentes d'un territoire à l'autre. Reprenons l'exemple des toiles échangées contre des laines avec Thomas Cantelowe: les ballots de toile de Flandres exprimés à la mesure des Flandres sont convertis par le marchand florentin à Londres à la mesure d'Angleterre. Le compte montre clairement l'accord établi en amont entre les marchands sur le prix de l'aune, comme il est dit *le quali montano a denari otto l'alla chome ne siamo d'accordo collui*. Dans tous les comptes de troc, les marchandises sont évaluées et décrites précisément. Les calculs et les adéquations sont aussi scruter avec précaution. Ainsi, le *bargaigno* peut être complété par une somme d'argent pour le faire rentrer dans les clous, *stornare*.

Lorsque la pratique du troc est étudiée, elle offre un aperçu de la dextérité des opérateurs économiques. Le troc monétarisé et son utilisation par les grands marchands de la péninsule italienne démontrent la combinaison nécessaire entre les différentes façons de solder les échanges. Tout comme la vente en comptant, la vente à crédit ou l'assignation, la connaissance et la gestion du troc monétarisé font partie des connaissances à avoir pour le grand marchand, comme pour le petit d'ailleurs. Finalement, si l'on examine les actes de la pratique, le recours au troc monétarisé

<sup>12</sup> AS, registre 342, c. 40v «E dicemo loro avere per fermo uno bargaigno delle prime tele a 2 tanti lane e mettiamo l'alla di qui denari 8 e 7 che stimamo mandarle in Silanda, non ci è riuscito, se volete il bargaigno alla buon'ora se non ditelo pella prima e richonperre noi le tele che lle possiamo riavere pelli chontanti a denari 6 1/4 l'alla ledite Brabanti, l'una pell'altra elle Dudinando per 5 2/4, sicché avixata pella prima inanzi l'amicho prenda partito delle tele, ch'abbiamo tempo di rispondere, di prendere le telle per tutto questa settima, siatene cho' Ruffino e fatene una determinazione».

complexifie l'échange marchand. Il nécessite de la même façon des calculs précis et une connaissance fine des marchés. Cette nécessité se perçoit de la même façon lorsque sont examinées les lettres échangées entre opérateurs allemands sur la place de Venise à la même époque (Braunstein 2016). Il est nécessaire de faire aussi des anticipations sur la marchandise reçue en échange et les possibilités offertes par le marché pour la mise en vente des nouveaux produits reçus. Dans l'exemple de l'agence Salviati de Londres, le troc monétarisé met plusieurs années à faire partie de la panoplie des marchands étrangers. Ils attendent plusieurs années après leur installation pour l'insérer dans leurs pratiques. Cela montre à la fois la difficulté de cette façon de faire du commerce et la nécessité de bâtir des relations solides.

L'observatoire du Nord-Ouest permet d'appréhender la pratique du troc des «Italiens» dans ces régions et son caractère structurel, tandis que la documentation, en particulier les *ricordanze*, fournit des informations précises sur les modalités des différents trocs et des réflexions sur cette pratique. Les lettres écrites depuis Londres, par exemple, fournissent des informations sur la manière dont certains produits étaient échangés.

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Anne Kucab

## *Les monnaies alternatives à Rouen à la fin du Moyen Âge*

Rouen est dans la seconde moitié du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle la deuxième ville du royaume de France, par son rôle économique mais aussi par son poids démographique avec environ 40 000 habitants à la fin du siècle (Kucab 2021a, 30-32). Après des années de Guerre de Cent Ans, le retour sous l'autorité de Charles VII, en 1449, marque le début d'un renouveau pour la ville (Marec 2019; Maroteaux 2021). Elle polarise ainsi un vaste ensemble de relations économiques et sociales dont nous avons la trace grâce aux nombreuses sources conservées. Les fonds archivistiques pour la fin du Moyen Âge sont importants et offrent des séries de registres quasi-continues. C'est notamment le cas pour les riches comptabilités produites par la ville ou les instances religieuses (comptes de l'hôtel de l'archevêque, des fabriques paroissiales ou du chapitre cathédral). Ces dernières, mises en regard avec les délibérations municipales, les sources narratives, iconographiques et archéologiques, ont permis de dessiner les consommations et les niveaux de vie des Rouennais dans la seconde moitié du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle.<sup>1</sup>

Les comptes sont en effet une source centrale pour cette période. Comme pour d'autres espaces, ils sont construits en trois parties: les recettes, les dépenses ou «mises» et les recettes espérées mais non effectivement reçues (Mattéoni, Beck 2012; Theiller 2012). Ils détaillent les dépenses (alimentation, bois de chauffage, vêtement), donnent des indications sur les salaires et transcrivent les mécanismes de paiement à l'œuvre. La précision des sources comptables rouennaises permet de saisir la complexité et le détail de ces transactions, montrant l'usage régulier de monnaies alternatives qui prennent plusieurs formes et s'inscrivent dans diverses logiques. Ces dernières sont particulièrement perceptibles dans les sources qui permettent de les détailler et font du cas rouennais un exemple représentatif des différentes logiques à l'œuvre en montrant notamment qui utilise les monnaies alternatives, qui les reçoit et dans quel cadre. L'utilisation des monnaies alternatives semble en effet différer en fonction des groupes sociaux qui en sont destinataires ou prescripteurs.

Ces monnaies alternatives s'utilisent dans le cadre d'une relation de travail, participent d'une transaction commerciale ou soulignent la dimension symbolique de l'échange. L'emploi du terme de «monnaies alternatives» est particulièrement

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<sup>1</sup> Le dépouillement et la mise en regard des différents types de sources afin de déterminer les manières de consommer ont été réalisés dans le cadre de notre thèse de doctorat «*Où l'on offre tout ce qui peut se vendre.*» *Niveaux de vie et consommation à Rouen à la fin du Moyen Âge*, sous la direction d'Élisabeth Crouzet-Pavan, soutenue le 4 décembre 2021 à Sorbonne université faculté de Lettres (Kucab 2021b).

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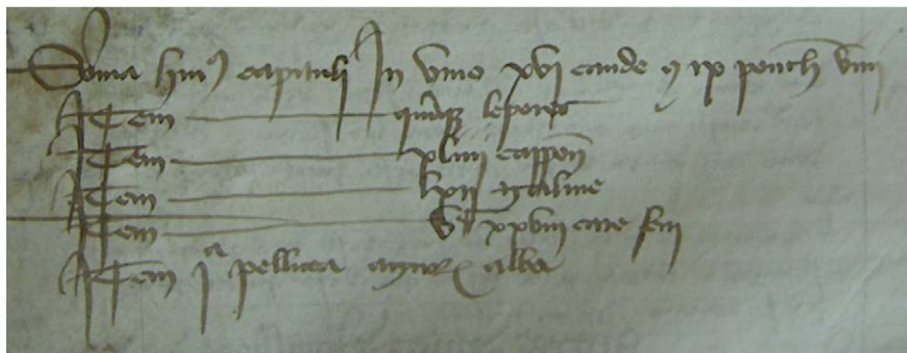
Anne Kucab, *Les monnaies alternatives à Rouen à la fin du Moyen Âge*, © Author(s), CC BY 4.0, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0347-0.18, in Angela Orlandi (edited by), *Mezzi di scambio non monetari. Merci e servizi come monete alternative nelle economie dei secoli XIII-XVIII / Alternative currencies. Commodities and services as exchange currencies in the monetarized economies of the 13<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries*, pp. 303-321, 2024, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 979-12-215-0347-0, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0347-0



pertinent pour Rouen puisqu'elles semblent considérées ainsi par les comptables eux-mêmes. En effet, les comptabilités sont tenues en monnaie de compte. Elles sont construites en deux colonnes, la première contient le détail de la dépense et de la recette tandis qu'une seconde récapitule le montant en livres, sous et deniers notamment afin de faciliter les sommes de bas de page. Or, on constate que les paiements en nature y figurent, au même titre que ceux effectués en pièces, transcrites en monnaie de compte. C'est notamment le cas dans les comptes de l'archevêque de Rouen qui reçoit encore dans la seconde moitié du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle certains cens, rentes et paiements en nature. Il ne s'agit pas uniquement de céréales mais de paiements en nature variés – livres de poivre, pelisse d'agneau blanc, mines de pois – qui sont alors comptabilisés au même titre que les monnaies. C'est par exemple le cas des lièvres reçus par l'archevêque pour l'année 1454-1455, est noté dans la première colonne: «Au chapitre des menus cens a esté faicte recepte de cinq lievres deubz à Mons<sup>r</sup>. Lesquelx ont esté baillés à Michel Prieur despencier de l'ostel pour ce icy» et dans la seconde «v lievres».<sup>2</sup>

On trouve ainsi en fin du chapitre des recettes la somme totale des gelines, des chapons et des autres paiements en nature reçus par l'archevêque selon le même procédé et la même typographie que pour les paiements en monnaie (fig. 1):

Fig. 1. Exemple de somme de paiement en nature dans le compte G. 52 de l'hôtel archiépiscopal de Rouen conservé aux Archives départementales de Seine-Maritime (fol. 53r)



Dans cet exemple sont sommées les dépenses faites en nature, à savoir 16 queues et 9 ponchons de vin, 5 lièvres, 4 chapons, 62 gelines, 528 cares de foin et une pelisse d'agneau blanc. On observe notamment des transactions avec des paiements en nature qui sont inscrits au chapitre des recettes puis sont ensuite portés au chapitre des dépenses, y compris lorsqu'elles sont utilisées au sein de l'hôtel archiépiscopal pour les provisions servant en cuisine. C'est également le cas du foin servant à l'écurie. Le principe d'équilibre des comptes – important puisqu'ils sont vérifiés – s'applique aussi aux paiements en nature. La présence simultanée, voire enchevêtrée, de la monnaie de

<sup>2</sup> Archives départementales de Seine-Maritime (ADSM), compte de l'hôtel archiépiscopal, G. 52, 52v.



Trois emplois des monnaies alternatives se détachent particulièrement à Rouen à la fin du Moyen Âge: en premier lieu elles ont une place notoire dans le cadre de la rémunération d'un travail, ensuite, elles participent pleinement des transactions commerciales; enfin, leur aspect symbolique ne doit pas être négligé car il justifie en partie leur utilisation.

## 1. Les monnaies alternatives dans le cadre d'une relation de travail

Si la pratique du salariat est quasi généralisée pour certaines professions des milieux urbains à la fin du Moyen Âge, il existe aussi des rémunérations alternatives à la place ou en complément du paiement en espèces. L'ouvrage coordonné par Patrick Beck, Philippe Bernardi et Laurent Feller a montré que cette mise en place du salariat n'excluait pas la poursuite de rémunérations en nature, y compris pour la fin du Moyen Âge, même si cela s'avère plus ponctuel (Beck, Bernardi et Feller 2014). La question des rémunérations alternatives a été peu abordée pour Rouen même si les différents chercheurs ayant travaillé sur la ville ont été sensible à leur utilisation et en ont relevé les mentions dans la mesure du possible (Cailleux, 2011; Lardin 1999 et 2003).

On observe ce phénomène pour les travailleurs rattachés à une institution ou à une personne. La concierge de l'hôtel municipal est gagée annuellement comme le cuisinier, la lavandière ou le trésorier de l'archevêque de Rouen, c'est-à-dire qu'ils reçoivent une somme d'argent fixe et déterminée pour chaque année de travail. En fonction de leur qualité et de la nature de leur travail, les gages sont plus au moins importants. Les clercs participant de l'administration comme le trésorier ou le scelleur de l'archevêque sont gagés pour plus de 40 livres quand les petites mains telles la lingère, le cuisinier ou le palefrenier gagnent entre 8 et 12 livres par an. Outre les gages, ce personnel est nourri, logé et parfois vêtu. Cette rémunération en nature n'est pas à négliger car elle représente des sommes conséquentes. Nous avons évalué que sur la période 1453-1504, un membre gagé de l'hôtel archiepiscopal est nourri en moyenne pour 12 deniers par jour auxquels il faut rajouter 4 ou 5 deniers correspondant à la boisson (bière, cervoise, cidre ou poiré). Le personnel et les officiers de l'hôtel archiepiscopal sont donc nourris et abreuvés pour un minimum de 16 ou 17 deniers par jour (ils reçoivent également régulièrement des épices pour un montant d'un denier par jour), soit plus de 25 livres par an (Kucab 2021b). Il ne s'agit pas ici d'un complément de revenus mais bien d'une part de celui-ci, versée en nature.<sup>3</sup> Cette part en nature peut s'expliquer par des contraintes pratiques: l'archevêque de Rouen utilise ainsi facilement une part des revenus qu'il perçoit en nature (blé, gibier). Les comptes indiquent d'ailleurs que ces revenus sont donnés au dépensier de l'hôtel pour l'usage courant, comme par exemple en 1474-1475 où les mines d'avoine et de pois qui sont dues à l'archevêques sont réutilisées aux écuries ou à la cuisine:

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<sup>3</sup> À titre de comparaison le salaire annuel d'un valet de bras est de 30 livres par an.

Audit chapitre de la recepte de Fresne est faicte recepte de deux muys xiiii m<sup>es</sup>[mines] et demy d'avoine qui ont esté distribué pour la provision des chevaux de l'ostel pour ce, ii muys xiiii m<sup>es</sup> et demy d'avoine  
 Au chapitre est faicte recepte de iiii mines de poys qui ont esté prins pour la provision de l'ostel, pour ce icy en descharge, iiii m<sup>es</sup> de poys.<sup>4</sup>

Le paiement en nature peut toutefois entraîner des frais de mesurage, de livraison ou de stockage qu'il ne faut pas négliger. Si l'opération reste rentable pour le comptable de l'hôtel archiépiscope qui n'a pas à acheter du grain ou du vin, elle n'est pas pour autant gratuite.

Il arrive que certains officiers de l'archevêque reçoivent exceptionnellement une partie de leurs gages sous forme de paiement en nature, comme le dépensier dont le rôle est d'assurer l'intendance de l'hôtel archiépiscope. Ses gages annuels sont habituellement de 12 livres. En 1453-1454, pour une raison inconnue, celui-ci est payé pour partie en argent et pour l'autre en vêtement. Les deux dépenses sont inscrites au chapitre des «deniez paiézs à cause des gaiges des officiers.»<sup>5</sup> Il ne reçoit que 7 livres de gages en monnaie auxquelles il faut ajouter le drap et la confection d'une robe, de sa doublure et d'un chaperon pour un montant de 10 livres, 7 sous, 9 deniers:

A Michel Prieur despensier sur ce que on lui peut devoir ou pourra estre deu de ses gaiges a esté paié en argent content la somme de vii l.

Audit Michel Prieur pour le drap d'une robe, la doubleure et pour le drap du chaperon et pour la fasson a esté paié par l'ordonnance de messires les vicaires à Catherine Auber et au cousturier comme appert par ledit mandement et quittance x l. vii s. ix d.<sup>6</sup>

Le dépensier ne perd donc pas au change car le montant total dépensé cette année-là excède les 12 livres de ses gages habituels<sup>7</sup>. Dans certains cas, le paiement alternatif correspond à un outil de travail comme on le constate avec le cas de Michault Faroul qui est payé chaque mois 6 écus auxquels on ajoute annuellement un cheval. Le paiement du cheval est justifié ainsi dans la comptabilité: «ung cheval par

<sup>4</sup> ADSM, compte de l'hôtel archiépiscope, G. 70, 30v.

<sup>5</sup> ADSM, compte de l'hôtel archiépiscope, G. 51, 14r.

<sup>6</sup> ADSM, compte de l'hôtel archiépiscope, G. 51, 14r.

<sup>7</sup> Les dépenses faites pour le dépensier (argent et vêtement) se montent ainsi au total à 17 livres 8 sous 9 deniers. L'année suivante, Michel Prieur sera rémunéré entièrement en argent sonnante et trébuchante pour un montant de 19 livres 10 sous. Ce montant supérieur à 12 livres s'explique par le fait que la rémunération couvre plus d'un an et semble correspondre à un rattrapage. Il sera gagé à hauteur de 12 livres pour les années 1455-1458, comme son successeur. Le paiement pour partie en nature de 1453 fait donc figure d'exception. Il s'explique éventuellement par le changement d'archevêque qui a lieu en 1453 date à laquelle Guillaume d'Estouteville est élu à cette charge.

an pour soy tenir en la court du roy affin de solliciter les causes de MonSr». <sup>8</sup> Cette pratique où le salaire est réglé pour partie en argent et pour partie en nature n'est pas propre à l'hôtel archiépiscopal car on l'observe également à l'oeuvre en 1410 dans les délibérations municipales. À la date du 25 janvier 1410 (n. s.) un accord est passé entre la ville et Olivier Homo, horloger et garde de l'horloge du beffroi de la ville. Ce dernier accepte de prendre en charge les éventuels frais de réparation liés à l'horlogerie mais demande en échange à recevoir une robe par an en plus de ses gages de 12 sous 6 deniers par semaine. Les échevins accepte l'accord et précise qu'en plus de ses gages hebdomadaires, il recevra chaque année au terme de Pâques une robe neuve d'une valeur de cent sous. <sup>9</sup>

Certains travailleurs de l'hôtel archiépiscopal sont entièrement rémunérés au moyen de monnaies alternatives. Nous avons identifié deux logiques à l'oeuvre. Il peut s'agir d'un travailleur ponctuel ou effectuant de menus travaux et qui ne reçoit pas de salaire en monnaie comme c'est le cas de Jehan de Lisle en 1461-1462 pour lequel le compte précise explicitement: «Pour une chausses pour Jehan de Lisle lequel a besoingné long temps à l'ostel sans rien gagner, païé xvii s. vi d.». <sup>10</sup> La rémunération salariale uniquement en nature peut aussi être la marque d'un statut transitoire ou d'un apprenti. À partir de 1455 et pendant plusieurs années, l'archevêque de Rouen emploie un jeune aide de cuisine nommé dans les comptes «le petit Robinet». Celui-ci est vraisemblablement très jeune car on trouve également mention de son père qui vient le chercher lorsqu'il tombe malade. Il est précisé qu'il ne reçoit pas de gages mais un ensemble vestimentaire composé selon les années d'une robe ou d'un pourpoint, d'une paire de chausses, d'un chaperon et de souliers:

Au petit Robinet de la cuisine auquel n'ont point esté assigné gages mais pour ii aulnes ung quartier tant de gris que de blanc drap, duquel a esté fait une robe et ung chaperon audit Robinet, païé à Alain de la Quesnaye xxxiiii s. vi d., pour souliers vii s. vi d., pour chauches iii s. ix d., pour la facon desdis tobe et chaperon baillé à Raoulin du Val ix s, ainsi pour ces parties liiii s. ix d. <sup>11</sup>

L'entrée de compte souligne explicitement que cette rémunération en vêtement s'explique par le fait que Robinet n'est pas gagé. Le montant annuel de ces vêtements augmente progressivement, passant de 2 livres, 14 sous, 9 deniers la première année de travail (1455) à 7 livres en 1461 (graph 1). C'est moins que les gages reçus par les autres serviteurs de l'hôtel, comme la lavandière ou le cuisinier qui reçoivent entre 10 et 12 livres.

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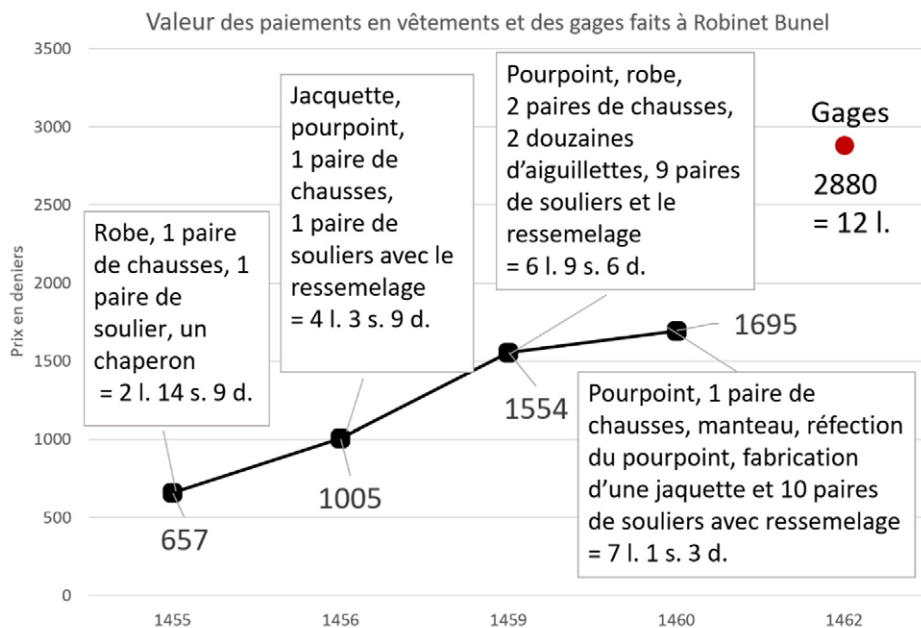
<sup>8</sup> ADSM, compte archiépiscopal, G. 69, 26v°. La pratique de payer un cheval afin de faciliter les trajets apparaît comme récurrente au sein de l'hôtel archiépiscopal puisque ce type de rémunération s'observe dès 1469 (ADSM, compte archiépiscopal, G. 66, 23v) et se poursuit entre 1474 et 1476 (ADSM, comptes archiépiscopaux, G. 70, 27r et G. 71 26r).

<sup>9</sup> ADSM, délibérations municipales, 3E1/BB40 (ancienne cote 3E1/ANC/A6), 266r.

<sup>10</sup> ADSM, compte archiépiscopal, G. 59, 31v.

<sup>11</sup> ADSM, compte archiépiscopal, G.53, 25v.

Graph 1. Valeur des paiements en vêtements et des gages faits à Robinet Bunel



Cette rémunération en vêtement semble signifier le fait que Robinet est «en formation» ce qui justifie qu'il ne reçoive pas un salaire en argent, la rémunération en monnaie intervenant alors avec la qualification. Nous en trouvons confirmation avec le compte de l'année 1462-1463: Robinet y apparaît toujours mais il est désigné alors comme cuisinier et reçoit 12 livres de gages.<sup>12</sup> Un autre «petit queu» est alors embauché qui reçoit un salaire en nature sous la forme de quatre paires de souliers.<sup>13</sup> Dans ce cas de figure, les monnaies alternatives sont la marque du statut d'apprenti tandis que le paiement en argent intervient lorsque le travailleur est vu comme qualifié. On observe d'ailleurs une concomitance entre les gages en argent et l'utilisation du patronyme (Bunel) dans les comptes puisque Robinet était uniquement désigné par son prénom tant qu'il était payé en nature.<sup>14</sup> L'utilisation de différents types de monnaie pour traduire des hiérarchies sociales existe également avec les pièces de monnaie: les monnaies noires ne sont pas utilisées pour payer les

<sup>12</sup> « Au petit Robinet cuisinier pour avoir servy à la cuisine durant le temps dessusdit païé xii l. pour ses gages pour ce icy, xii l. », ADSM, compte archiépiscopal, G.61, 24r.

<sup>13</sup> «Pour quatre paires de soulliers pour le petit queu de l'ostel de mondit Sr païé xv s. pour ce icy, xv s.», ADSM, compte archiépiscopal, G. 61, 31v.

<sup>14</sup> «A Robinet Bunel, cuisinier dudit hostel, païé pour ses gages xii l., pour ce xii l.», ADSM, compte archiépiscopal, G. 62, 20r.

mêmes personnes que les monnaies en argent ou en or. Ces dernières, plus prestigieuses, sont réservées à des catégories sociales ou à des professions spécifiques (Cardon 2021, 226-37). Dans le cadre de la rémunération du travail, les monnaies alternatives sont alors au bas de l'échelle et servent à rémunérer des travailleurs peu qualifiés ou ponctuels tandis que les monnaies d'or, notamment celles reconnues comme étant « internationales », sont prioritairement utilisés dans le cadre de transactions commerciales entre élites.

Les monnaies alternatives sont utilisées à Rouen dans le cadre du travail, et particulièrement pour les travailleurs gagés de l'hôtel archiépiscopal. Ces derniers sont nourris et abreuvés, ce qui représente une part non négligeable de leur rémunération et permet d'utiliser les revenus en nature de l'archevêque. En fonction de leur statut au sein de l'hôtel archiépiscopal, les monnaies alternatives peuvent représenter une part ou la totalité de leur paiement. Le recours à ce type de monnaie s'explique par la volonté de fournir un outil de travail, de rémunérer un travail ponctuel ou effectué par un apprenti. Le travail n'est pas le seul domaine concerné par des paiements en monnaies alternative et les processus identifiés sont également perceptibles dans d'autres types de transaction.

## 2. Les monnaies alternatives au sein des transactions commerciales

On observe l'usage de monnaies alternatives au sein de transactions commerciales. Les simples trocs (objet contre objet ou objet contre service) sont quasiment absents des sources rouennaises. On relève en revanche plus de mentions de transactions comportant une part en monnaie et une part en monnaie alternative. Ces dernières révèlent la grande capacité des hommes et des femmes du Moyen Âge à estimer la valeur des choses afin d'équilibrer les transactions (Denjean, Feller, 2013; Feller, Rodríguez 2016).

Pour faciliter la conversion et les équivalences entre monnaies alternatives, monnaies de compte et pièces de monnaies, des outils peuvent être développés. Il s'agit de tables de conversion facilitant les paiements quels qu'ils soient: salaire, rente, loyer... Denise Angers en a identifié pour une autre ville normande: Caen. Les registres de comptabilités de la ville de Caen conservés pour les années 1475-1476 et 1490-1492 s'ouvrent sur une liste de denrées (poules, blé, épices) avec leur équivalence en monnaie de compte selon « l'appréciation du roi » afin de faciliter la conversion comptables des paiements en nature (Angers 2011, 2012). En 1488, le bailli de Rouen donne également une équivalence des rentes en nature lors des assises de la vicomté d'Auge, on y apprend ainsi qu'un boisseau de froment est apprécié deux sous, six deniers, qu'un couple d'oiseaux de rivière vaut quinze deniers et qu'un poussin en vaut cinq.<sup>15</sup>

Le principe du troc commercial repose sur l'équivalence entre les biens échangés. Il faut donc que ceux-ci soient de même valeur afin qu'aucune des parties ne soit lésée, ce qui explique l'existence d'un complément en argent pour atteindre la valeur requise lorsque cela s'avère nécessaire. Ainsi, il faut parfois changer les chevaux lors

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<sup>15</sup> Rouen, Bibliothèque patrimoniale Villon, Y 29, t. II, n°136.

des visites dans les diocèses de la province ecclésiastique. Il s'agit d'échanger un cheval fatigué contre un plus fringant. Le troc est donc déséquilibré et c'est pourquoi une somme d'argent, la soulte, est ajoutée à l'ancien cheval comme en 1459-1460: «A Jaquet Gallois pour le changement d'un cheval boyart lequel a esté changé pour ce qu'il ne pouvoit plus servir pour les visitacions et affaires de monsr a esté payé pour ung cheval noir vi escus d'or avec le dit cheval boyart pour ce ix l.»<sup>16</sup> Quelques années auparavant, le compte parle même de « la troche d'un cheval » dans les mêmes circonstances.<sup>17</sup> L'appréciation de la valeur des éléments troqués est essentielle et repose sur de nombreux critères que les scribes ont à cœur de retranscrire dans les actes concernés – procès, actes notariés, inventaires de bien etc. – afin de faire ressortir les différentes composantes de l'échange. Ce phénomène est perceptible à l'échelle européenne comme l'a montré Claude Denjean pour la Catalogne (Denjean 2009).

Il y a parfois désaccord sur l'équité de la transaction, ce qui engendre des conflits. À l'été 1498, deux marchands font affaire lors de la foire de Pentecôte. Le premier, Bertrand de Recourt, marchand de vin parisien, fournit 53 ponchons de vin de l'Auxerrois au second, un Rouennais du nom d'André Grantchamp qui lui remet en échange un let de cuir, une pièce d'écarlate de 17 aunes, un blanchet d'Angleterre et le reste en « argent contant » c'est-à-dire en pièces de monnaie. L'affaire aurait pu en rester là mais l'un des deux marchands conteste la transaction au motif qu'elle est inéquitable et soumet l'affaire au conseil de la ville qui entend plusieurs témoins pour déterminer la validité de la transaction et la corriger.<sup>18</sup> Cet exemple souligne le caractère commun de ces transactions mixtes mais aussi la nécessité de bien estimer la valeur des choses pour éviter toute contestation.

Certaines transactions font appel au réemploi et à la récupération, notamment pour les matériaux de construction. Dans ces cas, il est précisé que les anciens matériaux sont remis par le commanditaire, à charge de l'exploitant de les récupérer. On soustrait alors la somme fournie sous forme de matériau des sommes dues, comme on le constate pour la réfection de la gouttière de l'hôtel archiépiscopal faite de plomb neuf et de plomb refondu en 1458-1459: «A Pierres des Vaultx, estaminier, pour cent et deux livres de plonc neuf et livre et demie de soudeure mises en la goutiere dudit appentis sur quoi avoit eu lxxviii l. de plonc viel, païé xxix s.»<sup>19</sup> Dans ce cas, sur 102 livres de plomb nécessaires, seules 24 livres de plomb neuf doivent être achetées, le reste étant fourni par l'archevêque. La somme dépensée correspond d'ailleurs au prix d'achat de 24 livres de plomb au prix moyen du marché. Cet usage de matériaux comme monnaie peut complexifier les transactions comme nous le voyons avec un autre exemple impliquant des plombiers en 1454-1455:

<sup>16</sup> ADSM, compte archiépiscopal, G. 57, 39v.

<sup>17</sup> « Item, ce jour baillé pour la troche d'un cheval lequel maistre Jehan Blondel avoit eu pour visiter Lisieux lequel cheval n'estoit pas assez fort pour faire les autres visitacions pour ce viii l. v s. », ADSM, compte archiépiscopal, G. 52, 50v.

<sup>18</sup> ADSM, délibérations municipales, 3E1/BB43 (ancienne cote 3E1/ANC/A9), 266r-269r cité par Mollat 1952, 387.

<sup>19</sup> ADSM, compte archiépiscopal, G. 56, 42r.



Item le mercredi devient la saint Michel baillé à Pierre des Vault et Guillaume Lefevre, plombiers, pour avoir refondu et mis en table neufve mil v. c. iiiixx xii livres de plomb et rendre autant de neuf comme de vieil par marché fait, pour cent xii s. vi d., ainsi pour ce ix l. xix s. Item pour cent iiiixx iii livres de soudeure à ii s. la livre xviii l. viii s., lesquelles parties montent a xxviii l. vii s. mes pour ce que en avoit plus de vieil lxxviii l. et demy que de neuf de la valleur de xlii s. ix d. laquelle somme a esté baillée pour partie de paiement ausdit plombiers pour ce xxvi l. iiiii s..<sup>20</sup>

Cette entrée de compte explicite le travail de deux plombiers rouennais qui doivent reformater du plomb sous forme de « tablettes » afin qu'il soit réemployé. L'archevêque de Rouen leur fournit le vieux qui est scrupuleusement pesé sous l'égide de la Vicomté de l'eau. Les plombiers sont rémunérés uniquement pour le travail de refonte puisque les matériaux sont fournis. La quantité de plomb à refondre et à récupérer est estimée à 1592 livres. Or, après l'opération de refonte, il reste un surplus de 78,5 livres de plomb par rapport à l'estimation. Le trésorier de l'archevêque décide de le laisser aux plombiers ayant œuvré mais en soustrayant le montant de ce plomb refondu de leur salaire total. Les plombiers reçoivent donc 26 livres, 4 sous en monnaie et 2 livres, 2 sous, 9 deniers sous forme de « plomb vieil ». Ces opérations d'équilibrage, particulièrement fréquentes dans le domaine de la construction, soulignent que l'on considère les matériaux comme des monnaies pouvant être, après estimation de leur valeur, mêlées à des monnaies de compte ou à des pièces de monnaie dans une transaction. Il ne faut pas sous-estimer le caractère « pratique » de telles opérations qui permettent de « rentabiliser » des matériaux dont on n'a pas ou peu usage en les utilisant comme monnaie. Un phénomène similaire s'observe avec les ciriers et la récupération de la cire des cierges utilisés, laquelle est décomptée avec une décote. Les torches et les cierges utilisés lors des offices font ainsi l'objet d'un pesage scrupuleux avant et après leur utilisation.

Il peut également s'agir de simplifier ou d'équilibrer des écritures comptables en évitant de mobiliser des pièces de monnaies. Ainsi en 1467, le sculpteur sur bois Paul Mosselemen qui travaille pour et est logé par le chapitre cathédral, décède de la peste en laissant des arriérés de loyer. Un accord est passé avec sa veuve à qui le chapitre doit de l'argent pour les sculptures des chaires effectuées par son mari mais non encore payées:

Paoul Mousellemen ymaginier deffunct avoit esté baillé en arrages de lx s. de laquelle somme nulle recepte doibt ycy estre faicte pour ce que la femme dudit deffunct admé que lesdits lx s. fussent defalquez sur certain ouvrage de ymages que son mary avoit fait pour les chaires du cœur deladite eglise.<sup>21</sup>

Le scribe note ainsi que la veuve ne lui verse rien pour le loyer car la somme a été défalquée de ce que le chapitre devait encore à son défunt mari pour son travail.

<sup>20</sup> ADSM, compte archiépiscopal, G. 52, 44v-45r.

<sup>21</sup> ADSM, compte du chapitre cathédral, G. 2504, 32r. Pour le parcours et les conditions de la mort de Paul Mosselemen, voir Lardin 2003, 34 n.81.

Il ne s'agit pas d'une opération isolée. Caroline Blondeau a relevé qu'en 1489 le maître verrier rouennais Jean Barbe doit plusieurs termes de loyer à la fabrique de la cathédrale (pour un montant de 15 livres) et il les soustrait du travail qu'il doit faire pour la fabrique, ce qui, au vu de la somme, le conduit à travailler sans être payé.<sup>22</sup> Ces transactions parfois informelles pouvaient conduire à des situations comptables parfois complexes comme l'a souligné Philippe Lardin pour le compte du chapitre cathédral de 1467:

À la mort de Jean Duquemin, receveur de la fabrique de la cathédrale, son successeur Colin de la Haye tenta de remettre de l'ordre dans les finances qu'il avait trouvées. Or, il constata que les ouvriers employés régulièrement sur le chantier avaient obtenu des avances, emprunté du matériel ou qu'ils n'avaient pas été payés entièrement, soit parce qu'ils avaient été, momentanément logés, soit parce qu'ils remboursaient les sommes qu'ils devaient. Tous ces éléments étaient consignés dans les papiers personnels du receveur mais n'apparaissaient pas dans la comptabilité destinée aux auditeurs (Lardin 1999, 146).

Cet exemple rappelle que les dispositions sont variées, que les paiements peuvent procéder d'arrangements en nature tels l'emprunt de matériel ou l'hébergement, mais aussi que le travail est un moyen de payer ses dettes. C'est le cas des exemples de Paul Mosselmen et de Jean Barbe qui sont également issus des comptes du chapitre cathédral. Une partie des transactions faites en monnaie alternatives peut ainsi de ne pas apparaître dans les comptes, ce qui conduit à minorer leur utilisation à la fin du Moyen Âge. Lorsqu'elles sont inscrites dans les comptabilités, on prend soin d'en noter la spécificité comme en 1470-1471 lorsque deux frères peintres, Guerard et Jacob Louf, font abandon des 30 sous de salaire que leur devait la fabrique de l'église Saint-Vincent «pour estre participais es biens fais, prières et oraisons de l'église».<sup>23</sup> Il s'agit d'une transaction où l'artisan renonce au prix de son travail en guise de don. Si l'entrée de compte apparaît dans le chapitre des dépenses, le trésorier prend soin de ne rien noter dans la colonne des montants afin que celui-ci ne soit pas sommé à la fin du feuillet (figure 3). Cet exemple souligne l'importance des monnaies alternatives d'un point de vue symbolique, ici l'abandon du prix de son travail au profit de l'Église.

<sup>22</sup> ADSM, compte du chapitre cathédral, G. 2513, 90v, cité par Blondeau 2020.

<sup>23</sup> ADSM, compte de la fabrique paroissiale Saint-Vincent, G. 7654, 1468-1472.



### 3. La forte symbolique des monnaies alternatives

Privilégier l'usage de monnaies alternatives n'est pas uniquement une question de pragmatisme ou de manque de numéraire car celui-ci revêt également un aspect symbolique.

L'objet utilisé comme monnaie alternative rappelle ainsi la nature de la transaction. Les cordiers de Rouen louent à la ville le chemin situé le long des remparts pour fabriquer leurs cordes. Ils s'acquittent en échange d'un loyer. Celui-ci comporte une part en argent (40 sous) et une part en nature (une corde par an).<sup>24</sup> Cette corde est utilisée pour le puits de l'hôtel de ville. La corde semble ici rappeler le métier et l'objet de la location. Cette charge symbolique est démultipliée dans le cadre des dons et des gratifications qui sont le plus souvent faits en monnaies alternatives.

Les gratifications interviennent à plusieurs reprises dans la vie des travailleurs. Elles manifestent le contentement des commanditaires et s'inscrivent dans des rituels. Au cours ou à la fin d'un chantier, les divers corps de métier peuvent être récompensés par des présents de différente nature: vin, alimentation (fruits, viande) ou vêtements (Lardin 1992 et 1999). Ces pratiques apparaissent dans les comptes puisque les trésoriers achètent ce qu'ils vont offrir en précisant bien la destination et le contexte. Il ne s'agit donc pas d'un problème de liquidités mais bien d'une volonté de matérialiser une transaction au moyen de présents qui jouent le rôle de monnaie alternative tout en ayant une forte charge symbolique.

Les présents en vin sont ainsi fréquents lors de la conclusion d'un marché (le vin du marché) mais aussi lorsqu'un chantier est fini. La persistance des expressions «pots-de-vin» ou «pourboire» en français est un beau témoignage de l'importance de ces pratiques et de la manière dont elles se sont inscrites dans la mémoire collective. Le vin étant une boisson onéreuse, son don aux travailleurs matérialise leur réussite. C'est une gratification coûteuse car à Rouen au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle un pot de vin (30 deniers) vaut 6 fois un pot de bière ou de cervoise (d'un prix de 5 deniers en moyenne), soit une journée de travail pour un valet ou un ouvrier de bras (Kucab 2021b). On observe toutefois une variété de gratifications qui s'étend parfois aux proches du destinataire (famille, serviteurs). C'est le cas en 1453-1454 où «deulx aunes de drap de lx sous [sont] donnés, par l'ordonnance du curé et paroissiens, à la femme du carpentier qui fit le comble de la nef de la dite esglise, lx s.».<sup>25</sup> Les montants dépensés sont fonction de la qualité du destinataire et du travail effectué, ils signifient la reconnaissance pour le travail accompli ou le service rendu de la part des payeurs.

Pour les gratifications en nature aussi il est pertinent de parler de « monnaies alternatives » puisqu'elles sont de plus en plus monétarisées dans la seconde moitié

<sup>24</sup> «De Jehan du Meullens, cordier, pour le louage d'un chemin ou alée à faire cordes joignant aux murs des praez de Grantmont à l'opposite de la cauchée de Saint-Sever, que letid de Meulenc a prise d'icelle ville pour ix ans commencans à la Saint Michel m. cccc. li par le pris de xl s t. par an et une corde à puis pour ce cy pour une année escheue au terme de Saint Jehan mil cccc xlvii, xl s.», ADMSM, compte de la ville, 3E1/CC15 (ancienne cote 3E1/ANC/XX2).

<sup>25</sup> ADMSM, compte de la fabrique paroissiale Saint-Nicolas de Rouen, G. 7323, le folio porte le numéro 173 en bas à gauche.

du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle. Les payeurs remplacent la gratification en nature par une somme d'argent. Ce phénomène est généralisé pour les ouvriers du bâtiment comme l'a relevé Philippe Lardin:

tout au long du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle un certain nombre de pratiques qui permettaient une convivialité ouvrière disparaissent dans leurs aspects concrets pour se monétariser. Les coutumes se maintiennent encore dans le vocabulaire, mais plus dans les faits. On parle encore de mouton de l'Ascensions, ou de vin, mais il s'agit le plus souvent de l'argent qui est censé les remplacer (Lardin 1992, 214).

Il est intéressant de constater que la charge symbolique de ces présents est conservée dans l'intitulé et la description de l'entrée de compte puisque la somme d'argent donnée est expressément présentée comme remplaçant la gratification en nature. Cette commutation de la monnaie alternative en argent se retrouve également dans les ordonnances de métiers édictées à la fin du Moyen Âge. En 1462, le statut du métier de drapier de Rouen donne une équivalence monétaire à la boisson dont doivent s'acquitter les ouvriers drapiers auprès de la charité du métier du Saint-sacrement située dans l'église Saint-Nicaise de Rouen en précisant qu'«ou lieu deladicte boisson, les ouvriers payent et convertissent icelle despence en deux sols, six deniers tournois qui seront payez à la dicte charité». <sup>26</sup>

Ce phénomène n'est en réalité pas propre au monde du travail et on l'observe également dans les délibérations municipales comme en 1453 où plusieurs messagers sont récompensés des bonnes nouvelles apportées – défaite des Anglais en Guyenne – en recevant des écus devant leur permettre d'acheter le vin de leur récompense:

Mémore que par Messieurs, le xxix<sup>e</sup> jour de juillet, fu donné à Jehan Mengaut, messenger, pour son vin d'avoir apporté bonnes nouvelles du pays de Guyenne, i escu, pour ce xxx s. [...]

Item semblablement le samedi xxix<sup>e</sup> jour de juillet par messr. donné à Saint-Messent, herault, pour son vin d'avoir apporté lettres missives à la ville, de par le Roy, de la desconfiture de Talbot et des Anglois en Guyenne, x escus, pour ce xv l. t.<sup>27</sup>

Ces exemples se multiplient dans la seconde moitié du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle où l'on voit un transfert de la charge symbolique de la gratification s'opérer entre la monnaie alternative et la monnaie réelle. Il s'agit pour le comptable de matérialiser l'intention du paiement en en expliquant la finalité afin de le différencier d'un simple achat. C'est

<sup>26</sup> ORF, t. XV, p. 545, art. 1. Même proposition de conversion à l'article 2: «Que la somme de dix solz que doivent les maistres dudit mestier en tistre, en boissons, quant ilz lievent les ouvrouers, soient convertiz comme dessus».

<sup>27</sup> ADSM, délibérations municipales, 3E1/BB42 (ancienne cote 3E1/ANC/A8), 6r.

encore le cas en 1496-1497 lorsque l'archevêque fait remplacer le don de vin et d'épices qu'il doit au chapitre cathédral par des pièces à savoir un demi écu d'or:

Le xxxiiii<sup>ème</sup> jour de décembre, jour de l'O de mondit Sr en lieu de vin et espices que messires les chanoines et les chapellains de l'esglise avoient acoustumé avoir en palaiz de mondit Sr apres les vespres a esté distribué à chacun des messrs les chanoines demy escu d'or et aux chapellains portant l'habit de l'esglise à chacun xx d.<sup>28</sup>

Les dons ou les présents sont plus difficilement classables ou interprétables au prisme des monnaies alternatives. À l'inverse des gratifications, ils ne subissent pas de monétarisation au cours du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle, probablement pour garder la charge symbolique dont ils sont porteurs. L'archevêque de Rouen comme la municipalité offrent fréquemment des repas ou des boissons aux différents représentants prestigieux qui passent par la ville et en particulier aux représentants du roi. Il s'agit de vins cotés comme les vins de Bourgogne. En 1461, le Comte de Charolais, futur Charles le Téméraire, reçoit trois ponchons de vin, l'un de Bourgogne, l'autre de Paris et le dernier est un blanc de Beaune<sup>29</sup>. Quelques années plus tard c'est le Duc de Savoie, beau-père de Louis XI qui est pourvu en vin de Tournus et de Beaune, la délibération municipale souligne bien qu'il s'agit d'une question d'honneur – et qu'il y a donc un usage symbolique du présent:

Le vendredi xxii<sup>e</sup> jour de septembre mil cccc lxxiiii  
Monsieur le Duc de Savoye accouru à Rouen et fust l'en à l'encontre de luy en notable compagnie de par la ville, à cheval et lui fu présenté de par ladite ville pour l'honneur d'icelle et reconnaissance de ce que le roy messir a espousé sa fille, une queue de vin de Beaune et deux ponchons de vin vermeil vin de Tournus.<sup>30</sup>

Le phénomène existe dans de nombreuses villes et semble dans certains cas «institutionnalisé» comme Marc Boone l'a montré pour la ville de Gand où il existe un « maître des présents » chargé «de la distribution des vins d'honneur que les dirigeants de la ville destinent aux hôtes de marque et à eux-mêmes et d'en tenir les comptes» (Boone 1988). Cet usage de présent 'symbolique' n'est pas le seul fait des municipalités, rouennaise ou gantoise, puisqu'on l'observe à différentes échelles notamment entre individus comme l'illustrent les présents reçus dans le cadre de l'entrée dans le métier de chirurgie.

<sup>28</sup> ADSM, compte archiépiscopal, G. 83, non folioté.

<sup>29</sup> ADSM, délibérations municipales, 3E1/BB42 (ancienne cote 3E1/ANC/A8), 197v. Preuve de l'importance de son statut, les présents en vin sont complétés par trois draps de la ville: un d'écarlate, un pers et un gris.

<sup>30</sup> ADSM, délibérations municipales, 3E1/BB42 (ancienne cote 3E1/ANC/A8), 222v.

Les impétrants chirurgiens rouennais offrent en effet un « bonnet doublé » à chacun de leurs examinateurs comme le précisent les statuts de métiers d'avril 1453: «Item, quant aucun viendra à l'examen dessusdit et qu'il sera passé par lesdicts Maistres jurez et rapporté justice, ainsi que dit est, il [l'impétrant] sera tenu bailler et donner à chacun des autres Maistres en cirurgie qui auront vacqué à son examen, ung bonnet double après sondit examen». <sup>31</sup> À la différence d'autres entrées de métiers pour lesquels le nouveau venu offre le vin et/ou le repas, ce présent souligne bien la symbolique du couvre-chef dans lequel réside l'honorabilité de son porteur. Il permet aussi de distinguer les chirurgiens dont la profession est plus prestigieuse que les métiers du bâtiment ou de la draperie. On observe aussi une hiérarchie dans les dons en textile: les pièces de vêtement (robes, chausses, chaperons) sont davantage données à des travailleurs tandis que les pièces d'étoffe (drap) sont en général offertes à des élites. Ce phénomène, également observé par Thomas Roy en Bourgogne (Roy 2019, 452-55) est manifeste à Rouen où la ville n'hésite pas à offrir des pièces de luxueux draps produits sur place. En août 1464, la ville dépense 130 livres pour offrir à la sœur de Louis XI lors de sa venue à Rouen un demi-drap de laine d'écarlate vermeille de la ville et un demi-drap gris de laine de Montivilliers. <sup>32</sup> Ces présents en nature sont aussi un moyen pour la ville de mettre sa production en avant.

De fait dans certains mécanismes de dons, les biens ou les services jouent le même rôle que les espèces sonnantes et trébuchantes. On le perçoit notamment pour les dons faits à l'Église dans le cadre de « l'économie du Salut ». Il peut s'agir d'argent, de rentes, de propriétés immobilières mais aussi de vêtements et de textiles comme Nicolas de la Rue faisant don en 1487 à la paroisse Saint-Étienne-des-Tonneliers de «iii chapes de drap impérial vermeil d'or de Lucques, un parement d'orfray à ymages, un drap de corp d'impérial de soie vermeille, à croisée perse et blanche advironné des armes de Pierre Jourdain et de sa femme». <sup>33</sup>

Les monnaies alternatives dans le cadre des dons et des gratifications sont plus délicates à saisir. On peut toutefois souligner l'importance de ces pratiques étant réellement vues comme complémentaires à l'usage de pièces de monnaie. Au cours du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle on observe ainsi deux logiques à l'œuvre: alors que les gratifications en nature se monétarisent pour les classes « laborieuses » tout en gardant la trace de leur origine alternative dans l'intitulé, les dons et les présents aux personnes de prestige continuent à être faits en nature. Cette dichotomie est loin d'être anodine et permet de souligner la dimension symbolique des dons et présents qui s'incarne dans le bien offert. Si ces aspects symboliques sont particulièrement importants dans le cadre des élites, il faut garder à l'esprit que les monnaies alternatives utilisées comme dons peuvent aussi relever dans certains cas du pragmatisme. C'est le cas pour les dons faits à l'Église. <sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> ORF, t. XIV, p. 281-284, cit. art. 6, p. 282.

<sup>32</sup> ADSM, délibérations municipales, 3E1/BB42 (ancienne cote 3E1/ANC/A8), 219r.

<sup>33</sup> ADSM, contrats de fondations de l'église Saint-Etienne-des-Tonneliers de Rouen, G. 6543.

<sup>34</sup> Il faut à cet égard souligner le cas particulier des pièces de monnaies collectées par les paroisses lors de la quête, dans les troncs ou les bassines prévus à cet effet. Les relevés des bassines de diverses églises de Rouen à la fin du Moyen Âge montrent que certains fidèles utilisaient des pièces de monnaies

Pour conclure, les comptabilités rouennaises permettent de saisir la diversité d'usage des monnaies alternatives à la fin du Moyen Âge. Les sources montrent ainsi que ces pratiques ne sont pas anecdotiques et sont pleinement intégrées comme des possibilités dans le cadre de transactions qui peuvent être complexes et combiner monnaies alternatives, monnaies de compte et espèces. Ces monnaies alternatives sont utilisées par plusieurs groupes sociaux dans le cadre de relations de travail, de transactions commerciales ou de dons et de gratifications. Elles apparaissent de manière très nette dans les comptabilités au même titre que la monnaie exprimée en pièces et que les monnaies de compte. En examinant leur valeur par rapport aux salaires les plus fréquents, on s'aperçoit qu'il ne s'agit pas de monnaies secondaires ou de moindre valeur mais bien d'un moyen de paiement potentiel. L'usage de ces monnaies dans des transactions parfois complexes souligne la grande capacité des hommes et des femmes du Moyen Âge pour estimer la valeur des choses et établir des équivalences ou des compensations. Cette gymnastique de conversion montre le caractère relativement répandu du procédé dans les milieux urbains de la fin du Moyen Âge. L'usage de monnaies alternatives s'explique par des questions pratiques – rentabiliser des matériaux usagés, des recettes en nature, éviter des paiements en pièces – mais aussi dans certains cas par leur place symbolique.

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étrangères ou n'ayant plus cours pour en faire don à l'Église. Le cas est intéressant car s'il s'agit bien d'un paiement monétaire, l'absence de valeur ou d'utilisation de la pièce de monnaie lui donne un caractère symbolique qui pourrait classer ces pratiques comme de la monnaie alternative.



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*Natura dei mezzi di scambio non monetari*

*The nature of alternative currencies*



Nenad Fejic

*An apparent paradox: wool as an alternative currency for merchants and weavers in Dubrovnik (Ragusa) in the 15<sup>th</sup> century*

## 1. The manufacture and trade of wool: a focal point of the first two Settimane Datini

In approaching the subject that the scientific committee has chosen for this 54<sup>th</sup> «*settimana di studi*», we would like to go briefly back in time for more than half a century and recall here the first two «*settimane*» of 1969 and 1970, dedicated, for the first one to «*La lana come materia prima: I fenomeni della sua produzione e circolazione nei secoli XIII-XVII*» and the second one to «*La produzione, commercio e consumo, dei panni di lana nei secoli XII-XVIII*». These two weeks of study are closely associated with the names of Fernand Braudel and Federico Melis, the founding fathers of the prestigious institute which brings us together today in Prato.

Since that time, eminent scholars starting with some of the contributors to the first two «*settimane*», such as Jorjo Tadic (Tadic, 1974) and Barisa Krekic (Krekic, 1976), have studied the lives and destinies of merchants who came to Dubrovnik from various Mediterranean countries and whose activities were closely linked to the wool trade and the production of woollen fabrics. Not to forget our distinguished colleagues Paola Pinelli (Pinelli, 2006, 2013), and Francesco Bettarini (Bettarini 2012, 2016), who, thanks to the research work made in the Datini archives of Prato, have removed, more recently, the last doubts about the presence of merchants and weavers from Prato and, more widely, from Tuscany in Dubrovnik in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The subject we propose to discuss in this contribution is, therefore, part of a research field continuum.

We want to focus on a specific aspect less often highlighted by scholars and which nevertheless underpinned the production-related and commercial flows of wool in Dubrovnik. We would indeed like to discuss the partial replacement of real money – the silver *grossi* – and money of account – the *hyperperi* – by wool and woollen fabrics, in the relationships between merchants and weavers, in the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

Facing the wealth of the archives of Dubrovnik as well as the immense bibliography devoted to the history of the production and trade of wool and woollen fabrics in Dubrovnik, we had to make a choice and approach the question of wool as an alternative currency from the point of view of merchants and weavers from the Iberian Peninsula, primarily the Catalans.

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## 1.1 Wool as an alternative currency in Dubrovnik: for which category of user?

The first question to ask ourselves is: was wool an alternative currency for all Iberian weavers and merchants active on the local market in the 15<sup>th</sup> century? The answer must be nuanced, as in the 15<sup>th</sup> century alone, more than 245 merchants from different cities of the Iberian Peninsula were active in Dubrovnik (Fejic, 1988). The Catalans were by far the most numerous, contributing to the fact that in modern historiography on Dubrovnik, the incomers from the states and cities of the Iberian Peninsula were mostly identified as Catalans. But the reality was more complex in Dubrovnik, where we identified in the archival documents, in addition to the Catalans, merchants and craftsmen whose origin was designated as from Barcelona, Tortosa, Mallorca, Valencia, Tarragona, Perpignan, Navarra, Narbonne, Cagliari, Zaragoza, Syracuse, Alicante, Granollers, or as from Castilla, Aragon, Spain and Portugal. And their use of an alternative currency varied considerably, according to their precise role in the wool trade and manufacture.

The most important merchants who entrusted large quantities of wool from Barcelona and Tortosa to the care of their local agents in Dubrovnik and therefore made the most profit from the sale of this article on the local market very rarely travelled overseas themselves. They belonged to the Barcelona patriciate, were sometimes members of the governing councils of the city, or high-ranking officers of the Catalan customs service, such as the Guiberts, the De Rodas, or members of Florentine families settled permanently in the Catalan capital, such as the Davanzatis, the Aldobrandis, the Neronis. (Battle-Gallart, 1973, 453; Fejic, 1988, 158-59, 163). The presence of their names in governmental, notarial or judicial registers in Dubrovnik is, therefore, more discreet than in the Catalan cities, being relegated to the background by the presence of their local agents in the Dalmatian city.<sup>1</sup> From the point of view of these great merchants living in Catalan cities, wool was a commodity like any other, insured by local insurers and transported to the Adriatic ports by local, mainly Catalan ship owners. Both insurance and transport prices were therefore expressed in local Catalan currency, whether real or of account. The silver coins – croats – and gold coins – the Aragon florin – were mostly used as real money. As the currency of account, *solidi* and *librae* were used, where 20 *solidi* corresponded to 1 *libra* (Mateu y Llopis, 1946).

Then, there was a second category of medium-sized Catalan merchants who assumed a dual function: agents acting in Dubrovnik for their respective patrons in Barcelona and, at the same time, local merchants who managed their own affairs. The members of this second category usually stayed long in Dubrovnik and developed relations with foreigners and local people at many levels. They sometimes married women from local families and often died in the Dalmatian city, having designated by testamentary dispositions, their heirs in Dubrovnik or their native cities in Catalonia (Fejic, 1994, 429-52). We will mention here just the names of two of

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<sup>1</sup> To find out the names of the great merchants who sent wool from Barcelona to Dubrovnik, two Catalan archives are particularly important: the Notarial Archives (AHPB) and the Municipal Archives (AHCB) located in Barcelona.

these local agents, Bernard Guasquill and Anthony Brull, both Catalans from Tortosa. They lived in Dubrovnik, the first for 16 years (1420-1436) and the second for 15 years (1436-1451), and their lives provide documents for real prosopographic studies (Fejic, 1988, 128-130, 150-153). They were known for using wool as a parallel currency in many cases while at the same time maintaining an activity that was firmly anchored in classical monetary practice, that of gold and silver money, the money of account, and the forwarding and reception of bills of exchange.

Finally, there was a third category of people of Catalan origin: the craftsmen. These craftsmen were involved in different stages, from raw wool treatment to producing finished fabrics. They were the least favoured and most precarious category of Catalans in Dubrovnik, both economically and socially. In most cases, the local registers in Dubrovnik reveal neither their precise origins nor the exact circumstances of their arrival in the Dalmatian city. Having no capital, they could only rent their labour to their wealthier compatriots or the Ragusans. In the best of cases, after some attempts, they created small weaving, fulling or carding workshops that were never safe from sudden reversals of fortune (Fejic, 1996, 83-90). It is precisely this third and most modest category of Catalans who, having no money of their own, has left the most numerous testimonies in local Ragusan sources on using wool as an alternative currency.

## 1.2 Wool as an alternative currency in credit transactions

In the credit contracts, wool was used as the currency advanced by the creditor. The debtor – the weaver – had to process the wool and repay the credit in the form of fabrics in various stages of completion. His work as a weaver added value to the wool, and the result of this work – the fabric provided to the creditor – also included an interest paid on top of the quantity of wool received. As we will see, in this case, the wool had a value agreed upon between the creditor and the debtor. Still, the challenge for historians is that the monetary counterpart for wool credits was only sometimes included in the contracts and was tacitly admitted. In such cases, the wool was set up as an alternative currency, reciprocally accepted by the creditor and the debtor (Voje, 1976, 94-104).

In the general absence of precise currency references for the credits in raw wool contracted by small weavers, we must try to establish the link between money and the cost of wool in Dubrovnik and then transfer this relationship to the contracts where the amount of the credit was established exclusively in the quantity of wool given by the creditor merchant to the debtor weaver. Any constant and regular relationship between the amount of wool advanced and the number, or even the dimensions of the fabrics recovered by the creditor throughout the 15<sup>th</sup> century, would make possible the evaluation of wool as a monetary instrument in Dubrovnik. This task is made even more difficult by the fact that the instruments of payment in Dubrovnik, as elsewhere at the time, were both real money – in gold or silver – and money of account.

Without going into detail about the monetary system in Dubrovnik (Resetar, 1924-1925), it should be pointed out that in terms of real money in gold, the Venetian



ducats were the most present in circulation, followed by Florentine florins. The real silver money was mostly represented by the Ragusan silver *denarii grossi*, and to a lesser extent, by silver coins minted in the neighbouring kingdoms of Serbia and Bosnia.

The currency of account in Dubrovnik was the Ragusan *hyperperus*. Knowing that the ratio of the silver *grossi* to the *hyperperi* was 12 *grossi* to 1 *hyperperus*, and that this ratio was unchanging, one can follow the rate of devaluation of the real currency, the silver *grossi*, against the Venetian ducats and consequently also the devaluation of the current money of account, the *hyperperi*, throughout the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Krekić, 1980, VIII, 252-53). It is therefore also possible to follow – and this is what interests us in particular – the changes in the price of wool as an alternative currency in Dubrovnik, firstly, in the granting and refunding of credits between merchants and weavers, secondly, in the summonses to pay when debts in wool were the cause of disputes between creditors and debtors, before the civil court and thirdly, in partnership contracts related to the production of woollen fabrics in which the contributions in wool participated to the same degree as money in the profits and the losses of the parties involved. Wool, as an alternative currency, was therefore mentioned in the following registers of the Dubrovnik archives (DAD): *Debita Notariae* for credit transactions, *Sententiae Cancellariae* for summonses to pay addressed to defaulting debtors, and *Diversa Notariae* for partnership contracts in the production of woollen fabrics.

As an alternative currency, wool was subject to devaluation, resulting in inflation, which caused severe problems to creditors and debtors who used wool and woollen fabrics as instruments of credit and repayment. In many cases, this resulted in clauses opening the way for subsequent readjustments regarding the number of fabrics to be produced from a previously specified quantity of wool supplied by the creditor to the debtor.

To try to answer the first question about the price of wool in real money and account money, we refer to table 1, which shows the variations in the price of wool in the Ragusan market. This table shows some examples of the granting of credit in wool in Dubrovnik between 1431 and 1434, the period of greatest activity in the sale of wool and woollen fabric production in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. When the credit was advanced in wool by the merchant to the weaver, it was expressed in the weight of the credited wool, i.e., in *miliarii*. Knowing that the *miliarium* corresponded to the weight of 1 000 *librae*, and that the weight of a *libra* «*ad pondus grossum*» corresponded in Dubrovnik to 358,104 gr, the *miliarium* of wool was approximately equivalent to 358 kg of wool.<sup>2</sup> The examples given, correspond respectively to 3 580 kg, in the first two cases, to 1 432 kg in the third case, and to 1 074 kg in the last two cases of the table 1. But, as we can see in the next column, the amount of the credit was expressed in different ways: for the first two examples, a fixed price in ducats for the *miliarium* of wool advanced. For the last three examples, the prices are expressed for the whole quantity of wool, respectively 110 ducats, an unspecified price in ducats and a price of 100 ducats and 12 *grossi* advanced to the borrower. We can therefore say that a

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<sup>2</sup> Two types of *librae* were used in Dubrovnik in the Middle Ages. The "libra ad pondus grossum" which weighed 358.104 grams and the "libra ad pondus subtile" which weighed 327.923 grams). The "libra grossa" was used to weigh all goods except precious metals, gold, silver and pearls (Vlajinac, 1968,28).

wool credit contract had recourse both to an amount in ducats per *miliarium*, and to an amount for the total quantity of delivered wool.

Tab 1. Some examples of the setting and variation of prices for workand fabrics in credit transactions between individuals in Ragusa between 1430 and 1434

Doc. Ref.	Date	Credit.	Debtor	Quantity in wool	Price	Reim-bursed fabrics in	Reimburse-ment due date
Div.Not. XVII 64'	26 June 1431	Johannes Brull	Ratco Bogdanov	10 mil.	5 dcts per mil.	? rolls 15 dcts per roll	?
Div.Not. XVII 76'-77	21 July 1431	Johannes Brull	Hugutius de Padua	10 mil.	5 dcts per mil.	? rolls 15 dcts per roll	3 months
Div. Not. XVIII 136'	4 December 1433	Johannes Brull	Simco Bogavtchitch	4 mil.	110 dcts.	? rolls 15 dcts per roll	3 months
Div.Not. XVIII,183	12 February 1434	Johannes Brull	Antonius de Rimini	3 mil.	? dcts.	8 rolls	?
Div.Not. XVIII.244	28 April 1434	Johannes Brull	Petrus Rakoevitch	3 mil.	100 dcts. 12 grossi	? Rolls 9dcts, 12 grossi per roll	?

The amount to refund, in the next column, which includes the amount of the credit in wool and the interest rate generated by the same credit, is expressed in terms of wool fabrics, the unit price of which was also, though not regularly specified in the registers. The debtor was obliged to deliver to the creditor, within a period, which was usually three months, a certain quantity of wool received and transformed by him into fabrics: these fabrics can be considered as the refund of the credit by the

debtor, with the rate of interest included, but not explicitly mentioned, as if it had been a loan in real or account money.

Creditors were sometimes obliged to sue the debtor weavers in the Dubrovnik Civil Court. The registers of sentences of the civil court, of which table 2 is an example, show, for the period between 1436 and 1443, the names of the plaintiffs and defendants, the amounts to be repaid, and the notarial registers in which the debts were originally registered, as well as the respective dates of registration. As can be seen, the debts were expressed in real or account money and fabric.

**Tab.2. Some examples of summonses to pay in wool or woollen Fabrics by the civil court of Ragusa between 1436 and 1443**

Doc. Ref.	Date	Creditor	Debtor	Debt in money or fabrics
Sent. Canc. VIII, 221	19/09/1436	Antonius Brull	Georges Radichitch	49 hyperperi
Sent. Canc. IX, 88'	12/02/1438	Antonius Brull	Rusco Bogoevitch	30 ducats
Sent. Canc. IX,89'	12/02/1438	Antonius Brull	Marcus the carder	4 rolls of fabric
Sent. Canc IX,140	9/07/1438	Antonius Brull	Nicolas from Bar	15 ducats
Sent. Canc. XII, 15	30/01/1443	Pascoe Orlachich	Antonius Brull	1194 librae of wool
Sent. Canc XII, 18	8/02/1443	Vutchina Tvrdochich	Antonius Brull	7 rolls of fabric

## **2. At the outset in Catalonia: an assesment in real currency**

Given that wool and woollen fabric were used as an alternative currency by merchants engaged in trade in Dubrovnik during the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the question naturally arises as to the distribution of income between the three categories mentioned above, those of the prominent merchants based in Catalonia, and those of the medium and small merchants, or simple weavers who lived in Dubrovnik.

For the great merchants based in Barcelona or Tortosa, as has been observed from the outset, wool was not an alternative currency but rather an article of the trade like any other, the value of which was usually expressed in local Catalan currency. Indeed, the insurance contracts for large quantities of wool to be transported from Catalonia to the Adriatic Gulf<sup>3</sup> do not mention the modalities and actors of the future transformation of the wool once it has arrived at its destination. At this stage, therefore, the contracts drawn up in Catalonia mention only the quantity of wool insured and transported, as well as insurance premiums and transport conditions. What interested these great merchants was the placement of their products on the markets of Dubrovnik. They willingly delegated the precise terms of these placements to their local agents who knew Dubrovnik better, having lived there often for many years. Since the price expressed in Aragonese florins and Venetian ducats, as gold currencies or in the Catalan croats and the Ragusan *grossi* as silver currencies, could vary at both ends of the wool route, the use of currency of account could allow, as already said, for possible readjustments of the differences between the values of the respective real currencies.

At the starting point of the wool route in Catalonia, we find information in local sources on the quantities and prices of wool sent to the Adriatic Gulf. Although it is rather difficult to come to precise and exhaustive figures, let us recall some data: the Italian historian Mario Del Treppo, basing his work on the register of the local insurer Bartolome Masons, calculated that between July 1428 and December 1429, 360 tons of wool were transported from Tortosa to Genoa, Pisa, Dubrovnik and Venice through this Barcelona insurer alone (Del Treppo, 1976, 241). Claude Carrère, who also based his work on the register of Bartolome Massons, estimated that the quantity of wool sent to the ports of Venice and Dubrovnik alone was 119 tons (Carrère, 1967, 601). Focusing on Dubrovnik, we have finetuned these data. Using once more the registers of the same insurer and covering a slightly more extended period of 4 years, from 1426 to 1430, we could confirm that almost 114 tons of wool were sent to Dubrovnik (Fejic, 1988, 82). All these figures prove the importance of the Ragusan wool market in the eyes of the great Catalan merchants.

## 2.1 Wool becomes an alternative currency in Dubrovnik

In Dubrovnik, once the wool had been unloaded and weighed and the Ragusan customs duties paid, it was placed in the hands of local Catalan agents, who were responsible for selling it to their partners, the local, Italian, or Catalan weavers. As a side note, very little is known about the customs duties applied to the import of wool in Dubrovnik. The 1% tax on the value of imported wool, possibly applied to Catalan wool, is based only on an assumed but not proven reciprocity to the tax applied by Barcelona and Valencia port authorities to Venetian merchants. Apart from the fact that there is no evidence that reciprocity was ever applied, we have evidence that in 1444 two Ragusan merchants protested vigorously in Barcelona against the

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<sup>3</sup> A generic term to designate the Adriatic Sea in navigation or insurance contracts drawn up by Barcelona insurers for Catalan entrepreneurs or in the contracts for maritime transport to Dubrovnik and Venice

application of these «Italian» customs (Dohana Ytalica) to Ragusans, arguing that the local authorities «treated them unfairly as Italians, not as Ragusans who in any case should not pay any customs». (Fejic, 1982-1983). At this point, wool acquired a new dimension, that of an alternative currency.

The question arises why wool is acquiring the status of an alternative currency precisely at that moment, instead of the traditional instruments of real money or money of account favoured in the Catalan ports where wool was insured and loaded on ships? This question is even more relevant as the relations established by these intermediary agents with their local partners in Dubrovnik, have multiple natures. Whether it is a question of credit contracts, in the form of the advance of raw wool or semi-finished fabrics granted to debtors, or in the form of company contracts for various stages of wool processing or in the form of lawsuits brought before the Ragusan civil court for non-compliance with the content of the contract, everywhere wool and wool fabrics substitute to traditional payment instruments. How can this phenomenon be explained?

To answer this question, we need to look at the nature of credit in Dubrovnik in the Middle Ages and, more specifically, at the issue of credit trade involving Catalans in this Dalmatian city. To explain the nature of credit in the Dalmatian city, the great historian of Dubrovnik, Barisa Krekic, has suggested several lines of inquiry that are still relevant. The importance of credit in the local economy increased in line with the growth of Dubrovnik's economy in general, particularly in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, with the participation of the Ragusans in the mining boom in the Balkan hinterland, in Serbia and Bosnia. The Venetians, who had reconquered Dalmatia in 1420 after losing it following the war of Chioggia (1378-1381), had never succeeded in supplanting their Ragusan competitors in the Balkan hinterland. This is even truer for the Catalans, the Ragusans having kept in the Balkan hinterland a privileged position thanks to their knowledge of the environment and their cultural and linguistic affinities with the ruling elites of the Balkan States (Krekic, 1973, 1978). But the role of the Catalans in the city's economy increased with the introduction and development of wool manufacturing at the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. In this context of the credit boom, the installation of new wool processing workshops, whether carders, fullers or dyers, required significant local investments.

The communal authorities encouraged these activities by acting as intermediaries in the storage and resale of wool to individuals, by making weaving workshops available to craftsmen, by advancing credits to manufacturers and sometimes by undertaking to buy back their products in quantities fixed in advance. However, the Ragusan government did not participate directly in purchasing the wool that the Catalan merchants delivered. It did not practice a monopoly policy on the wool market, as it often did on the salt and cereals to constitute strategic reserves in which it could draw in the event of major danger for the commune. For wool, as we have seen, the government was content to levy a modest customs tax, after which the wool was sent to the merchant's depots, waiting to be sold, or advanced in the form of a credit to weavers and other artisans engaged in the transformation of wool. However, the government strictly ensured that the quantities of wool given by merchants to craftsmen corresponded to the processing capacity of craftsmen so that they were not tempted to stock up to resell them and make excessive profits. As for the agents of

the great merchants of the Catalan cities in Dubrovnik, they encouraged and accompanied the installation of the woollen factories, advancing to the weavers, quantities of wool to produce fabrics, participating exceptionally in certain intermediate stages of production, and constituting companies of limited duration with these same weavers, for the production of fabrics.

Despite this obvious dynamism of the Dubrovnik wool industry, the instrument of credit underlying it was not primarily money – whether real or of account – but rather the raw material itself or the products derived from it, wool or woollen fabrics. This may seem paradoxical, given the increased production and circulation of precious metals in Dubrovnik, at least part of which was absorbed and used by the local mint to produce coinage (Cirkovic, 1981, 1986). How, then, can we explain the absence of real money or money of account in wool production in Dubrovnik in the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century and the almost total domination of raw wool in everything related to fabric production and trade?

## 2. 2. A favourable economic climate for wool as an alternative currency in Dubrovnik

It would seem that the reason for the absence of real money in wool production is to be found paradoxically in the increased production of precious metals, especially silver, in the Balkan hinterland. The great historian of Dubrovnik, Jorjo Tadic, estimated that between 1427 and 1432, 25 tons of silver with a total value of more than 500,000 ducats were exported annually from Dubrovnik to the western Mediterranean, especially to the Italian cities (Tadic, 1968, 527). The exporters handed part of this amount under obligation to the Ragusan mint, which minted the local silver coins, the *grossi*. From the register of this mint, the historian Sima Cirkovic calculated that the export of this precious metal in the year 1422 alone was slightly less important but still amounted to more than five tons (Cirkovic, 1976, 81-90). Catalan and Venetian foreign agents transported most of this precious metal. The medium-sized merchants of Catalan origin, who represented the great patrons of Barcelona, invested the profits from the wool trade in purchasing precious metals – gold and silver – from the hinterland, rather than immobilizing them in the short circuit of wool production. In other words, with a steady flow of wool arriving in Dubrovnik from Catalonia, at least until the 1460s, there was no need to tie up large amounts of money in wool production. Exporting this silver as ingots or coins to the western Mediterranean markets was much more profitable. For example, the same Bernard Guasquill, one of the most active intermediaries in the supply of wool craftsmen in Dubrovnik, transported more than 9 kilograms of silver through Dubrovnik to Venice in 1422 alone (Kovacevic-Kojic, 1998). It is not the absence of silver transiting through Dubrovnik that explains why wool assumed the role of an alternative currency in Dubrovnik in specific contracts between merchants and craftsmen. On the contrary, the abundance of silver as a precious metal, partly minted in coins in Dubrovnik but in great part exported to the West, allowed the wool to establish itself as an alternative currency.

At the same time as the precious metals of Balkan origin were exported to the Mediterranean West, the products of the Ragusan woollen factories were exported in large quantities to a demanding market in the Balkans. Thus, Jorjo Tadic estimated that the value of wool exports to the Balkan markets amounted to 250,000 ducats, yearly between 1427 and 1432 (Tadic, 1968, 531). Under these conditions, the woollen factories in Dubrovnik could operate on a self-financing basis in a strictly local circuit, provided that their finished products were re-exported and made a more substantial profit abroad. Initially a factor of enrichment and prosperity among many others, wool manufacturing became, over time, a victim of its success and, consequently, a credible alternative currency in the Dubrovnik economy, but on a local scale only.

### 3. Conclusion: the origins of an apparent paradox

The role of wool as an alternative currency in Dubrovnik was certainly a result of the favourable economic situation, which coincided with the emergence of the wool industry in Dubrovnik on the one hand, and a strong increase in mining production in the Balkans on the other, both phenomena being characteristic of the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The flow of precious metals from the interior of the Balkans to the coastal towns and the subsequent enrichment of the royal and princely courts and urban centres in Serbia and Bosnia created a need for luxury goods, which was perfectly satisfied by the wool production in Dubrovnik. As Professor Krekic summarised very well in his contribution to the second «settimana» in Prato in 1970, which we quote here in the text: «Si puo dire che a Ragusa in generale, fu il commercio a stimolare la produzione e questo è vero per la produzione di panni più di ogni altra» (Krekic, 1976,708). Did wool, assume – in a sort of mirror game – the same role as silver currency, as an instrument of payment in the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century? This seems likely to us, especially as the role of wool as an alternative currency in Dubrovnik changed in line with the overall changes in the economic activity in the Balkans. With the latter's decline in the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, especially following the Ottoman conquest and Ottoman authorities' ban on exporting precious metals in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, wool lost its role as an alternative currency.

The great demand for fabrics in the prosperous Balkan market in the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century was the main asset for wool as an alternative currency in Dubrovnik. When the reasons for enjoying this advantage disappeared, the role of wool as an alternative currency in Dubrovnik also disappeared. It should also be noted that, at the same time as the inflow of precious metals from the Balkans decreased, so did the inflow of Spanish wool, which had been the source of the prosperity of the woollen factories in Dubrovnik, in the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed, the era of the predominance of the powerful patrician families in Barcelona, engaged in the export of wool, came to an end with the outbreak of the civil war in Catalonia in the sixties and early seventies of the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Battle-Gallart, 1973): the civil war caused a decline, and then an almost complete halt in the export of wool to the Adriatic region, and especially to Dubrovnik, and consequently caused a decline in wool manufacture in the Dalmatian city. Without a secure market in the Balkans, wool and woollen

fabrics could not benefit from an advantage that ensured their status as an alternative currency. So, the traditional means – primarily real money and money of account – again became the main instruments of the Ragusan economy, including the wool manufacturing.

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*Pratiques du troc, industries et stratégies individuelles  
(Lodévois et Vallespir, XV<sup>e</sup> siècle – vers 1550)*

Payer en nature ou avec son travail, échanger des produits, *baratare* sont des pratiques courantes dans les espaces méridionaux que constituent les territoires examinés, qu'il s'agisse du comté de Roussillon (couronne d'Aragon) ou du Languedoc (couronne de France). Elles interviennent quelle que soit l'échelle des échanges et le grand commerce international, examiné à partir de Perpignan ou des foires de Pézenas et de Montagnac, en témoigne. Dans le cas qui nous retiendra ici, l'échelle des échanges est plus modeste. Le contexte est celui de deux districts industriels, celui du Vallespir qui correspond à la vallée du Tech, sur le versant sud du mont Canigou, et le Lodévois, entre vallées de l'Orb et de l'Hérault, sur les contreforts du Massif central. La démonstration a pour objectif d'analyser la fréquence des paiements en nature, désignés sous l'appellation générique de «troc», et leur adéquation à une économie dynamique et fortement monétarisée dans les campagnes méridionales, du XV<sup>e</sup> au milieu du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle. Dans la pratique, il s'agit d'examiner la circulation des objets et des biens échangés contre d'autres objets et d'autres biens ou contre du travail. Les sources notariées nous permettent de rentrer de plain-pied dans les conditions de l'échange et dans ses spécificités, en appliquant une démarche comparative entre les deux districts, afin d'exposer les formes des échanges en nature (et en travail), d'en apprécier la diversité, d'en saisir les nuances et de proposer des hypothèses pour en comprendre les mécanismes, l'usage et les spécificités d'un district à l'autre.

## 1. Deux districts industriels dans la croissance

Le contexte est celui de deux districts industriels en période de croissance. Les activités industrielles y sont diversifiées et se combinent différemment d'un district à l'autre. Les productions alimentent l'espace local et régional et sont exportées (1) pour le Vallespir, au-delà du Roussillon, vers Valence ou le royaume de France par les ports de Collioure et de Canet (par cabotage), par voie de terre, vers le comté de Foix et la Cerdagne, (2) dans le cas du Lodévois, vers les actives foires languedociennes de Pézenas et de Montagnac et les ports d'Aigues-Mortes et de Marseille (Fig. 1).

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Fig. 1. Carte des districts industriels du Vallespir et du Lodévois (c) Région Occitanie, Véronique Marill, 2023



Dans le district du Vallespir, on note l'activité prédominante de deux industries majeures: la sidérurgie sur laquelle la documentation est la plus abondante et celle du drap, en particulier la teinturerie. D'autres industries concourent à diversifier la production mais elles demeurent moins connues du fait de la rareté des archives: le travail du cuir (mégisserie) et l'industrie du bois, associée au flottage. L'activité agricole est fondée sur la production traditionnelle de céréales, de vin, et sur l'élevage, en particulier de moutons mais non exclusivement. Toutes ces productions s'appuient sur une importante activité de transport qu'il s'agisse de convoi muletier, de flottage ou de cabotage. C'est l'industrie sidérurgique qui est associée le plus étroitement à la pratique des échanges en nature, sous différentes formes. Il est nécessaire d'en préciser quelques aspects pour la bonne compréhension de la démonstration qui suit. Elle est l'un des moteurs de la croissance d'un long XV<sup>e</sup> siècle qui se ralentit vers les années 1550. Ce secteur de production est alimenté par des forges hydrauliques de réduction directe (des moulins) qui sont des entreprises rassemblant une vingtaine d'hommes au travail. Elles livrent du fer en barre et en lingot, plus ou moins carburé, et également des aciers. Si l'atelier est la propriété de membres de la notabilité locale des bourgs, les entrepreneurs qui le louent dans le cadre de baux à court terme (d'un à deux ans) et la main-d'œuvre qui y travaille sont tous d'origine étrangère, tout au long de la période considérée, qu'il s'agisse de Languedociens et de Basques, puis ensuite d'Italiens (Génois, Lombards, Toscans). Peu d'entre eux semblent se fixer à long terme et leur vie est rythmée par des allers-retours entre les versants du Canigou et leurs patries, poursuivis qu'ils sont par l'endettement (Verna 2017). Toutes ces

conditions de travail doivent être rappelées car le sens à donner à la pratique des échanges en nature dépend de la bonne compréhension des relations économiques et sociales qui sont en œuvre dans cette société industrielle de montagne (Fig. 2).

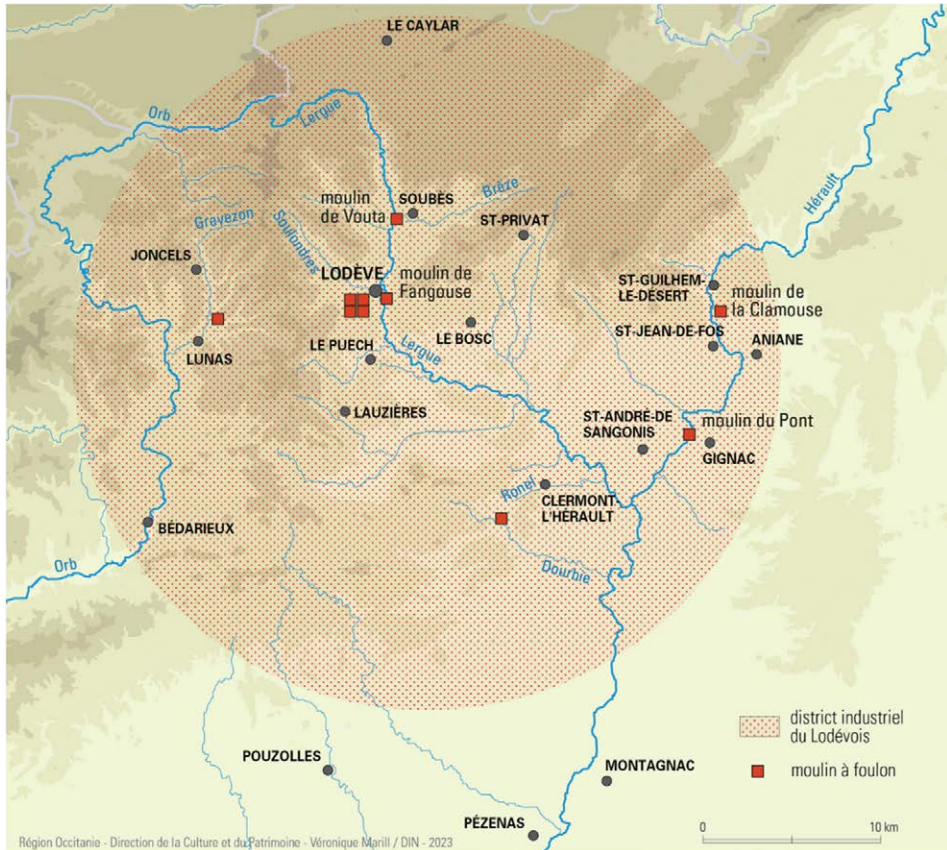
Fig. 2. Carte du district industriel et des moulins du Vallespir (c) Région Occitanie, Véronique Marill, 2023



Le district de Lodève présente un profil différent. Ses limites concordent assez largement avec le diocèse et l'arrondissement de la cité épiscopale de Lodève, située entre Massif central et Méditerranée. L'industrie majeure est celle du drap: des draps *burels* et des *blanquets* pour le secteur compris entre Bédarieux, Lodève et Clermont-l'Hérault et des draps blancs et des *blanquets* pour les bourgs de la vallée de l'Hérault. Les meules de barbier sont également l'objet d'une production de masse, diffusée sur les marchés internationaux. Dans le domaine des peaux, la production d'agneaux-fourrures (animaux avortés dont la peau et la fourrure sont traitées sur place *a minima*) alimente un marché extérieur et l'industrie de la cité d'Aurillac. Dans le domaine du drap, la production s'effectue dans des ateliers spécialisés, correspondant à la fragmentation de la chaîne opératoire (tissage, foulage et teinture). Disséminés entre la ville et la campagne, les ateliers demeurent entre les mains des notables de la petite ville de Lodève et des bourgs alentours qui emploient une main-d'œuvre essentiellement locale (Fig. 3). L'activité industrielle est combinée avec une activité agricole dynamique où s'affirme la production d'huile, de céréales et de vin, la première faisant l'objet d'un commerce à moyenne distance (elle est présente, notamment, sur les marchés toulousains). L'élevage, activité pratiquée à la fois dans les espaces ouverts du sud du Lodévois, mais aussi et surtout sur les causses septentrionaux, dont celui du Larzac, alimente à la fois l'industrie du drap, la production d'agneaux-fourrures et la mégisserie, moins connue. Le district est en

relation étroite avec les grandes foires de Pézenas et de Montagnac, situées à moins de 40 km de Lodève, et avec celles du Lendit à Saint-Denis, pour les agneaux-fourrures, via les pelletiers d'Aurillac (Caliste 2021).

Fig. 3. Carte du district industriel et des moulins à foulon du Lodévois (c) Région Occitanie, Véronique Marill, 2023



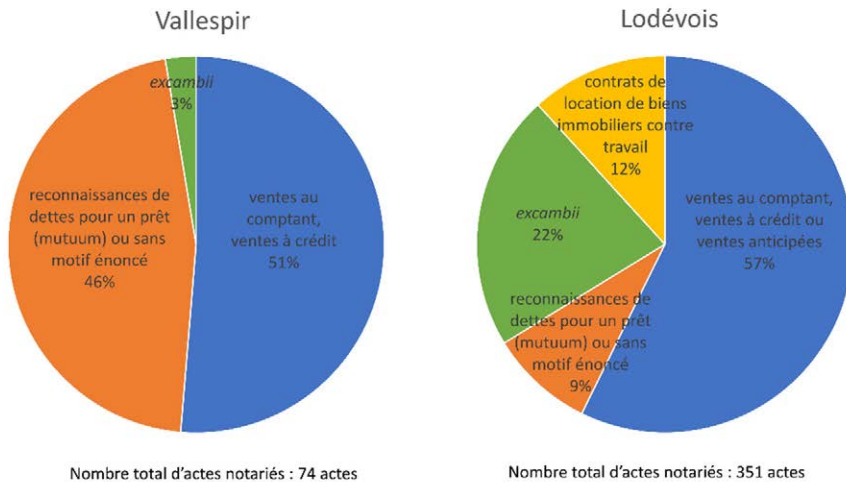
Dans ces deux districts, la circulation monétaire est attestée largement dès le XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. On ne paie pas ici en nature ou en travail parce que l'on ne peut pas faire autrement du fait de l'étroitesse de la masse monétaire en circulation ou de l'incapacité à en faire usage. Même dans le cas de paiements en nature, en travail ou d'échange avec compensation (*excambium*) les prix des produits et des services sont souvent exprimés en monnaie de compte ou en monnaie réelle. La valeur respective des monnaies en circulation est connue de tous les usagers, pas uniquement des marchands et des revendeurs au détail. Dans certains actes, les parties trouvent utile de préciser le cours de la monnaie (son change) (Bompaire, Furio 2014). Dans le cas de paiements en nature, le prix des produits qui servent à l'échange est indiqué à l'unité, ou

bien peut être déduit de la formulation de l'acte. Par ailleurs, l'achat d'une marchandise ou d'un bien peut être soldé à la fois en monnaie réelle et en nature. Ainsi, le contexte est bien celui d'une économie marchande ouverte sur les échanges internationaux et où les acteurs économiques, quelle que soit leur identité sociale ou professionnelle, pratiquent le paiement en nature ou en service par choix, que celui-ci leur soit imposé ou non, mais rarement par défaut.

## 2. Les formes notariées des échanges en nature

Les formes des échanges en nature se moulent dans les cadres traditionnels des contrats notariés. D'un district à l'autre, elles ne sont pas absolument identiques et cette situation documentaire permet une utile recension des modalités de paiement en nature et en travail, et de leurs pratiques.

Fig. 4. Nature des actes notariés (échanges en nature et en travail) en Vallespir et en Lodévois



En Vallespir, le corpus compte 74 actes. Les plus nombreux parmi ceux qui resituent l'usage du paiement en nature (et parfois, mais très rarement, en service de travail) sont des actes de vente au comptant et des actes de vente à crédit (soit, de 1407 à 1556: 38 actes, avec une répartition en faveur du XV<sup>e</sup> qui rassemble 21 actes). S'y ajoute un second ensemble lié à l'endettement chronique dans cette société rurale. Il s'agit de reconnaissances de dettes pour un prêt spécifiquement énoncé (*mutuum*: 21 actes, dont trois seulement pour le XV<sup>e</sup> siècle) ou sans que soit précisée l'origine de la dette (13 actes dont quatre au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle).

En Lodévois, le dossier documentaire rassemble 351 actes pour le seul XV<sup>e</sup> siècle. Il est donc beaucoup plus riche que celui du Vallespir (dans le cas du Lodévois, il n'a pas été possible de poursuivre le rassemblement des sources après 1500). Le paiement en nature est mentionné dans 185 contrats de vente, que l'achat se fasse au comptant, à crédit ou par vente anticipée ; dans 29 actes, l'échange en nature concerne la reconnaissance d'une dette liée à un prêt (*mutuum*) ou pour un motif non précisé. Les actes qui encadrent les échanges en nature sont donc de même type dans les deux districts industriels.

Le plus souvent, il s'agit d'acheter un produit avec un autre produit (ou par son travail). Dans le cas de remboursement de dette (remboursement d'un prêt ou remboursement pour une dette dont l'origine n'est pas spécifiée), il s'agit de payer sa dette avec des objets ou du travail. Une première remarque à ce stade de la démonstration: en Lodévois, on achète et on rembourse avec toutes sortes d'objets très diversifiés, mais cependant on note l'usage fréquent de l'huile, des céréales, du drap et de la laine. Ce n'est pas le cas en Vallespir où on achète et on rembourse dans la très grande majorité des cas avec un seul produit: du fer. Cependant – et seconde remarque –, dans les deux districts, les objets qui circulent dans le cadre du contrat n'ont pas la même fonction. On note, en effet, un sens dans la transaction. On achète un bien et on rembourse une dette avec du fer mais le fer est rarement l'objet d'une «vente en nature»: il l'est par le biais de «ventes monétarisées». En Lodévois, on achète et on rembourse avec de l'huile qui, parmi les nombreux produits en circulation, domine la documentation notariée (85 actes). L'huile, en revanche, tout comme le fer en Vallespir, est achetée majoritairement contre un paiement en monnaie. Fer et huile sont donc les objets mobilisés pour acquérir prioritairement un bien ou solder une dette en nature. Notons que, dans le cas du fer, la grande majorité de ceux qui achètent avec du fer sont des entrepreneurs étrangers à la tête des forges. Pour l'huile, aucun profil particulier ne ressort de la documentation.

Pour revenir à la nature des documents, il s'avère que, au-delà de ces deux types d'actes communs aux deux districts, c'est-à-dire des ventes et des remboursements de dettes, le Lodévois est caractérisé par une plus large diversité typologique, en particulier par la présence de nombreux contrats d'*excambium* (71 contre deux dans le Vallespir). Nous souhaitons nous arrêter un moment sur ce type d'actes car il nous semble correspondre à ce que l'on peut désigner communément comme un «troc», c'est-à-dire «l'échange» d'un produit contre un autre produit, parfois de même nature (Reyerson, Salata 2004). Les termes utilisés dans les actes notariés sont spécifiquement *permutatio*, et *excambium sive permutationem*. Le terme *baratare* qui apparaît dans un des deux cas catalans, et dans les manuels de marchands, n'est pas utilisé en Lodévois. L'*excambium* est incontestablement une caractéristique du Lodévois. La forme commune de ce type de contrat comprend les noms des parties engagées et les termes de l'échange. Sur les 71 *excambii* du Lodévois, 89% concernent des biens fonciers. Dans les cas observés, les biens peuvent être de même nature: il peut s'agir de deux vignes, de deux maisons... Toutefois, dans la majorité des cas, les biens échangés diffèrent. Ainsi, en 1464, un champ s'échange contre une olivette. Quelques cas plus rares portent sur un moulin ou une boutique. En 1494, Amalric de Clermont, seigneur du Bosc, échange avec Pierre Rabejac, une de ses terres contre des droits sur un moulin

et une maison situés dans un hameau du Bosc.<sup>1</sup> Trois mois plus tard, ce même Amalric échange avec les frères Philippe et Pierre Rabejac une terre et plusieurs champs contre leur part du moulin, de son soubassement et un casal proche du moulin.<sup>2</sup> S'agit-il pour le seigneur de compléter sa propriété du moulin? Sans doute. Ce cas démontre que l'*excambium* peut être le support d'une véritable stratégie d'accumulation du capital. Les cas ne semblent pas cibler de professions ou de statuts particuliers, tous les membres de la société, de la cité épiscopale aux villages, y participent.

La forme juridique de ce contrat prévoit qu'il y ait une compensation dans le cas d'une différence de valeur entre les biens échangés, selon l'expression *pro turnis seu maiori valencia* (c'est aussi la formule qui apparaît dans le second acte de cette nature en Vallespir). Cette pratique est celle énoncée dans les manuels de marchands et, en particulier, dans ceux qui sont rédigés en Languedoc et en Catalogne à la fin du Moyen Âge (*Traité de Pamiers*, 1430, et *Suma de la art de arismètica*, Barcelone, 1482). Il y est question du «prix du troc» qui prend en compte la complexité de l'opération mesurée à l'aune du «juste prix». Les traités diffusent ainsi les moyens de calcul permettant une surélévation équivalente des deux produits, pour aboutir à un équilibre des échanges (Labarthe 2002, Lamassé 2005). Dans la pratique dont témoignent les sources des districts, cette compensation peut donner lieu à un paiement en numéraire. Le paiement en nature y trouve également sa place, les matières premières et les produits textiles servant souvent de compensation. Ainsi, en 1464 à Lodève, le fabricant de bourses Pierre Godart troque avec un peigneur une vigne contre une autre vigne. En raison de la plus grande valeur de l'une d'elles, Pierre Godart doit six moutons d'or qu'il promet de rembourser sous la forme de trois quarterons de laine de mégisserie.<sup>3</sup> Dans un contrat de 1467, c'est le drap qui est utilisé comme monnaie d'échange: le tisserand Antoine Cambon reconnaît devoir deux écus d'or, en raison d'un *excambium* conclu le jour même, concernant une maison contre des terres, champs, jardins et bois.<sup>4</sup> À la suite de ce contrat, son vendeur reconnaît avoir reçu deux cannes de *blanquet* de Lodève. En Vallespir, les deux seuls actes qui illustrent la pratique de l'*excambium* portent sur des mules, avec *turnis*.

### 3. Les produits échangés

Dans les deux districts, comme nous l'avons précédemment noté, les objets échangés ne sont pas interchangeables. Il y a des objets achetés et échangés et il y a des objets qui servent prioritairement à acheter les autres. Il convient à présent de rassembler dans une même liste tous les objets que l'on voit passer dans les contrats d'échange en nature, quelle que soit leur place.

En Vallespir, le fer, une des productions phare du district, est prédominant dans les échanges. On note également la présence des mules originaires du Roussillon qui sont très appréciées tant dans la couronne d'Aragon que dans le royaume de France.

<sup>1</sup> Archives départementales de l'Hérault (ADH), 2<sup>E</sup>39/201, fol. 16r.

<sup>2</sup> ADH, 2<sup>E</sup>39/201, fol. 31r.

<sup>3</sup> ADH, 2<sup>E</sup>39/50, fol. 48r.

<sup>4</sup> ADH, 2<sup>E</sup>39/77, fol. 86r.



La mule constitue un capital de survie dans le cas des Basques et, plus généralement, pour les travailleurs migrants (Verna 2017, Pinto 2005). Sont également échangés des victuailles (céréales, vin, bétail), du bois et un peu de charbon de bois (parfois associé à son transport). Tous ces objets sont produits dans le district. On constate, néanmoins, la sous-représentation des draps et de la laine (laine *sutzga* c'est-à-dire «sale») comme celle des cuirs et des peaux. *A contrario*, ces produits (laine, draps, peaux) sont présents dans les échanges monétarisés. Ils sont achetés au comptant ou bien à crédit, mais ils sont très rarement l'objet de troc ou d'échange non monétarisés (drap: un acte [1412], laine: deux actes [1448 et 1485], peau: aucun acte). Pour clore le chapitre sur le Vallespir, émettons une dernière remarque afin de rendre compte de la diversité de la place des produits dans les échanges. Dans les actes de vente (quelle que soit leur forme, à crédit ou non) et dans les reconnaissances de dettes, on achète un produit et on rembourse une dette majoritairement avec du fer. Le fer est le moyen de paiement le plus courant et très largement majoritaire. On peut le désigner sans hésitation comme une monnaie de substitution dans ce contexte spécifique, d'autant que, comme nous le verrons, le prix du fer en Vallespir est rarement spécifié dans les actes. Il est supposé connu. Cependant, il ne faut pas simplifier la situation à l'extrême: comme il a été énoncé *supra*, on achète également avec du bois, avec de la laine, avec du seigle ou avec du charbon.<sup>5</sup> Il est clair que l'on paie avec ce dont on dispose et sans doute avec ce qui est intéressant pour le vendeur, ce dont le vendeur a besoin. La mule est un cas particulier: on achète des mules avec du fer, on échange des mules (*excambium*) mais on ne paie pas avec des mules.

En Lodévois, quatre produits occupent la majorité des échanges en nature: l'huile, les céréales, les draps et les laines. Il s'agit, comme dans le Vallespir, des produits phares du district lodévois où la part des productions agricoles est indéniablement plus importante. À ces produits s'ajoutent le bétail, les biens fonciers, également du bois, du redoul, du vin, des tuiles, de la chaux, du suif... Notons la place occupée par les biens fonciers qui n'a pas d'équivalent en Vallespir où le marché de la terre passe par des paiements en monnaie. Comme en Vallespir, cette diversité s'accompagne d'une spécificité des usages de certains produits dans les échanges en nature. Ici, également, les objets ne sont pas interchangeables mais disposent d'une fonction spécifique entre vendeurs et acheteurs. Ainsi, huile, draps, laine et céréales interviennent majoritairement comme moyens de paiement, même si pour les draps la situation est partagée entre objet d'un échange en nature et moyen de paiement. Dans ce dernier cas, les draps interviennent dans 29 contrats, pour acheter des biens fonciers, du bétail et de la laine, pour solder une dette. Il s'agit de «draps du pays». La laine, également «du pays», intervient dans des échanges comparables à ceux des draps (23 contrats): pour solder une dette, acheter des draps du pays, des biens fonciers (maison, pré, vigne et moulin drapier). Les céréales (25 contrats) sont utilisées comme moyen de paiement pour du foncier et du bétail. Rappelons que c'est l'huile qui est le produit majoritairement utilisé comme moyen de paiement (85 contrats). Elle sert

<sup>5</sup> Archives départementales des Pyrénées-Orientales (ADPO), 3<sup>E</sup>1/5069, fol. 22, 3<sup>E</sup>2/782, fol. 93-94, 3<sup>E</sup>20/8, fol. 46v-47, 3<sup>E</sup>21/4, fol. 15, 3<sup>E</sup>21/9, 3<sup>E</sup>21/20, fol. 8, 3<sup>E</sup>40/14, fol. 31, 3<sup>E</sup>40/51, 3<sup>E</sup>40/830, 3<sup>E</sup>40/832, 3<sup>E</sup>40/910.

aux échanges portant sur un plus large éventail de biens: en majorité et comme les produits précédents, bétail, biens fonciers, draps mais également bois, redoul, vin.

Comme nous l'avons noté, la grande originalité du Lodévois réside dans la place des biens fonciers dans les échanges en nature. Ainsi, majoritaires dans les *excambii*, ils sont également les plus fréquemment achetés contre un paiement en nature (94 contrats). Les biens fonciers sont plus rarement utilisés comme monnaie d'échange. Ils sont variés (maison, tannerie, moulin drapier, jardin, champs, terres irriguées, vigne, olivette, bois) et bien placés sur l'échelle des valeurs marchandes.

Il faut effectivement s'interroger sur la qualité des produits échangés et leur valeur sur les marchés quelle que soit la forme des échanges. Comme cela vient d'être énoncé pour les biens fonciers, les produits qui interviennent dans les échanges en nature ne sont pas des produits dévalorisés et ils sont souvent désignés par une dénomination de qualité ou d'origine.

#### 4. La qualité des produits échangés

Préciser la qualité des produits est primordial dans le cadre d'échanges en nature car il faut être en capacité de connaître les qualités respectives des produits pour en déduire leur valeur d'échange, que la valeur monétaire de l'un ou de l'autre soit spécifiée dans l'acte (ou non). Or le produit et ses qualités sont connus des experts et même communément de ceux qui pratiquent ce type d'échange. Ils connaissent la valeur des objets qui sont tous originaires du district.

Commençons par le Vallespir et par le fer. La majorité des actes précise le type de fer à livrer, il s'agit d'un fer «*terssat, terveyrat*». Si en catalan le terme *terssat* désigne un rapport 1/3-2/3, s'agit-il de rendre compte de la forme du produit tel qu'il apparaît traditionnellement au sortir de l'atelier: 2/3 de fer en verge pour 1/3 de fer gros, ou bien d'un rapport 2/3-1/3 offrant d'autres combinaisons de formes comme le suggère un acte qui prévoit que le fer *terssat* soit livré pour 2/3 en verge et 1/3 en *rellada* (en morceaux). Il n'est pas inutile de rappeler que le conditionnement permet l'identification des fers à l'époque moderne. Le terme *terssat* désignerait-il également une qualité spécifique de métal? Certains actes du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle permettent d'émettre cette hypothèse. Dans le cas du fer *terssat*, le produit qui est divers quant à sa forme, pourrait être hétérogène quant à sa qualité, ce qui correspond à la qualité courante des fers produits dans les forges hydrauliques de réduction directe. Ainsi, comme le «fer de Foix», le fer *terssat* serait un produit brut issu de la forge hydraulique pouvant, quelle que soit sa forme, offrir aux consommateurs une répartition de «fers» de qualités différentes et donc d'usages différents pour les consommateurs: des fers plus ou moins aciérés et des aciers (Verna 2017).

Quant aux mules, elles sont décrites. En particulier est spécifiée la couleur du pelage, mais on ne trouve pas leur «pedigree» comme dans certains cas de ventes monétarisées où sont précisés les noms des propriétaires antérieurs (peut-être pour se protéger d'une accusation de vol), dans ce cas, l'évaluation de la qualité de la bête se fait sur pied et sans doute à l'œil (Feller et Verna 2012). Quelques précisions sur le bois: la qualité correspond aux essences qui sont énoncées, ou bien en général à l'usage que l'on va en faire, ce qui est un moyen d'en définir la qualité (Fabre 2021).

C'est sans doute le cas du bois *tineti* (s'agit-il du bois pour teindre ou bien pour chauffer les cuves des teinturiers?<sup>6</sup>). Comme pour le fer, on en précise parfois la forme ce qui renvoie une nouvelle fois à la qualité du bois: poutres, rondins, fagots. Pour les victuailles, seule est précisée leur nature: du vin, du seigle. Quelques mots sur les quantités: elles sont majoritairement modestes mais l'on sait, par ailleurs, que le troc pratiqué dans le cadre d'échanges internationaux et attesté en Roussillon, peut mobiliser de forts tonnages.

Quant au Lodévois et à ses draps, il s'agit de draps produits également localement: draps *burels* de Lodève, draps *burels* de Clermont-l'Hérault, *blanquets* de Lodève ou draps blancs d'Aniane. Au sein des contrats, la mention d'une origine géographique, ajoutée à la désignation générique du tissu – *burel*, *blanquet*, drap blanc –, sert de marque de fabrique et suffit à s'assurer de la qualité du drap. Le drap *burel* est fabriqué à partir de laine en provenance du sud du Larzac tandis que le drap blanc fait appel à des laines plus locales, de Saint-Jean-de-Fos, Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert ou Gignac. Les draps *burels* sont tissés à partir d'une chaîne peignée et filée au fuseau ou à la roue et d'une trame cardée et filée à la roue. Ils sont échangés bruts, parfois teints (le plus souvent en couleurs sombres, que ce soit gris, bleu foncé ou noir) et apprêtés. Le cas du drap *burel* de Lodève est caractéristique de la capacité de ce territoire à s'adapter au marché, notamment au marché d'exportation. Cette étoffe fait son apparition dans les sources lodévoises au début des années 1430. Son arrivée sur les marchés internationaux est rapide: présente à Marseille en 1449, elle circule en Méditerranée dans la seconde moitié du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle (Caliste 2021).

Les laines sont des laines de toison utilisées pour la fabrication des draps destinés au commerce local mais également aux marchés internationaux. Elles sont échangées en suint et, le plus souvent, dites «mêlées», les différentes parties n'ayant pas encore été triées. Cette forme est loin d'être dévalorisée car elle permet (comme pour le fer *terssat*) de regrouper un éventail de qualités. Les laines sont parfois spécifiées «blanches», quand elles sont collectées dans la vallée de l'Hérault pour la production des draps dits «blancs». À trois reprises, l'échange porte sur des laines d'agneaux que nous savons également être travaillées en Lodévois. La qualité de l'huile est rarement précisée hormis par la formule classique «huile d'olive, claire, bonne et marchande» (*oley olive boni clari et mercabilis*). Rien n'est dit de son usage ultérieur: alimentaire ou industriel (pour le travail des laines).

## 5. Le prix des produits échangés

La question est simple dans son énoncé: dans le cadre des paiements en nature, quel que soit le type d'actes, les prix des produits correspondent-ils au prix du marché? Pour cet examen des prix, nous nous limiterons au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle et à deux produits majeurs dans les deux districts: le fer pour le Vallespir et le drap pour le Lodévois. L'un et l'autre disposent d'une désignation d'origine et de qualité (plus diversifiée dans le cas des draps) et l'un et l'autre servent majoritairement de moyen de paiement.

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<sup>6</sup> ADPO, 3<sup>e</sup>40/830 (1412).

Pour le Vallespir, n'ont été conservés que les prix du fer énoncés dans les actes de vente (et non dans le cadre de remboursements d'une dette, quel qu'en soit le motif car la dette complexifie la formation du prix). La valeur du fer au quintal peut être spécifiée dans l'acte mais ces cas sont rares. Ainsi, sur l'ensemble des actes où le fer est le moyen de paiement tout au long du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle, seuls quatre fournissent le prix du fer (de 1440 à 1503).<sup>7</sup> Il faut sans doute expliquer cette caractéristique par l'encadrement du marché du fer. Sur le marché du fer en gros et dans le cadre de contrats de vente au comptant et/ou de vente anticipée, monétarisées ou en nature, le prix du fer en gros vendu par les forgers est qualifié de «juste prix» et de prix «communément pratiqué par les marchands d'Arles», sans qu'il soit par ailleurs énoncé (Verna 2017). C'est donc que, dans le cadre du marché de fer en gros, les hommes qui en sont les experts, c'est-à-dire les muletiers et les forgers à la tête des moulins, ou bien les marchands qui achètent le fer auprès des producteurs et qui le revendent en gros ou au détail, établissent et reconnaissent un prix du marché (un «juste prix») à la définition duquel ils participent. Dans ce contexte, si le prix du fer est rarement précisé, c'est sans doute que la valeur du fer au quintal, en lingot ou en vergelle, un fer qui passe de main en main, est connue de tous, qu'elle est établie, ce qui renvoie à son usage comme monnaie de substitution.

Comme nous l'avons précisé, nous ne disposons que de quatre actes de 1440 à 1503 énonçant un prix du fer dans le cadre d'échanges en nature. Ils concernent tous le milieu des producteurs qui achètent avec du fer ce dont ils ont besoin. Ils peuvent être comparés avec le prix du fer en gros calculé pour le XV<sup>e</sup> siècle à partir d'une série d'actes de ventes anticipées, monétarisées, émanant des registres de notaires locaux: celui-ci oscille entre 30 et 32 sous le quintal pour du fer *terssat* (Verna 2017). Trois ne sont pas aberrants, même s'ils sont inférieurs au prix moyen du fer en gros, soit 29 sous le quintal (1445), 25 sous le quintal (1463), 24 sous le quintal en 1503. Tous les trois concernent l'achat de mules. Le prix de 1440 est tiré vers le bas. Il est de 15 sous le quintal. Contrairement aux trois autres actes, l'échange ne se fait pas entre hommes du métier (forgers, muletiers) pour l'achat d'une mule mais avec Pere Comelles, un marchand bien connu sur le marché du fer dans le Vallespir et l'achat concerne du pain et du vin qui doivent ravitailler la forge et que Pere Comelles fournit. On ignore ce que cette situation cache, peut-être un endettement antérieur auprès dudit marchand ou un accord spécifique portant sur les conditions d'approvisionnement de la forge dont la documentation écrite atteste par ailleurs? Peut-être simplement la qualité du fer qui, dans cet acte, n'est pas précisée. Ainsi, à partir de sources si peu nombreuses, on peut émettre deux remarques: (1) que le prix du fer dans ce type d'échange est rarement précisé alors que, de façon courante, les échanges en nature font référence à une évaluation monétaire d'au moins un des deux produits échangés ce qui confirme l'idée d'un marché du fer encadré et d'un prix du marché connu et pratiqué, (2) lorsque l'on paie avec du fer, le prix du fer est inférieur à la moyenne connue des prix du fer en gros dans le cadre d'échanges monétarisés.

On peut dire que le constat est équivalent en Lodévois à partir de l'étude des draps. Le nombre d'actes, dans ce cas également, est assez restreint: 10 contrats de

<sup>7</sup> ADPO, 3<sup>E</sup>40/906 (1440), 3<sup>E</sup>40/911 (1445), 3<sup>E</sup>40/914 (1463), 3<sup>E</sup>21/41, fol. 7 (1503).

vente, conclus entre 1440 et 1495, dans lesquels est stipulée une évaluation monétaire du paiement en nature. En comparant ces 10 prix avec ceux pratiqués sur le marché de gros local (183 prix), il apparaît qu'ils sont équivalents. Plus précisément, ils sont compris dans la fourchette médiane des prix pratiqués sur ce marché. Ainsi, par exemple, en 1449, le blanquier Guillaume Peletier achète à crédit, à Deodat Laurent, laboureur de Lodève, un quintal de laine en suint et s'engage à lui remettre un drap de Lodève au prix de 4 livres 15 sous tournois.<sup>8</sup> À cette époque, les draps de la cité épiscopale s'échangent, en moyenne, entre 4 et 7 livres. En 1478, une mule est vendue 10 écus d'or, payés en partie contre un drap brut de Lodève au prix de 3 livres 15 sous (le prix commun du marché oscille alors entre 3 livres 10 sous et 4 livres 15 sous).<sup>9</sup> Dans ces cas, les prix sont fixés au plus bas. Ce qui est très intéressant en Lodévois, c'est que pour des produits beaucoup plus diversifiés que dans le Vallespir, où le fer est principalement concerné, le «prix du marché» est souvent spécifié, en particulier quand le paiement en nature correspond à un achat à crédit. La valeur du bien utilisé comme monnaie d'échange est définie en fonction du prix en vigueur sur le marché mais son évolution possible est enregistrée dans le contrat. Ainsi, en 1457, dans le cadre de la vente à crédit d'un pré dans la juridiction de Lauzières, l'acheteur s'engage à payer, chaque année, trois quarterons, puis un demi-quintal de laine, dont la valeur sera fixée selon le cours du marché du moment.<sup>10</sup> De même, en 1461, un habitant de Soubès promet de rembourser une partie de sa dette avec du vin qu'il devra fournir à la Toussaint, au prix du marché.<sup>11</sup> Les dates de versement ne sont pas fixées au hasard: parfois à l'appréciation du vendeur (*de die in diem*), ce qui le favorise incontestablement (comme dans le cas de remboursement de dettes), elles sont arrêtées aux moments où la fourniture et la revente des marchandises sont assurées, aux dates des foires pour les draps, au Carême-prenant pour l'huile ou encore à la Toussaint pour le vin.

Retenons une donnée fondamentale: les prix des produits intervenant dans les échanges en nature correspondent dans le cas des draps du Lodévois à la valeur moyenne des draps sur le marché de gros. Dans le cas du fer, ils sont inférieurs au prix du fer en gros et, dans un cas, très inférieur.

## 6. La valeur du travail comme monnaie d'échange

Notre examen des échanges en nature se détournera momentanément des produits, de leur qualité et de leur valeur, pour traiter du travail. On peut, en effet, acheter un produit, rembourser une dette avec son travail, sa force de travail, ses compétences. Cette fois-ci, encore, la comparaison entre le Vallespir et le Lodévois est édifiante. Les actes où le travail est un moyen de paiement sont très peu nombreux en Vallespir [deux: en 1425 et 1554] même s'ils sont instructifs, contre 38 en Lodévois. Une fois de plus, il faut établir un sens dans les échanges en nature et en travail. Nous

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<sup>8</sup> ADH, 2<sup>E</sup>39/25, fol. 81r.

<sup>9</sup> ADH, 2<sup>E</sup>39/179, fol. 32v.

<sup>10</sup> ADH, 2<sup>E</sup>39/892, fol. 14v.

<sup>11</sup> ADH, 2<sup>E</sup>63/361, fol. 18v.

ne traiterons ici que de l'achat d'un produit, d'un bien ou du remboursement d'une dette avec du travail.<sup>12</sup> En Vallespir, peu d'actes restituent cette forme d'échange. Peut-être est-il très commun mais peu formalisé par l'écrit. Une caractéristique s'impose et, encore une fois, la situation est différente en Lodévois. Ainsi, quand le travail sert à payer en Vallespir, il est toujours utilisé dans le cadre d'une situation de dette et d'obligation, quand celui qui propose son travail n'a rien d'autre que la force de ses bras à offrir. Un charbonnier rembourse une dette de 5 livres à trois hommes qui travaillent comme lui dans une mouline de Céret. Il remboursera ce *mutuum* par son travail et également avec du charbon (1425). Le second cas concerne un brassier d'Arles, emprisonné pour dette et qui a pu être libéré grâce à la somme versée par un forgeron génois. Il le remercie et s'engage à travailler pour lui pendant quatre mois (1554).<sup>13</sup>

En Lodévois, le travail sert de monnaie d'échange dans des actes de vente à crédit et pour des biens fonciers. Ainsi, on retrouve la forte présence des biens fonciers quand il s'agit d'acheter avec du travail. La moitié des actes concerne des individus déclarant une profession dans le domaine du textile. Le travail n'est pas dévalorisé. Il permet d'acheter des biens fonciers dont la valeur n'est pas négligeable en proposant des compétences variables mais toujours très spécialisées. Ainsi, en 1462, un pareur de Lodève achète une terre et une olivette pour 18 livres tournois à un corroyeur et s'engage pour cela à apprêter des draps pour la somme due.<sup>14</sup> Dans certains cas, il s'agit de s'approprier ponctuellement et pour un temps une main-d'œuvre. Cette situation est davantage associée à la location de biens (plutôt qu'à une vente), une question complexe mais qu'il convient à présent d'affronter.

Un bien peut être loué contre du travail. Il faut, dans ce cas, distinguer très précisément la nature du bien. S'il s'agit de louer un atelier avec ses outils en versant au propriétaire une partie de la production correspondant à la désignation de l'atelier, cette catégorie d'échange s'apparente à un contrat de métayage. La situation nous paraît différente quand l'espace loué contre du travail est décrit comme neutre, sans mention d'outils, lieu de vie et de travail de la famille, un travail qui peut être, par ailleurs, intégré à la chaîne de production dirigée par le bailleur lorsqu'il s'agit d'un pareur. Ainsi, en 1464, le pareur Johan Hereter loue pour deux ans à Domergue Valet, sa maison située à Lodève rue Notre-Dame, au tarif annuel de 3 moutons et 5 sous tournois que le locataire devra payer en exerçant son métier de tisserand (*quos debet dare ad lucrandum in officio texenderie*).<sup>15</sup> En fait, il faudrait pouvoir mesurer le niveau de rétribution du travail et le comparer aux montants des loyers exigés en monnaie. Par manque de sources, cela s'avère difficile sinon impossible. Il faudrait également connaître les relations établies, au-delà du loyer, entre locataire et bailleur. Il apparaît, en effet, que pour comprendre l'usage et le choix des échanges en nature (objet et

<sup>12</sup> Effectivement, quand on vend son travail et qu'il est payé en nature, intégralement ou non, il s'agit d'une des formes communes de rétribution du travail salarié au Moyen Âge. Le format de cet article ne nous permet pas de traiter de cet aspect spécifique des échanges en nature.

<sup>13</sup> ADPO, 3<sup>E</sup>40/14 fol. 31r (1425), 3<sup>E</sup>20/8 fol. 219r-v (1554).

<sup>14</sup> ADH, 2<sup>E</sup>39/32, fol. 2r.

<sup>15</sup> ADH, 2<sup>E</sup>39/39, fol. 85r.

travail), l'historien doit être en capacité, à partir d'exemples précis, de les inscrire dans les rapports plus larges qu'entretiennent entre elles les parties.

## 7. Échanger des produits et payer avec son travail: la part du choix

Maintenant que nous avons mis à plat les différentes informations fournies par les actes sur les modalités des échanges en nature (nature des actes et conditions juridiques de l'échange), sur les catégories de produits échangés, sur les prix des produits rapportés au marché et sur la spécificité de certains échanges en service, il est possible d'inscrire ces pratiques dans l'économie et la société des districts.

Il n'étonnera personne que les produits et les services échangés et ceux qui les échanget soient tous localisés dans le district, au moins dans le temps prévu de l'échange. Ainsi, lorsque l'échange en nature est pratiqué et conclu sous la forme d'un acte écrit, les individus se côtoient, et les produits sont ceux que l'on trouve communément fabriqués sur place. Or, que nous disent les écrits sur le choix de telles pratiques? Pour aborder ce point crucial de l'enquête, il convient de s'arrêter sur une réalité documentaire. Même dans le cas du corpus exceptionnellement étoffé du Lodévois, on peut penser à l'évidence que la pratique des échanges en nature et en service passe majoritairement par l'oral. Pour le Vallespir, comment expliquer que n'aient été conservés que 74 actes alors que les ventes de tout type, avec échanges monétarisés, se comptent par centaines? Nous ne croyons pas que cette situation soit le signe exclusif d'une plus forte monétarisation des campagnes catalanes, par rapport à celles du Languedoc. Nous ne pensons pas non plus que le paiement en biens et en travail soit une forme secondaire de paiement mais nous pensons, tout au contraire, qu'il s'agit d'une forme alternative de paiement, bien adaptée à certaines formes d'échanges et sans doute sous-évaluée du fait de son exceptionnel passage par l'écrit. Le biais de la source ne peut être mesuré. Il ne peut pas davantage être ignoré.

Il nous semble intéressant au stade où nous en sommes de notre enquête, de distinguer deux niveaux d'échange. Un niveau de base, sans doute le plus courant, sans doute celui qui passe également le plus couramment par l'oral: l'on échange ce dont on dispose pour obtenir un produit ou un service dont on a besoin. Ce qui est en place, c'est tout simplement la commodité des échanges du quotidien, fondés sur la confiance et également sur la réputation. Il convient à ce stade d'énoncer quelques exemples. Dans le cadre du Vallespir, nous avons jusqu'à présent insisté sur les échanges de produits payés en fer, dans ce cas, ce sont les forgeurs qui achètent ce dont ils ont besoin avec ce qu'ils produisent. Les situations sont néanmoins plus diversifiées: un teinturier (Maurin Dur) à la tête d'une teinturerie à Arles-sur-Tech achète contre 3 cannes de drap teint *morat* (violet) du bois à un paysan (1412).<sup>16</sup> L'on sait combien les cuves de teinturerie sont dévoreuses de bois et cet échange en nature n'est sans doute pas le seul même s'il est l'unique que nous ait laissé la teinturerie de Maurin Dur qui, par ailleurs, achète beaucoup de bois. Un paysan se procure une mule auprès d'un aubergiste avec lequel il est souvent en affaire, contre du bois (1412), un autre du foin ou de l'herbe auprès d'un boucher également contre du bois

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<sup>16</sup> ADPO, 3E40/830.

transporté (1418).<sup>17</sup> On retrouve, avec ces deux échanges, l'activité la plus commune exercée par les paysans dans le cadre des districts industriels, c'est-à-dire la fourniture et le transport du combustible. Par ailleurs, un muletier dont nous savons qu'il transporte du fer et se livre à son commerce au détail, achète des médecines pour ses mules à un forgeron avec du fer (1420), un charbonnier achète une mule à un peigneur et le paie en charbon (1458), un paysan paie sa dette avec de la laine «*sutzza* de son bétail» à son créancier (1485).<sup>18</sup>

Les exemples du Lodévois nous renvoient à la même pratique. Les hommes paient avec des produits issus de leur travail, mais le constat s'étend également aux produits auxquels ils ont un accès facilité dans le cadre de leur activité. Un paysan paie à l'apothicaire Bernard Capellan de Lodève, 2 setiers de froment pour l'achat de médecines (1442).<sup>19</sup> Johan Chalvet, qui acquiert une mule au prix de 3 livres 2 sous 4 deniers tournois et 800 briques neuves, est désigné comme tuilier à Pouzolles. Il paie donc la mule avec une partie de sa production (1464).<sup>20</sup> Le boucher Johan Sperelle paie une partie des 7 livres 18 sous 6 deniers tournois, prix d'une table de boucherie au marché de Lodève, au moyen de suif, vraisemblablement issu de son activité de boucher (1444).<sup>21</sup> À trois reprises, le laboureur Johan Mathei du Puech, endetté auprès d'un chanoine de Lodève à la suite de l'achat de céréales, s'engage à payer sa dette au moyen de laines (1476 et 1477).<sup>22</sup> Il s'agit sans doute de laines qu'il collecte sur ses bêtes ou sur celles présentes sur le territoire du Puech qui fournit le district en matière première. Si les tisserands échangent des tissus bruts, ils échangent également des draps apprêtés auxquels ils ont accès du fait de leurs relations de travail. Ainsi, un tisserand de Lodève achète une vigne au moyen d'un drap apprêté (1476).<sup>23</sup>

La question qui demeure est: pourquoi passer par les notaires? Il semblerait, outre le niveau d'échange de proximité dont nous venons de traiter, que le passage par l'écrit atteste d'une forme de comportement économique. Il permet à certains individus de s'approprier un produit central dans les échanges et d'en encadrer le marché. C'est le cas avec le fer en Vallespir. Il permet, pour d'autres, de contrôler et de fixer une main-d'œuvre spécialisée. C'est le cas en Lodévois. Les deux pratiques s'inscrivent dans des espaces en croissance, productifs, tournés vers les marchés locaux, régionaux et internationaux. Elles sont une des formes rémunératrices du marché de la main-d'œuvre et de celui des biens. Examinons les situations en revenant aux actes.

Commençons par le Vallespir. La grande majorité des actes, tout type confondu, qui attestent des échanges en nature (en biens et en service) concernent les hommes qui travaillent dans les forges hydrauliques (56 actes sur un total de 74, du début du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle aux années 1550). Ces hommes sont en majorité les entrepreneurs qui dirigent l'atelier, rétribuent la main-d'œuvre diversifiée (des muletiers, des forgers,

<sup>17</sup> ADPO, 3<sup>E</sup>40 830 (1412) et 3<sup>E</sup>40/832 (1418).

<sup>18</sup> ADPO, 3<sup>E</sup>40/832 (1420), 3<sup>E</sup>40/51 (1458), 3<sup>E</sup>21/4, fol. 15 (1485).

<sup>19</sup> ADH, 2<sup>E</sup>39/23, fol. 45v.

<sup>20</sup> ADH, 2<sup>E</sup>4/237, fol. 67r.

<sup>21</sup> ADH, 2<sup>E</sup>39/24, fol. 25v.

<sup>22</sup> ADH, 2<sup>E</sup>39/95, fol. 10r, fol. 85r, fol. 169v.

<sup>23</sup> ADH, 2<sup>E</sup>39/95, fol. 34r.



des charbonniers et des mineurs). Ils gèrent l'approvisionnement en minerai et en combustible. Ils vendent la production dont une partie l'est sous la forme de ventes anticipées du fait de leur endettement chronique et du besoin qu'ils ont de disposer d'un capital roulant pour faire tourner la forge. Tous sont étrangers: aux Languedociens du début du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle, souvent désignés comme forgerons, succèdent les Basques muletiers pour la plupart, puis ensuite les Italiens à partir de la fin du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle, souvent Génois et désignés comme *farguerii*. L'atelier, avec ses outils et ses machines hydrauliques, appartient aux notables des bourgs, auxquels s'ajoutent au début du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle des investisseurs urbains qui n'interviennent pas dans la production, et se limitent à exiger le loyer des forges.

D'une manière générale, les hommes du fer sont très présents dans la documentation notariale, en particulier les Basques, puis les Italiens, moins les Languedociens. Ils ont recours fréquemment au service d'un notaire, parfois pour récupérer de toutes petites sommes correspondant à une partie de salaire non versée. Cette fréquentation assidue et partagée par tous ces travailleurs du fer pourrait correspondre à une pratique culturelle spécifique à leur lieu d'origine. Comme elle traverse tous les groupes concernés, quelle que soit leur origine, il semble que le recours à l'écrit, qu'il soit apprécié par les migrants ou bien par ceux qui sont en affaire avec eux, dépend davantage de leur situation dans le monde du travail. Il est rendu nécessaire par l'instabilité de ces travailleurs qui passent de forge en forge, qui effectuent des allers-retours entre leur lieu d'origine et leurs lieux de travail. L'acte écrit offre une garantie au contrat que l'oralité ne permet pas. La forte présence des sidérurgistes dans les actes écrits attestant de paiement en nature ou en service ne serait ainsi que l'illustration de leur plus grande fréquentation des officines notariales, qu'il s'agisse pour eux de disposer d'un écrit qui les protège, ou bien qu'il s'agisse pour leurs interlocuteurs de se garantir face à des individus volatiles. Il n'en demeure pas moins vrai que, du fait de cette prolifique et exceptionnelle production d'écrits, l'historien peut disposer d'informations sur une forme d'échanges rarement enregistrée.

Or, que voit-on? D'abord des forgerons, des muletiers et des charbonniers travaillant dans la forge qui achètent des mules avec du fer. Le marché des mules est très actif dans le Roussillon et au-delà dans l'ensemble du comté de Roussillon mais seuls les forgerons paient avec un produit (le fer), les autres acheteurs, et ils sont nombreux et divers, utilisent l'outil monétaire. Ces transactions se situent dans le premier niveau d'échanges de proximité, celui que nous avons préalablement étudié: les hommes des forges ont besoin de mules qui sont indispensables à l'activité sidérurgique et ils paient l'animal à ceux qui leur vendent, en particulier les muletiers, avec du fer. Le fer est donc intégré aux échanges et il se diffuse dans la société de montagne par ce canal, en irrigant un actif marché du fer au détail (Verna 2017). Un second canal de diffusion du métal passe également par une autre forme de paiement en nature quand ceux qui dirigent les forges s'adressent à ceux qui sont en capacité de les ravitailler en vin, viande et céréales: des marchands. Les quantités sont importantes, le coût du transport également et le paiement s'effectue en fer, souvent livré au quintal pendant des semaines sinon des mois jusqu'au règlement intégral. Il s'agit d'une des formes très commune d'achat à crédit. Comme nous l'avons noté, le prix du fer livré, quand il est connu, est un prix inférieur au prix du marché de gros. Les marchands qui s'adonnent à ces échanges obtiennent, à la source, auprès des producteurs,

d'importantes quantités de fer à un prix d'autant plus intéressant que pour certains d'entre eux on dispose de contrats de vente au détail qui prouvent l'important bénéfice obtenu entre l'achat en gros par le biais du paiement en nature et la vente au détail qui passe par l'usage monétaire. Ces hommes sont, par ailleurs, souvent en affaire avec les sidérurgistes et en concluant des ventes en nature, ils sont doublement gagnants: ils vendent leurs marchandises (il est difficile d'étudier les prix de celles-ci dans ce cas) en échange de fer dont le prix est fixé au plus bas. Ajoutons que sont également rédigés des contrats de ravitaillement exigeant l'exclusivité de la production d'un atelier au profit du marchand. Examinons quelques cas.

On retrouve parmi les marchands des figures majeures de l'économie locale, par ailleurs largement présents dans la documentation: Bartomeu Aygabella, Pere Comelles, au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle, Antoni Serradell vers 1550 (Verna 2012, Verna 2018). Il s'agit de marchands à l'envergure régionale, vendeurs de fer, présents sur le marché de gros et de détail. Les plus grosses quantités de céréales échangées contre du fer le sont néanmoins, dès la fin du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle, par un marchand de Perpignan, fermier des revenus royaux. On voit également, au milieu du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, s'infiltrer dans ces échanges des individus peu visibles dans la documentation au Moyen Âge, c'est-à-dire des paysans (*laboratores*) qui sont en fait des entrepreneurs, pratiquant une pluriactivité. C'est le cas de Joan Lansa de Céret (1545-1555) qui est en relation avec de nombreux forgerons souvent endettés, qu'il s'agisse de leur accorder des prêts ou bien de se charger de leur approvisionnement en céréales, contre du fer.<sup>24</sup>

En Lodévois, rappelons que nous avons noté une plus grande variété des produits échangés. S'y ajoute la très grande diversité des intervenants dans les échanges en nature: des travailleurs du drap, certes, et d'autres industries (verriers, forgerons, travailleurs du cuir) et également des bouchers, des paysans, des notaires, des aubergistes et des marchands. Il semblerait que l'ensemble de la société du district prenne part aux échanges en nature et que ceux-ci passent, en grand nombre, par l'écrit. Il s'agit donc d'individus résidant dans le district et non de travailleurs migrants. Concentrons la démonstration sur le drap. Il est utilisé à la fois (et nous l'avons vu) comme monnaie d'échange et comme bien acheté. Dans ce dernier cas, il s'agit principalement de «draps du pays» qui font l'objet de ventes anticipées payées en nature, des actes qui évoluent en reconnaissance de dettes lorsque la livraison de la marchandise n'est pas honorée. Nous savons que des hommes disposant d'un petit capital, quelle que soit leur activité, font massivement usage de la vente anticipée pour collecter une ou deux pièces de drap afin d'intégrer ponctuellement un commerce dominé par les pareurs et les marchands aux foires de Pézenas et de Montagnac (Caliste 2021). Les situations d'endettement facilitent l'accès aux producteurs, au produit et à sa qualité à un prix plancher. La location d'un bien immobilier abritant le foyer domestique, contre du travail, permet aussi de disposer d'un produit à un meilleur prix et, par ailleurs, de fixer une main-d'œuvre dont les compétences sont recherchées.

Le cas des pareurs le démontre. Ces hommes ont intégré la chaîne de production des draps, de manière verticale, intervenant à chacun des stades de la fabrication, soit pour donner à travailler, soit pour acquérir un produit semi-fini qu'ils apprêtent et vendent eux-mêmes. Suivons l'un d'entre eux, Mathieu de Fonte. Il maîtrise les

<sup>24</sup> ADPO, 3E2/1034, fol. 468r (1545).

circuits d'approvisionnement en matières premières et s'assure par différentes modalités d'un accès aux laines. En 1468, il achète à crédit plus de 10 quintaux de laine. Il s'en procure également par le biais de l'endettement paysan. Il utilise, en outre, d'autres modalités d'accès à la matière première: en 1458, il sous-loue un moulin drapier à un tisserand, le locataire devant lui verser trois quintaux de laine blanche en toison. Nous savons, également, que Mathieu de Fonte s'attache les compétences d'un cardeur en lui louant une maison à Lodève contre son travail (1462).<sup>25</sup> Pour acquérir des draps, il participe au marché de gros monétarisé où il a recours, à plusieurs reprises, à la vente anticipée pour bénéficier du meilleur prix: entre 1459 et 1485, il commande 13 draps bruts de Lodève par le biais de 9 contrats, draps qu'il paie par avance en monnaie, en vue des foires de Pézenas et de Montagnac. Désigné comme pareur et tondeur de draps (également comme marchand), son activité d'apprêt, et vraisemblablement de teinture, est bien attestée, notamment lorsqu'il loue pour son usage une teinturerie. De même, son contrat de mariage (1459) avec la fille d'un corroyeur bien connu de Lodève, montre que le réseau familial contribue à la circulation des draps au sein du district, depuis les lieux de production jusqu'aux foires de Montagnac et de Pézenas (Caliste 2021). Les modalités d'accès aux produits et à la main-d'œuvre sont donc multiples et les hommes qui disposent de compétences, de finances et des réseaux adaptés font usage des contrats de location (contre du travail et des produits) et du paiement en nature (en biens et en service) autant que des ventes anticipées et des ventes à crédit monétarisées. À l'échelle d'un individu, les modalités d'accès aux produits et au travail semblent se combiner afin de dégager un profit, dans le cadre des foires languedociennes.

Ainsi, l'étude de cas portant sur deux districts industriels démontre l'usage des échanges en nature, leur diversité et leur place dans une économie ouverte sur le commerce méditerranéen. Cet usage n'est pas périphérique mais pleinement intégré à une économie de marché, fortement monétarisée, et où le fer en Vallespir occupe la fonction de monnaie de substitution ou «quasi monnaie». Échanger en nature est une pratique de proximité dans une société rurale où le «troc» est courant, enregistré par l'écrit, et sans doute largement conclu par oral. C'est aussi un moyen pour certains individus, marchands de fer et pareurs, de s'approvisionner en fer, en drap ou en laine directement auprès des producteurs à un prix bas et d'encadrer une main-d'œuvre compétente et spécialisée, qu'elle soit migrante ou non, souvent endettée. Par le biais original de l'industrie rurale, les sources notariées des districts restituent une pratique complexe dans des espaces d'échanges intermédiaires, souvent peu accessibles aux historiens, et donnent à voir le choix du troc, comme autant de stratégies individuelles, entre nécessité et profit.

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<sup>25</sup> ADH, 2<sup>F</sup>39/49, fol. 32r.

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## 1. Introduzione

Coi capelli ornati da perle e coperte da preziosi monili, così si presentano le donne rappresentate dai maestri della pittura veneziana cinquecentesca.<sup>1</sup> La ricchezza dei loro gioielli rifletteva l'opulenza della Serenissima, tanto agli occhi dei forestieri come davanti a quelli dei veneziani stessi. Al pari che nelle rappresentazioni visive, perle e gemme punteggiano con insistenza anche la documentazione veneta rinascimentale: si contano in fili o compaiono in sacchetti, ben numerate, categorizzate e pesate, 'legate' in oro e montate in gioielli di varia foggia oppure sciolte. Compaiono elencate negli inventari stilati per le più diverse occasioni e necessità, così come con frequenza fanno la loro comparsa negli atti notarili, utilizzate come beni di scambio denaro-equivalenti anche in ambito finanziario.

Credito e scelte finanziarie non vanno infatti associate per l'epoca rinascimentale solo alla moneta generalmente intesa, tanto reale che di conto, ma vanno piuttosto sostituite con un approccio per il quale il denaro ha un significato più ampio. Nonostante il mercato del credito non si discosti in genere dal misurare i beni secondo valori monetari, ciò non significa che il denaro fosse il mezzo di pagamento primario (Muldrew 2014, 365). Il 'prezzo' esprime quindi non tanto e non solo un'unità riferibile a un coefficiente contabile il cui fine ultimo era il valore intrinseco di una moneta, quanto l'attribuzione di un valore che trova sostanza in base alla domanda e all'ambiente in cui essa si concretizza. Sotto tale lente, le strategie degli scambi possono comprendere beni largamente intesi e quello che viene semplicisticamente definito come generica forma di baratto si trova a ricoprire un ruolo raffinato (Romani 2019 e D'Ercole-Romani 2019). A ciò si aggiunga che agli oggetti veniva attribuita una

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\* Abbreviazioni utilizzate nel corpo delle note: ASVe (= Archivio di Stato di Venezia); CIMN (= Cancelleria Inferiore, Miscellanea Notai); GPI (= Giudici di Petizion, Inventari); NotA (= Notarile, Atti). Tutte le date sono state normalizzate al calendario corrente rispetto agli altri usi (*more veneto* o stile della natività per alcuni notai) praticati nella Venezia dell'epoca.

<sup>1</sup> Una carrellata di quei volti e degli oggetti rappresentati a marcare i tratti delle protagoniste è raccolta in Padgen 2022 e sul significato delle gemme e dei gioielli nella pittura italiana rinascimentale si veda Malaguzzi 2023. Più in generale, sul ruolo delle perle nella storia socio-economica e culturale italiana d'epoca medievale e moderna, e come connettori di scambi a livello globale, si veda Muzzarelli, Molà, Riello 2023 (per il caso veneziano in particolare alle pp. 203-245).

valutazione sfaccettata, capace di racchiudere un ruolo funzionale, uno comunicativo, uno culturale, ma anche la possibilità di una tesaurizzazione da riconvertire in merci e denaro ove se ne fosse presentata la necessità o l'occasione vantaggiosa (Ago 2006, 3-6, 11 e Ago 2008, 44). In un tale sistema prismatico, nella valutazione degli oggetti e nella formazione di una stima si inserivano quindi anche elementi sociali (Welch 2007 e Guerzoni 2007), che facevano sì che il prezzo contrattato non solo venisse riconosciuto e condiviso da una comunità, ma finisse anche col variare nel tempo e in diversi contesti. Il destino di molti oggetti, del resto, fin dall'origine era solo parzialmente legato all'interazione col proprietario, quanto piuttosto finalizzato a rispondere una funzione di bene di scambio (Muldrew 2014, 369-70)

Gemme e gioielli rispondono appieno a questa multifunzionalità, grazie all'alto e riconosciuto valore intrinseco, alla facilità di conservazione e trasporto, e a una sostanziale stabilità della loro stima per l'epoca qui analizzata<sup>2</sup>. Risultano quindi i perfetti beni denaro-equivalenti da impiegare in un'economia mercantile e finanziaria come quella realtina cinquecentesca. In grado, inoltre, di narrare le «molteplici storie» e la natura dinamica e mutevole assunta dagli oggetti in base al contesto, caratteristica propria degli stessi anche durante il Rinascimento (Findlen 2013, 6-15).

Il grande *hub* veneziano fu infatti capace di raccogliere ancora per tutto il Cinquecento mercanti di varia provenienza e specializzazione, insieme a merci giunte da ogni luogo per vie marittime e terrestri. Venezia non solo continuava a mettere in collegamento la Penisola e il continente europeo con il vicino Oriente, ma costituiva anche un mercato privilegiato per i beni di lusso (Rosenthal 2013). Oggetti comprati, venduti e scambiati che oltre a prendere nuove direttrici si fermavano in città, entrando a far parte dei patrimoni delle famiglie di una delle metropoli più popolate e socialmente variegata del tempo. Un contesto che si rifletteva anche negli oggetti conservati dentro le case (Fortini Brown 2006, 54-64, Palumbo Fossati 2013 e Foscari 2020). Non stupisce allora che, come rilevato da Isabella Cecchini (2012a, 39-40 e 2012b),<sup>3</sup> oggetti di ogni tipo punteggino gli inventari non solo in quanto registrazione di proprietà (Riello 2013, 127-140 e Palumbo Fossati 2013, 2-5), ma anche come beni impegnati e resi parte dell'ambiente creditizio. Di quei simboli del lusso e degli oggetti che miravano ad avvicinarne il gusto anche alla classe media emergente (il Cinquecento è il secolo dell'affermazione della produzione di merci afferenti alla cosiddetta categoria del *populuxe*)<sup>4</sup> detenevano il ruolo preponderante anche nella Serenissima i beni afferenti al comparto tessile (Cecchini 2012a, 47), ma i gioielli insieme ai metalli preziosi lavorati e alle pietre sciolte avevano il vantaggio non solo della praticità

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<sup>2</sup> Nei secoli a seguire sotto l'effetto di una maggiore volatilità e accessibilità degli oggetti di moda il valore degli abiti e della gioielleria tenderà a maggiori oscillazioni e più rapide discese (Fontaine 2014, 114) a fronte comunque di una conservazione più lineare del valore delle gemme sciolte.

<sup>3</sup> A partire da inventari autentificati dalla magistratura dei Giudici del Proprio (competente a Venezia in materia dotale e per questioni successorie) lo studio di Isabella Cecchini affronta una dettagliata analisi della varietà di oggetti impegnati, ma che in origine avevano composto la quota in beni mobili delle doti delle spose veneziane.

<sup>4</sup> Il termine indica l'insieme di oggetti assimilabili ai gradi minori dei 'beni di lusso', che andavano a soddisfare la domanda degli strati medio-alti della società riproducendo a minor costo fogge e mode degli oggetti d'alta gamma prima riservati esclusivamente alle *élites* (Trivellato 2008, 204).

d'utilizzo, ma pure di risultare più flessibili in un impiego che mirasse a unire commercio e ricorso a pratiche creditizio-finanziarie.

Si deve poi considerare come i beni denaro-equivalenti potessero rappresentare al contempo una necessità e un vantaggio nell'epoca caratterizzata dalla cosiddetta 'rivoluzione dei prezzi', sotto il peso del lungo periodo inflattivo iniziato nel secondo quarto del Cinquecento e destinato a durare per oltre un secolo (rimando ai quadri generali in Romano 1967, De Maddalena 1973 e Fischer 1996, 65-102): i decenni presi in esame in questa analisi. Mentre i prezzi crescevano sotto la spinta della massiccia importazione metallifera americana (Fisher 1989), ma anche per gli esiti economici delle guerre d'Italia (Cipolla 1972) e dei cambiamenti climatici che impattavano sulle colture, per gli scambi grandi e minuti, d'affari e quotidiani, diventava più conveniente e sicuro far uso di merci. Queste ultime più capaci di salvaguardare, se non accrescere, il loro apprezzamento sul mercato. Metalli preziosi e gemme risultavano in tal senso ancor più efficaci.<sup>5</sup>

Il ricorso agli «ori, arzenti et zoie» a fini non di ornamento e indosso (o impiego pratico nel caso dell'argenteria), ma come beni denaro-equivalenti sarà al cuore delle tematiche analizzate nelle prossime pagine. A tal fine verrà dapprima sondata la disponibilità di tali merci nelle case dei veneziani, attraverso uno sguardo su una campionatura di inventari raccolti nella documentazione delle corti e uffici della Serenissima. La natura pubblica di quelle magistrature ha il pregio di fornire un quadro che spazia attraverso i diversi strati sociali della città. I Giudici di Petizion, ad esempio, sulla scorta della loro competenza per materie che comprendevano anche le amministrazioni ereditarie e pupillari, così come le accettazioni di eredità con beneficio d'inventario e il rifiuto delle attribuzioni di *commissaria*, si trovavano a trattare la ripartizione, valutazione e assegnazione di beni mobili per ogni strato sociale della popolazione veneziana (Da Mosto 1937, 92). Non diversamente i numerosi inventari raccolti fra i fondi della Cancelleria Inferiore ci parlano di un'istituzione che a fianco della gestione e conservazione dell'archivio della massima carica veneziana, il doge, custodiva imbreviature notarili e cedole testamentarie – e loro allegati – capaci di fornire un quadro sociale onnicomprensivo (Pozza 1997).

A integrare quanto emerso dagli inventari si utilizzeranno dati e riferimenti raccolti all'interno di una fra le fonti ad oggi meno utilizzate a tale fine: la documentazione notarile. In essa a quegli oggetti vengono attribuite in modo più chiaro le modalità di utilizzo non proprio, ma di merce denaro-equivalente. I beni mobili escono dunque dallo spazio della gestione ufficiale del credito,<sup>6</sup> per entrare nelle pratiche d'affari quotidiane, accettate sia dal mercato che dalla società (e non contrastate dalle istituzioni), in cui a quanto teoricamente imposto dalla legge si affiancava l'adattabile equilibrio alla base dei rapporti economici fra i diversi operatori; tantopiù ove

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<sup>5</sup> Ciò risulta particolarmente calzante nel contesto veneziano, dove la presenza di manifatture altamente specializzate produceva, ad esempio, maggiori diversificazioni fra la popolazione salariata, con una contrattazione individuale più marcata che altrove, pur nei limiti posti dalla regolamentazione delle 'arti' (Trivellato 2023, 133-34).

<sup>6</sup> Esso riconosceva modalità come il conferimento in pegno presso bottegai e artigiani per acquisti a credito e ancor più trovava piena forma quando si trasformava in pagamento vero e proprio attraverso la cessione in caso di mancato riscatto o con la gestione istituzionale delle aste pubbliche (Welch 2005, 196-203).



si realizzasse fra comunità non omogenee, come ad esempio la maggioranza cristiana e la minoranza ebraica (Maifreda 2021, 53) al centro anche del caso di studio qui proposto.

In seguito, la trattazione si muoverà sul tema del loro ricorso nel mercato del credito, come beni preferibili all'impiego della moneta reale in forme sia di scambio che finanziarie; anche a fronte della disponibilità della prima. A tale fine si userà il caso di studio dei banchi e delle botteghe di *strazzaria* del ghetto ebraico, grazie ad una ricca rappresentazione della loro gestione pratica nelle fonti notarili. Essa comprende non solo (e non tanto) il loro utilizzo come pegni, ma ne svela soprattutto il ricorso per scambi finanziari alternativi alla moneta attraverso contratti simulati e mascherati. Si valuterà il loro impiego, quindi, non solo nella più tradizionale modalità di beni in garanzia,<sup>7</sup> ma soprattutto quando attraverso pratiche di vendita e pagamento dilazionato si inserivano nelle modalità di cessioni del credito che esulano dalla fenerazione. Se ne valuterà la diffusione e quando lo scambio di beni con altri oggetti provenienti dalle botteghe fosse più conveniente. In sintesi, verrà evidenziato come la carenza di moneta circolante non fosse solo causa, ma più spesso occasione preferibile per la partecipazione a un mercato parallelo fondato sullo scambio di beni alternativi (Fontaine 2014, 110). Da ultimo si darà spazio a una delle tipologie di clientela più propense a quelle pratiche: la componente femminile. Di essa si seguirà il ricorso a quei beni nel contesto delle aperture giuridiche veneziane alla gestione del patrimonio delle donne.

## 2. Perle e preziosi: tipologie di beni di scambio nelle mani dei veneziani

All'inizio del maggio 1611 Camillo Sordi, il residente a Venezia della corte gonzaghesca, scriveva a Vincenzo I che gli era arrivata notizia che il duca cercava nella città lagunare un diamante del valore di 6000 ducati, da scambiare con altrettanto riso proveniente dal futuro raccolto mantovano. Si affrettava dunque a indirizzare la sua risposta in Lombardia, per chiedere ulteriori ragguagli al suo signore, oltre a quanti già ricevuti sulla caratura della pietra e la tipologia di taglio desiderata.<sup>8</sup> Poco meno di un secolo prima Marin Sanudo non lesinava del resto la sua meraviglia nel descrivere il grandioso elmo realizzato a Venezia dagli orafi Caorlini per Suleyman I, «pien de zoie con 4 corone», ricoperto di pietre preziose fra le quali rubini, smeraldi, perle da 12 carati ciascuna e quattro grandi diamanti del valore di 10.000 ducati (Sanudo

<sup>7</sup> Per l'epoca più tarda sul piccolo credito su pegno attraverso operatori 'tradizionali' dell'informale come gli osti, ma che invece a Venezia detenevano un ruolo ufficiale nel comparto, oltretutto supervisionato dalle magistrature statali, si veda Pompermaier 2022, 101-132.

<sup>8</sup> Si veda la banca dati Archivio Corrispondenza Gonzaga. 1563-1630, scheda 3836. <<http://banchedatigonzaga.centropalazzote.it/collezionismo/index.php?page=Visualizza&carteggio=3836>>. L'originale è conservato in Archivio di Stato di Mantova, *Archivio Gonzaga*, b. 1543, f. I, cc. 86-87 (18 maggio 1611). Vincenzo I, del resto, in precedenza era già ricorso molte volte al mercato veneziano per comprare perle, come testimoniano gli acquisiti fatti dai suoi mandatari presso famiglie del patriziato o dai mercanti specializzati di origine fiamminga Helman (Muzzarelli, Molà, Riello 2023, 236-37).

1900, 634-635 e de Maria 2013, 125).<sup>9</sup> Tuttavia, se questo secondo manufatto destinato a ornare il capo del sultano ottomano esemplifica tanto le competenze artigianali e artistiche dell'oreficeria veneziana cinquecentesca quanto ancor più sottolinea la disponibilità di materiali preziosi sulla piazza lagunare, più interessante appare per i temi qui trattati l'affare tentato dal duca mantovano.

Come i suoi contemporanei e predecessori, Vincenzo I Gongaza ben sapeva quanto il mercato veneziano fosse una sede assai fortunata per la trattazione di beni di lusso (materie grezze e prodotti lavorati) in quanto situato alla congiunzione fra un'ampia domanda e offerta intenzionale. Da una parte per un settore artigianale locale che sull'alta gamma stava puntando in tema di esportazione.<sup>10</sup> Dall'altra, per i traffici a medio e lungo raggio fra rotte europee e vicino orientali che sin dal medioevo riuscivano ad intercettare prodotti di provenienza asiatica, oltre che europea e mediterranea; e in seguito anche dalle Americhe.<sup>11</sup> Poiché l'uso di gemme e manufatti d'argento e d'oro rendeva quegli oggetti i perfetti beni sostituti della moneta per la facilità di trasporto e tesaurizzazione, il mancato deterioramento (a differenza dei tessuti), il riconosciuto mantenimento di alte valutazioni di mercato – sia a Venezia che lungo le principali tratte commerciali su di essa convergenti – nonché per la capacità di assolvere a scambi relativi ad alte somme, non potevano che rappresentare un mezzo privilegiato nella circolazione dell'economia lagunare. Gemme, gioielli e soprattutto diamanti (Ciriaco 2014) e perle non si trovavano quindi solo fra le mani di quanti li lavoravano nelle botteghe degli orafi, ma anche fra chi mercanteggiava, così come nelle case dei veneziani.

L'analisi condotta da Isabella Cecchini sugli inventari raccolti e resi 'provati' e ufficiali dalla magistratura dei Giudici del Proprio in relazione ai diritti dotali ha dimostrato da un lato come oggetti che possiamo definire 'preziosi' erano presenti, seppure in diversa quantità e qualità, fra i più differenziati strati sociali lagunari; dall'altro come vi fosse un frequente ricorso alla tesaurizzazione, con oggetti da reimpiiegare in forma di garanzia e baratto. Un fenomeno certo non esclusivo di Venezia, né di recente tendenza, trattandosi del resto di una soluzione che sin dal medioevo si era radicata in tutto il contesto italiano e europeo (Denjean 2019 e Covini 2019).

Una campionatura effettuata su 150 inventari (per il periodo 1526-1601) conservati nei fondi dei Giudici di Petizion e della Cancelleria Inferiore veneziana e scelti secondo il criterio di un terzo per ciascun settore sociale (ovvero patriziato, cittadini e professionisti insieme ai mercanti di rango, e da ultimo artigiani e altri componenti 'popolari') comprensivo di laici ed ecclesiastici,<sup>12</sup> segue le tendenze che Cecchini

<sup>9</sup> Si tratta del sontuoso copricapo col quale il sultano veniva ritratto in una xilografia coeva attribuibile forse a Tiziano nel disegno primigenio. Una riproduzione anonima conservata al Metropolitan Museum of New York è visibile a questo indirizzo: <<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/338723>> (accession number 42.411).

<sup>10</sup> Ne sono esempio due comparti distintivi fra Quattro e Cinquecento della produzione del lusso veneziana, come il vetro e gli oggetti in cristallo (si veda Scuro 2021, 109-121) e la produzione dei tessuti serici (Molà 2000).

<sup>11</sup> Sul ruolo di intermediazione dei porti mediterranei, come Genova e Venezia, nella trattazione dei traffici globali anche di preziosi quali coralli e diamanti si veda Lo Basso 2019.

<sup>12</sup> Trattati da Archivio di Stato di Venezia (ASVe), *Cancelleria inferiore, miscellanea* notai (CIMN), bb. 34-44 e ASVe, *Giudici di Petizion*, Inventari (GPI), bb. 338-342.

(2012a, 50-54) evidenza per la componente femminile della popolazione. Ai fini di questa indagine risulta significativo come si attesti una certa diffusione di oggetti preziosi fra le varie classi (eccettuati i meno abbienti), con una prevalenza di quelli in metallo lavorato e in particolare di argenterie. Seppure con diverse e marcate sfumature circa la preziosità intrinseca dei singoli oggetti nel caso appartenessero a individui di differenti gruppi sociali. Non erano gli stessi, ad esempio, gli anelli alle dita dei componenti del patriziato e del ricco ceto mercantile ‘cittadinesco’ o forestiero e quelli indossati da persone di estrazione più popolare; nonostante ciò, anche questi ultimi mediamente disponevano di qualche monile e a volte di piccoli e sparuti oggetti d’argenteria. E se per i membri dell’*élite* possedere tanti oggetti di pregio era un segno utile a marcare la scala e la distanza sociale (Welch 2002, 216-220), dal punto di vista tanto culturale che economico restava interesse generalizzato poter disporre di beni tipologicamente facili da utilizzare trasversalmente sul mercato e in grado al contempo di comunicare uno status; oltre ad essere capaci di gratificare il possessore. Beni che spesso finivano nella disponibilità dei ceti medi – e in particolare di mercanti e artigiani – proprio per mezzo della pratica comune di vendere a credito su pegno (Hohti 2010, 657-60).<sup>13</sup>

Al netto delle distorsioni provocate dal campione, a partire da una preponderanza di proprietari maschi,<sup>14</sup> ciò che importa per lo scopo di questa analisi è rilevare come beni scambiabili al posto del denaro e ad alta valutazione di mercato o intrinseca fossero variamente disponibili nella maggioranza delle abitazioni di tutto quel vasto insieme di veneziani che andava dal patriziato ai meno poveri fra i poveri (ad esempio nelle case degli artigiani descritte in Palumbo Fossati 1984). Inoltre, se resta vero che l’impiego di preziosi nel comparto del microcredito restava confinato a situazioni episodiche (Pompemaier 2018, 188-193) e che essi risultano una nicchia rispetto alle merci del comparto tessile (vestiti, biancheria e tappezzerie) che sono le più frequentemente impiegate, ciò non significa che possedere una pietra o un gioiello non potesse fare la differenza. Le potenzialità dei preziosi, ad esempio, emergevano quando il bisogno di denaro faceva optare verso beni capaci di garantire somme maggiori (sia che si trattasse di venderli o impegnarli). In special modo quando si cercasse di evitare il ricorso a oggetti indispensabili (in ragione del loro uso o per motivi di

<sup>13</sup> Nonostante il grande interesse dimostrato negli ultimi decenni per la storia materiale del rinascimento italiano, capace di spaziare in un ventaglio di direzioni comprensive di aspetti culturali, sociali, di storia personale e economica (quest’ultima in particolare per quanto riguarda la produzione, il commercio e la valutazione) il tema resta ancora largamente da esplorare per quanto riguarda sia i ceti medi e popolari, sia – ancor più – i centri minori. Con il caso di Siena (Hohti 2020) a spiccare fra le eccezioni, le ricerche si sono concentrate soprattutto sulle corti e sulle maggiori capitali degli stati regionali italiani (anche per motivi di accessibilità alle fonti): Firenze, Roma, Venezia, Milano e Napoli. Se Goldthwaite (1993, 47) attesta una certa diffusione del lusso anche fra i livelli più modesti della Firenze rinascimentale, con un dato comparabile a quanto emerge per Venezia, poco e nulla si sa invece dei trend che si erano sviluppati nelle ricche città dello Stato veneziano, che pure avrebbero rappresentato un importante caso di raffronto.

<sup>14</sup> Cambia col genere il tipo e soprattutto la quantità per tipologia degli oggetti. I maschi oltre ai propri detenevano anche gli *asset* della casa, così come la documentazione essi comprovante (registri, scritture, contratti e imbreviature). Tuttavia per quanto concerne i beni di uso familiare, se da un lato si conferma l’assoluta preminenza del tessile e dei vestiti, dall’altro gli uomini disponevano meno di frequente di gioielli, che se giunti come beni dotali restavano di proprietà della moglie ma potevano essere usufruiti dal marito per tutta la durata del matrimonio (Bellavitis 1998b, 152).

rappresentanza), che pure in casi estremi rischiavano di finire in mano altrui se non vi erano alternative (Muzzarelli 2014, 23).

Talvolta quei monili erano pochi, come per il filatore di seta Battista Marenzo di Santi Apostoli che al momento della morte aveva in casa solo una pietra di turchese, un cristallo di rocca, due vere da donna e due anelli con incastonati *veriselli* che simulavano rubini.<sup>15</sup> Simile la situazione del barbiere Filippo di *confinio* Sant'Angelo (privo anche del cognome) che in una cassetta oltre ad alcune monete conservava cinque anelli d'oro, due *manini* (anelli e bracciali a ctenella) dello stesso metallo, due *verete* e un anello d'oro «da bolla» con il simbolo di alcune oche, forse ricevuto in pagamento da qualcuno.<sup>16</sup> Più ricco il 'tesoro' del falegname d'origine bergamasca Jacopo Zuanelli abitante a Santa Sofia, proprietario di un *filetto* di 79 piccole perle, comprato al momento delle nozze per 20 ducati, una catenella d'oro «a martello» da un'oncia (valutata 10 ducati), due rubini, due diamanti e altri gioielli di poco valore per un totale di poco più di 53 ducati.<sup>17</sup> Non è da escludere però, vista la finalità per la quale erano stati stilati questi inventari *post mortem* (nei quali di norma non venivano elencati i beni dati in pegno<sup>18</sup>, a differenza di quelli per il recupero degli oggetti dotati), che al momento della redazione altri monili fossero conservati da terzi in garanzia.

Ben altre erano le disponibilità dell'avvocato Stefano Cerchieri, appartenente al ceto cittadino, che di sua proprietà (non della moglie) conservava a casa al momento della morte un gruppo di pietre preziose e semipreziose sciolte (rubini, diamanti – di cui uno falso –, zaffiri), un rosario di granati, qualche anello d'oro e stoviglie d'argento (posate, tazze, bicchieri, una saliera).<sup>19</sup> Degno di una famiglia patrizia, poi, l'insieme di oggetti posseduti da Marietta Loredan, stimati quasi 700 ducati e comprensivi di molti coltelli e posate d'argento, scodelle e bacili lavorati anche 'alla damaschina', oltre a gioielli d'oro e d'argento. Una *zòia* d'oro e pietre preziose valutata 46 ducati veniva contata a parte, poiché da tenere separata per essere utilizzata a garanzia di un debito familiare.<sup>20</sup>

Al di là degli inventari, un passo ulteriore nel loro impiego a fini alternativi al denaro ci viene offerto dalla documentazione notarile. È proprio questa tipologia di fonte a mostrare gli usi che non si limitavano all'indosso e al ricorso come pegno per questi beni, ma che andavano a costituire in tutto e per tutto una forma reificata del denaro, non solo come merci di garanzia. Non è un caso allora che, come risulta dall'ordine e dalle descrizioni negli inventari, i preziosi e le pietre venissero conservati insieme alle monete contanti.

Fra disporre degli oggetti per indossarli e utilizzarli, o per impiegarli a garanzia e pegno con la buona prospettiva di rientrarne in possesso da un lato, oppure

<sup>15</sup> ASVe, CIMN, b. 40, n. 32 (8 novembre 1566)

<sup>16</sup> ASVe, CIMN, b. 43, n. 6 (19 novembre 1589).

<sup>17</sup> ASVe, CIMN, b. 43, n. 15 (1 giugno 1587).

<sup>18</sup> In questo tipo di inventari gli oggetti dati o detenuti a garanzia finiscono solitamente per comparire già convertiti in valore monetario alla voce rispettivamente dei debiti o dei crediti. Solo raramente si trova esplicita indicazione della loro natura, del loro impiego come pegni e del nominativo della persona presso la quale si trovavano.

<sup>19</sup> ASVe, GPI, b. 338, n. 47 (28 novembre 1584).

<sup>20</sup> ASVe, CIMN, b. 38, nn. 48-50 (27 marzo 1549).

impiegarli come beni alternativi al denaro in attività finanziarie e creditizie, però, non è scontato si scegliessero le stesse tipologie merceologiche. In questo senso l'analisi della fonte notarile aiuta a comprendere meglio cosa veniva preferito dai singoli e dal mercato con quell'obiettivo specifico, poiché il ricorso al notaio riguardava in maniera più incisiva proprio l'impiego che non fosse di pegno semplice, già ampiamente regolato dalla prassi quotidiana. Inoltre, ricorrere ad un rogito implicava che l'affare avesse bisogno di particolari garanzie e coinvolgesse somme sufficienti ad ammortizzare il costo della scrittura. Per tal motivo se pure la fonte tace sugli scambi più minuti e frequenti, al contrario offre un miglior punto di vista su tutto il mercato del credito informale che si realizzava attraverso i beni di alto valore. Questi ultimi, poi, erano quelli che per motivi tanto affettivi che di valore intrinseco erano ricercati con maggiore frequenza dagli individui a fine di tesaurizzazione e per l'eventuale trasmissione alle generazioni successive (Blake 2006, 332-33 e Ago 2008, 53-56 e per il caso veneziano Hinton 2002, 248-254) o da utilizzare socialmente come dono (Ago 2008, 50-52).<sup>21</sup> La documentazione notarile, inoltre, consente di provare che la diffusione della clientela interessata a tali pratiche era trasversale, seppure per ragioni di opportunità se ne trovi traccia in particolare per i ceti più ricchi.

Gli oggetti in argento (e meno frequentemente in oro) lavorato si dimostravano allettanti anche a quello scopo, non solo come pegni. Il metallo che li costituiva, e che al bisogno poteva essere rifuso per coniare nuova moneta,<sup>22</sup> offriva garanzia sufficiente a tutte le parti. Il nobile Pietro Capello poteva quindi ricorrere a «tanti arzenti lavoradi» per il valore di 225 ducati per uno scambio di crediti con alcuni ebrei.<sup>23</sup> Lo stesso ragionamento sottostava la cessione di un bacile d'argento da barbiere e un coltello col fodero in oro e gioielli che Alvisè Loredan dava a uno dei banchieri del ghetto per 362 ducati nel 1561.<sup>24</sup> La certezza che la valutazione di quegli oggetti era stabile faceva sì che potessero essere usati anche dagli stessi banchieri ebrei per affari finanziari fra i banchi, senza muovere contanti o diritti su scritture.<sup>25</sup>

Il discorso è simile per quanto riguarda i gioielli, che di necessità potevano essere smontati per recuperarne i componenti (metallo e pietre). Al tempo, infatti, nella stima di questa tipologia di oggetti prevaleva nettamente il valore intrinseco su tutti quei tratti che oggi definiremmo 'artistici', oppure legati al mercato della moda. Per tale motivo si sceglievano i gioielli o in solo oro (dalle semplici vere a monili più

<sup>21</sup> Il ruolo degli oggetti come dono di alto pregio materiale e simbolico, dal valore alternativo o superiore al denaro, coinvolge di frequente le pietre preziose e i gioielli anche nel loro impiego di facilitatori dei rapporti diplomatici. Paradigmatico il loro ricorso a tale scopo nelle relazioni fra le Serenissima e la corte ottomana in epoca rinascimentale, come in Aymar-Wollheim e Molà 2011 e Howard 2011. Il tema più in generale in Howell 2010, 145-59 e 171-207.

<sup>22</sup> In tal senso la loro accumulazione veniva indirettamente sostenuta anche a livello statale. Nel 1541, ad esempio, un decreto senatoriale lamentava l'uso delle perle (che possono invecchiare e si svalutano se decadono in qualità), sottolineando come i gioielli in metallo prezioso fossero da preferire: essi potevano essere fusi e riconvertiti in moneta in momenti di tassazione straordinaria (Muzzarelli, Molà, Riello 2023, 227).

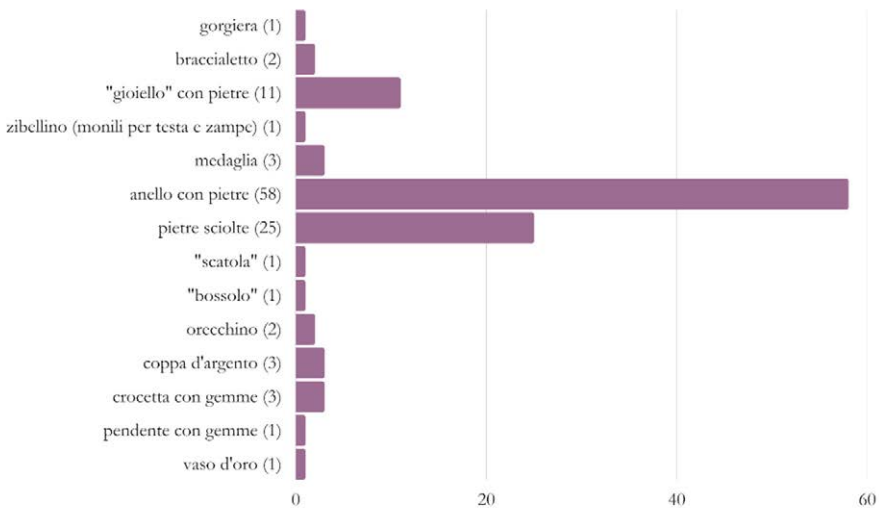
<sup>23</sup> ASVe, *Notarile, Atti* (NotA), b. 8244, III, c. 35r-v (23 dicembre 1557).

<sup>24</sup> ASVe, *NotA*, b. 8248, V, c. 24r-v (2 settembre 1561).

<sup>25</sup> Ad esempio per i 130 ducati spostati in forma di 16 *marche* di oggetti d'argento fra il banco di Salamoncino *quondam* Simonetto e quello dei fratelli Salamoncino e Cervo Dal Banco; ASVe, *NotA*, b. 8249, VII, cc. 22v-23r (7 dicembre 1562)

complessi quali le cinture<sup>26</sup> e pendenti scolpiti) oppure quelli con montate pietre preziose. La tipologia di gioie che ‘valevano’ l’affare è ben identificabile in un elenco di 113 unità fra *gioie* e pietre sciolte compilato per assicurare un debito di 2200 ducati che i soci gioiellieri Michele Chepel *tedesco* e Gisberto da Strada dichiaravano di avere nei confronti di Angelo Stoppa e dei suoi fratelli.<sup>27</sup> I preziosi non si trovavano però nella bottega dei due a Rialto (pur trattandosi di appartenenti a una categoria professionale nota per ‘trafficare’ in gioielli anche a livello creditizio come ricorda Fontaine 2014, 115-117 e 119), ma erano già stati impegnati presso l’ebreo Mosè Salit per 3000 ducati. In caso di mancato pagamento i creditori potevano rivalersi su quei beni, oppure usarli per pagare un credito verso terzi, già registrato presso un altro banco del ghetto. Si trattava quindi delle tipologie che meglio venivano valutate e gli oggetti descritti spaziano per modello e insieme di gemme scelte per adornali (Figg. 1 e 2). Tuttavia, ribadiscono la tendenza che emerge anche dall’impiego ordinario: si preferivano in gran misura gli anelli, in particolare quelli con rubini, zaffiri, diamanti e perle; molto meno usati collane, orecchini o altre tipologie di ornamento.

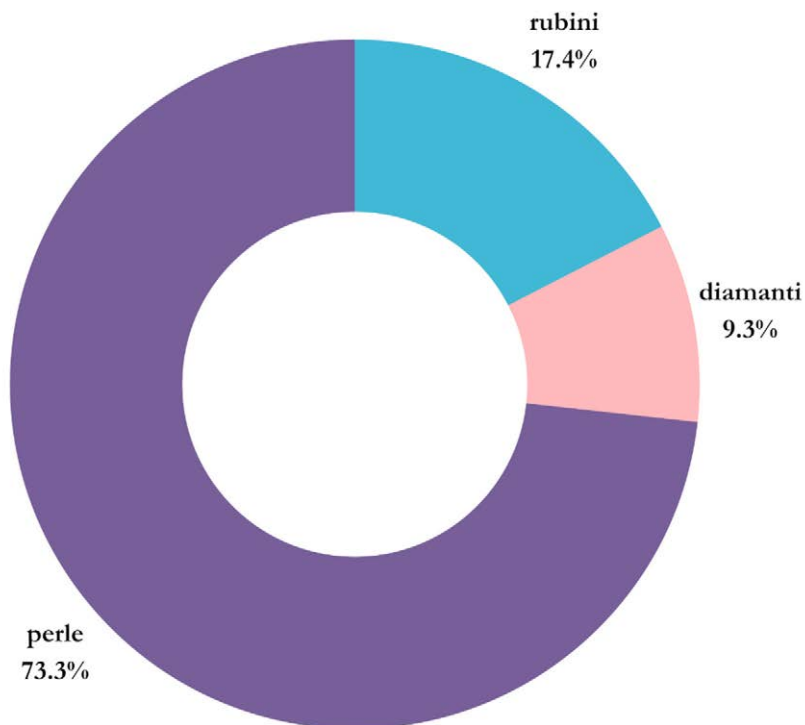
Fig. 1. Elenco delle tipologie di gioielli forniti dai gioiellieri Chepel e da Strada



<sup>26</sup> Come in ASVe, *NolA*, b. 8249, IV, c. 13v (13 maggio 1562) e b. 8250, II, c. 17r-v (23 febbraio 1563).

<sup>27</sup> ASVe, *NolA*, b. 8247, III, cc. 36r-38r (17 maggio 1560).

Fig. 2. Tipologie e distribuzione quantitativa delle principali pietre sciolte coinvolte nell'affare



Un dato che in maniera empirica emerge anche dalla quantità di anelli che compaiono nei ritratti coevi (Figg. 3 e 4)

Decisamente più raro incrociare il riferimento a pietre semipreziose seppur molto amate al tempo per simulare i rubini, come nel caso del balascio e dello spinello. Quest'ultimo minerale, ad esempio, era montato su un pendente d'oro venduto da una tal Virginia, moglie dello «spettabil» Bernardo Gello, tuttavia il monile raggiungeva la stima di 122 ducati solo grazie al metallo e alla perla che pure lo adornavano.<sup>28</sup> Il valore di mercato inferiore per le pietre semipreziose le rendeva verosimilmente più adatte al microcredito, e più in generale a pignoramenti e scambi fra beni denaro-equivalenti per cifre minori e in cui l'esigenza di garantirsi la transazione con un atto notarile fosse meno pressante.

<sup>28</sup> ASVe, *NotA*, b. 8250, II, c. 12r-v (17 febbraio 1563).

Fig. 3. Lorenzo Lotto, *Ritratto di uomo con rosario*, c. 1520 Nivaagaards Malerisamling (Copenhagen), Public domain





Fig. 4. Francesco Montemezzano, *Ritratto di donna con scoiattolo*, c. 1565-1575, Rijksmuseum (Amsterdam), Public Domain



Sono invece le perle, insieme e più dei diamanti,<sup>29</sup> a farla da padrone quando si decideva di passare dal notaio. Le pietre sciolte potevano risultare un buon investimento tanto quanto gli oggetti di metallo prezioso nella città in cui i *veriselli*<sup>30</sup> potevano compensare la momentanea assenza fra le vesti dell'originale, ma sono le perle ad essere scambiate in fili e sacchetti come vera e propria alternativa al denaro. Contratti dissimulati di finanziamento e forme creditizie non apertamente esplicitate sono in buona misura accompagnate dal passaggio di mano di perle di ogni tipo: «orientali»<sup>31</sup> o non diversamente definite, di vario peso e foggia. Sempre contate in fili, il più delle volte in numero fra le 50 e le 60; talora se ne specifica la caratura, ma più spesso se ne derivano la qualità e la grandezza dal valore stimato.<sup>32</sup> Bianche, lucide e lucenti, le perle nel Cinquecento erano diventate un vero simbolo di 'venezianità', anche grazie all'abilità dei vetrai muranesi nel crearne delle riproduzioni in vetro *lattimo* e smalti vendute a bassissimo prezzo. Un prodotto che in breve era stato capace di diventare popolarissimo non solo in città, ma anche come merce d'esportazione.<sup>33</sup> Le donne veneziane potevano quindi adornarsi di perle: vere per poche; imitazioni in vetro per quante non potevano permetterselo. Quasi a cascate sembrano quindi diventare carattere proprio della moda in laguna e ancor più dell'abbigliamento delle spose (Campagnol 2014)<sup>34</sup> e con altrettanta esuberanza ne vengono ricoperte le figure femminili nell'arte pittorica, a partire dalla stessa personificazione della Serenissima. Ma se quelle in vetro permettevano anche di aggirare i limiti imposti dalle leggi suntuarie (Muzzarelli 2003), sono le autentiche a interessare gli affari e a essere scambiate al posto dei contanti. Di lì avrebbero preso le diverse direzioni dei traffici veneziani,

<sup>29</sup> In questo secolo la circolazione dei diamanti iniziò a essere facilitata anche dall'impiego di tali pietre nei *network* gestiti dalla diaspora ebraica sefardita (Trivellato 2023, 100-09), capace di unire non solo le diverse sponde del Mediterraneo, ma anche reti commerciali e finanziarie a livello globale (Trivellato 2009, 232-38 e 244-62). Si tratta di un elemento interessante se pensiamo al caso qui esaminato come legato agli operatori del ghetto, in cui, seppur formalmente divise professionalmente, convivevano famiglie sefardite con quante di origine *ashkenazita* e italiana.

<sup>30</sup> Il termine indica le simulazioni in vetro di pietre preziose, settore nel quale si era specializzata la vetreria muranese, a fianco del settore delle *conterie* ovvero delle biglie decorative di vetro in varia foggia; sono queste ultime quelle vendute a casse e destinate al mercato globale come *trade beads*. Sui *veriselli* si veda Zecchin 1987-1990, 153-57.

<sup>31</sup> Si consideri che ancora a inizio Cinquecento le perle orientali in entrata da Venezia erano esentate dal dazio (Muzzarelli, Molà, Riello 2023, 229). In seguito ne poterono beneficiare anche le perle 'americane' che prima di raggiungere la città fossero passate dalla piazza di smercio specializzata di Costantinopoli.

<sup>32</sup> Sulla scorta della *Tariffa de pexi et mesure* di Bartolomeo Pasi a Venezia il carato per la pesatura delle perle era pari a circa 0,207 grammi (Pasi 1503, 3r), ma da altre notazioni notarili si rileva che a volte i mercanti si accordassero per applicare la libbra sottile in uso per la seta e le spezie (Muzzarelli, Molà, Riello 2023, 227-229).

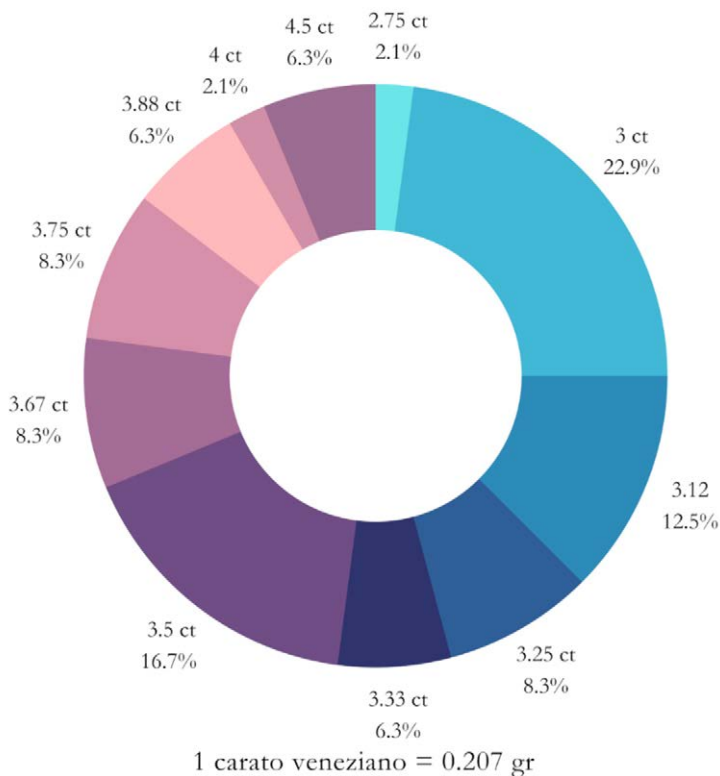
<sup>33</sup> La diffusione di simulazioni di alta qualità era così pervasiva da impensierire i massimi vertici dello Stato, che col Consiglio dei Dieci lamentavano a inizio Cinquecento i rischi che venissero usate per commettere frodi. In tal modo confermando indirettamente il loro diffuso impiego come mezzo di scambio alternativo al denaro circolante (Muzzarelli, Molà, Riello 2023, 244-45).

<sup>34</sup> Lo mostrano le tavole e le descrizioni di Cesare Vecellio nel ritrarre l'abbigliamento delle veneziane nubili, sposate, vedove e cortigiane, che non mancavano di indossare perle nemmeno nelle occasioni maggiormente votate alla modestia e alla moderazione come la quaresima (Vecellio 1590, 124-46).

per poi magari tornare in laguna: per tutto il secolo Venezia restò uno dei principali empori per le perle, in qualsiasi parte del globo avessero trovato origine (Muzzarelli, Molà, Riello 2023, 225).

Un ricco esempio di quella «ricchezza condensata in una piccola, rilucente sfera» (la definizione in Muzzarelli, Molà, Riello 2023, 14) è offerto dalla dettagliata lista di perle che l'ebreo Cervo abitante a Lonigo, nel vicentino, consegnava al patrizio veneziano Pietro Marcello.<sup>35</sup> Un insieme di 48 pezzi, «tute oriental» (portate a Venezia probabilmente dopo un lungo viaggio iniziato nei mari indiani e con un probabile passaggio a Costantinopoli) (Muzzarelli, Molà, Riello 2023, 210-11 e 230), che nel contratto venivano numerate, pesate e descritte una per una (Fig. 5).

Fig. 5. Distribuzione per carati delle perle oggetto dell'affare fra Cervo e Pietro Marcello



Oltre al dato economico e di stima, più che in altri casi la scelta fra i contraenti di garantire la riconoscibilità di quelle perle esemplifica anche la diversa concezione

<sup>35</sup> ASVe, *NotA*, b. 8250, II, cc. 6v-8r (14 febbraio 1564).

sottesa al denaro da parte ebraica e cristiana. Se dal punto di vista ebraico il denaro è una merce imperfetta che può trovare corretto apprezzamento solo nella comparazione con un'altra merce quantificata e identificabile, diversamente per la riflessione della maggioranza il denaro sottende a una quantificazione astratta dell'oggetto (Todeschini 1989, 48, 71, 135, 170). Il valore di unità di conto per la quantificazione veniva quindi affidato ad una scala di misurazione identificabile come una 'moneta immaginaria'. E questa, da ultimo, non corrispondeva all'effettivo contenuto metallico se non attraverso la comparazione con le monete monetate. L'equilibrio fra le due visioni era valso nella pratica economica quotidiana fra maggioranza e minoranza in tempi precedenti sin dalla diffusione del prestito ebraico in area italiana nel pieno medioevo, e continuava a valere al momento di valutare gli oggetti portati ai banchi e botteghe del ghetto veneziano come pegni. Tuttavia, non perdeva la sua efficacia neanche nella trattazione dei beni denaro-equivalenti, quando quegli oggetti non erano destinati a passare dallo stato di pegno.

### 3. Il rapporto fra preziosi e attività finanziaria: il caso del ghetto veneziano

In epoca medievale la scarsità di denaro circolante e la condanna ecclesiastica dell'usura<sup>36</sup> avevano generato una serie di modalità alternative di scambio creditizio, tali da sopperire a forme più o meno codificate di prestito su 'pagamento' del denaro. L'esigenza di credito, infatti, non si esauriva con la mancanza di risorse monetarie circolanti, né per l'opposizione della Chiesa a pratiche di aperta richiesta d'interesse. Quelle soluzioni si erano rafforzate a partire dal pieno e tardo medioevo, sotto la spinta delle esigenze dei mercanti ormai in grado di mettere in collegamento il continente europeo con l'intera area mediterranea e oltre (Demo 2014, 116-24). A partire dal Trecento e dalla redistribuzione dei capitali seguita alla Peste Nera nella Penisola si era poi vissuta una forte ripresa dell'attività manifatturiera e mercantile, in forme che nel tempo diventarono proto-industriali e comportarono quindi una maggiore necessità di flessibilità e di disponibilità di moneta variamente intesa. Negli stessi decenni, la riflessione francescana interna al mondo cristiano aveva raffinato la concezione del problema per delineare meglio il rapporto fra credo e credito anche con l'invenzione di strumenti nuovi come il Monte di Pietà (Muzzarelli, 2014, 25-26), in una società in cui vivere indebitati era una norma non solo accettata, ma considerata addirittura vantaggiosa, tanto che un basso tasso di indebitamento non è da intendersi come indice di un sano e razionale comportamento economico, quando di una posizione marginale nel mercato (Fontaine 2014, 155).

La diffusione della passività e dei tempi dilazionati per i pagamenti erano pertanto in grado di generare una 'massa' di denaro virtuale utile a sopperire e integrare la scarsità di circolante e sostenere la circolazione di capitali privati (per la *Terraferma*

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<sup>36</sup> Quest'ultima intesa come qualsiasi forma di corresponsione di interesse non rispondente alla disciplina economica elaborata in ambito ecclesiastico, che unico si era assegnato la prerogativa di codificare le regole degli scambi fra persone e gruppi e di definire il rapporto fra 'fede' contrattuale (quale emazione di una 'fides' pubblica all'interno di una 'societas christiana') e fede religiosa; sul tema rimando alle considerazioni in Todeschini 2005 e più in generale all'analisi dell'autore in Todeschini 2016.

veneziana si veda Scuro 2019b, 143-44). Tali pratiche sul medio e lungo termine assicuravano il raggiungimento del pareggio, mentre nell'immediato stimolavano l'economia e gli scambi con l'emissione di debiti di fatto, che a loro volta potevano essere scambiati, ceduti, comprati, assicurando ulteriori guadagni dalla speculazione sulla circolazione dei crediti (Grubb 1999, 189-92).

In quel contesto aveva assunto un ruolo di primo piano lo scambio non monetario. Valutazioni più o meno favorevoli di una merce-bene e conseguenti oscillazioni di stima davano modo di guadagnare sulla discrepanza posta in essere fra il valore concordato fra i contraenti e quanto quelli avrebbero potuto ricavarne in un secondo momento o nella reintroduzione del bene verso terzi. L'utilizzo di quegli oggetti (e più in generale di *commodities*) formalmente stimati in maniera paritaria (ma in grado di spuntare prezzi più vantaggiosi su altri mercati e contesti) e l'abilità speculativa in questo passaggio, erano in grado di produrre guadagni 'informali' anche di notevole entità, grazie alla solidità delle reti dei *partner* commerciali (come nel caso della famiglia Finzi in Romani 2007). L'attribuzione di una parificazione concorde a una o più merci diverse dal denaro consentiva dunque di generare un valore 'nascosto' e aggiuntivo, che sarebbe riemerso con una nuova stima in momenti e luoghi più favorevoli, o con altri compratori. Nell'insieme le modalità informali che coinvolgevano i beni denaro-equivalenti facevano del baratto una pratica sofisticata di scambio, di cessione del credito e della gestione finanziaria.<sup>37</sup>

Di quegli spazi liminali avevano goduto sin dal Tre-Quattrocento gli operatori specializzati di parte ebraica. La minoranza, quindi, da quell'epoca era stata sempre più confinata dalla maggioranza nel ruolo di prestatori, per sopperire in modo ufficiale a quella domanda di credito. Gli ebrei, esclusi e vilipesi come infedeli, venivano a ricoprire un ruolo vitale, ma vietato alla maggioranza. Dal Quattrocento l'intera Italia centro-settentrionale era così andata punteggiandosi di banche di prestito su pegno condotti da feneratori ebrei, sparsi in ogni centro grande o minore che avesse mostrato una vitalità economica sufficiente da aver bisogno di credito e, di conseguenza, d'essere in grado di fornirne i profitti. Non è questa la sede per percorrere quel quadro, ma basti sottolineare come il confinamento professionale avesse reso i banchieri ebrei particolarmente abili nell'avvantaggiarsi non solo delle operazioni creditizie, ma anche dell'altra componente a cui erano associati: i beni mobili offerti in pegno.<sup>38</sup> Non stupisce che ne fosse seguita un'ulteriore specializzazione nella compravendita di merci usate, inizialmente mossa dalla necessità di rivendere con profitto gli oggetti non riscattati. Fenerazione, attività bancaria e *strazzaria* erano diventate ancor più le chiavi dell'attività ebraica nello Stato veneto, poiché la Serenissima aveva vincolato la minoranza a queste due sole professioni; precludendole anche qualsiasi forma di proprietà e possesso di beni immobiliari (Scuro 2019b, 147-54).

La conseguenza era stata sin dal Quattrocento una sempre più spiccata tendenza da parte ebraica a scegliere di essere ripagati in merce anziché in moneta, a dispetto

<sup>37</sup> Sul tema del ruolo dell'informalità nell'ambito creditizio rimando ai saggi in Carboni e Muzzarelli 2014.

<sup>38</sup> La specializzazione aveva anche affinato il trasferimento di competenze nei principali settori d'interesse degli oggetti scambiati, come l'oreficeria. Lo dimostra la diffusione di manuali come quello analizzato in Sirat 1968.

delle clausole inserite nelle condotte siglate fra i banchieri e le autorità locali. Regolamentazioni che imponevano di norma la restituzione dei prestiti in denaro contante (Romani 2012, 53-63). A fianco di ciò, man mano che l'attività ebraica si radicava, la scelta di avvantaggiarsi dei circuiti dei beni denaro-equivalenti già praticati dai cristiani (ad esempio per mezzo della reimmissione sul mercato delle rendite) aveva prodotto soluzioni capaci di introdurre forme creditizie nel mercato delle merci di *strazzaria*, con modalità da parte ebraica più complesse, adattabili e variegate del piccolo credito praticato dai colleghi cristiani (Allerston 1996, 65-67 e 140-47 e Allerston 1999).

In assenza del bene come pegno, si provvedeva a sostituirlo con una compravendita basata su un pagamento rateale dilazionato e a durata variabile (ma solitamente compresa fra i tre e gli otto anni). Una tendenza in accordo con il lungo processo di negoziazione e i tempi dilatati propri dell'economia formale e informale veneziana (Shaw 2018, 635-40). Non si trattava di una vendita per tamponare un'insolvenza, bensì di una scelta di strategia economica consapevole sin dall'inizio. In tal modo, infatti, se da un lato la cessione dell'oggetto 'ufficialmente' venduto simulava nella pratica quanto sarebbe accaduto se quello fosse stato impegnato e mai più riscattato, dall'altro le motivazioni concordi di entrambe le parti perseguivano il preciso obiettivo di sfruttare le potenzialità dell'apprezzamento di quella merce sul mercato. Il cedente poteva sacrificare un bene, preferibilmente ad alto valore intrinseco, in cambio dell'ottenimento garantito di liquidità in modalità cadenzata. Il tasso applicato all'operazione constava della differenza fra la valutazione reale dell'oggetto e la cifra ottenuta in totale. Per il venditore diventava quindi un tasso fruttifero. Da parte sua, invece, il compratore otteneva immediatamente l'oggetto/bene da introdurre sul mercato in maniera speculativa; o da cedere come garanzia a terzi. Scambiare o cedere a altri attori i diritti sul bene o sul credito a esso collegato arricchiva ulteriormente le opportunità speculative per entrambe le parti. Non è un caso, quindi, che sin dalle prime attestazioni della pratica nella *Terraferma* quattrocentesca per realizzarla si fossero scelti oggetti quali indumenti d'alta gamma e gioielli (Scuro 2012, 203-06).

Sull'importazione in laguna di queste modalità di scambio e di finanziamento era andato a costituirsi il cuore economico della comunità ebraica veneziana a inizio Cinquecento, dopo che con la stipula della condotta e la creazione del ghetto nel 1516 essa divenne permanente e legata all'attività bancaria e di commercio dell'usato. Le due professioni alle quali Venezia aveva vincolato per legge gli ebrei della *natione tedesca* (ovvero la componente d'origine italiana e *ashkenazita*) (Pullan 1971, 541-60, Ravid 2001, 7-8 e Segre 2021, 443-485). Si trattava di quelle famiglie ebreiche che avevano abbandonato lo Stato da Terra per rifugiarsi nella capitale sulla scorta degli sconvolgimenti legati alla guerra della Lega di Cambrai (Scuro 2019a e Scuro 2020). E se gli ebrei non erano i soli ad avere familiarità con l'acquisizione e rivendita degli oggetti, a differenza di altri come gli *strazzaroli* cristiani (Allerston 1996, 63-75) potevano beneficiare di due vantaggi in più. Innanzitutto la competenza acquisita nel processo di limatura della pratica di scambio fra oggetti e credito dilazionato come prima descritta. In secondo luogo, e non meno importante, contavano su un solido *network* che univa famiglia e affari lungo le parentele della minoranza disseminate nella Penisola e oltreconfine. Una rete tale da poter muovere quote societarie e oggetti verso le piazze di volta in volta più favorevoli alla rivalutazione (Luzzati 2004, 197, Romani 2008 e Maifreda 2021, 158-59), secondo un modello di legami economico-sociali forti

sulla scorta della cosiddetta 'F-connection'. Quest'ultima in grado di raggruppare legami di sangue (*family*), sociali e culturali (*friends*), e economici (*firms*) (Ben-Porath 1980). Non è un caso allora che sin da subito si preoccupassero di vedersi garantito dalla Repubblica il diritto di possedere delle botteghe di *strazari*: una concessione pagata a caro prezzo alla Serenissima, ma che il gruppo sapeva sarebbe stata presto ricompensata.

Un mercato come quello della capitale veneta, in cui beni ad alto valore intrinseco circolavano in maggior numero che altrove, non poteva che rappresentare un terreno ideale per lo sviluppo di tali pratiche, ma del ricorso a vendite simulate in quel contesto si tratterà fornendo degli esempi nelle prossime pagine, sulla scorta dei rapporti con la clientela femminile. Né verrà trattato in questa sede l'impiego delle gioie come pegni, seppure a Venezia il loro ricorso potesse risultare ancora più vantaggioso in assenza di un Monte di Pietà, che il patriziato della Serenissima aveva strenuamente voluto mantenere al di fuori dei confini della laguna (Ravid 2001, 10-13 e Pullan 2001, 59-66). Una condizione che imponeva ai veneziani il doversi recare in *Terraferma* in uno dei centri in cui l'istituto era stato fondato se avessero voluto farvi ricorso. È quindi possibile ipotizzare che proprio l'assenza di un'alternativa (formalmente istituzionalizzata dal punto di vista civico) al credito ebraico, per fasce medio-basse della popolazione, avesse dato modo di rafforzarsi ad ulteriori soluzioni di scambio (come accadeva ad esempio nel contesto inglese, pure privo di tale istituzione, Muldrew 2014, 363-365 e Muldrew 1998, capp. 7-8). Una situazione in grado di attirare verso il mercato del ghetto anche forestieri e sudditi dai distretti veneti, che qui migliore e più facile apprezzamento avrebbero trovato per i loro gioielli e preziosi.<sup>39</sup> L'assenza del Monte Pio faceva sì, inoltre, che i banchi ebraici fossero gli unici fornitori di credito a tasso fisso prestabilito e garantito nella Capitale.

In aggiunta, a sostenere l'uso alternativo dei beni denaro-equivalenti nell'ambito del mercato creditizio gestito dagli ebrei vi era il fatto che gli accordi con la maggioranza avessero imposto clausole precise ai massimali che ogni banco veneziano poteva prestare annualmente. L'alta domanda a fronte del tetto prestabilito aveva nel tempo indotto a ridurre a fine Cinquecento a una manciata di ducati (tre) la cifra che era possibile prestare per singola operazione/bollettino (Cecchini 2012a, 49 e Pullan 1971, 573-74). In tal modo la Repubblica cercava di agevolare il ricorso a beni di modesto valore, per garantire l'accesso al credito della popolazione minuta, dopo aver ormai imposto *de facto* agli ebrei lagunari della *natione tedesca* il ruolo di alternativa 'di Stato' ai Monti di Pietà. Pochi gioielli o qualche perla che i ceti più abbienti potevano dare in pegno avrebbero altresì dirottato su una singola persona il valore che a beneficio dell'ordine sociale la Serenissima preferiva fosse redistribuito per le esigenze popolari. Era così invalso l'uso (o malcostume, stante la legge) di assegnare quote dello stesso bene a più bollettini (Ravid 1987, 683).

Ma per superare questo limite, altre forme di scambio e di garanzie si erano rapidamente affermate, basate sul passaggio di cessione di crediti in forma anche di oggetti. Ciò veniva ulteriormente garantito dal fatto che le tipologie merceologiche qui trattate fornivano un valore stabile o crescente in momenti favorevoli, nonché

<sup>39</sup> Come in ASVe, *NotA*, b. 8246, II, cc. 3v-4r (10 marzo 1559); b. 8247, I, cc. 22v-23r (3 febbraio 1560) o b. 8250, II, cc. 10r-11r (16 febbraio 1563).

universalmente spendibile. Per perle, gioielli e gemme questo era ancor più vero che per altre categorie del lusso, in quanto meno soggette a deterioramento o andamenti del mercato e fluttuazioni del gusto e della moda, stante il fatto che il loro valore si fondava in larga parte sulla loro stessa materialità. Nella Venezia cinquecentesca, inoltre, le perle avevano visto un progressivo aumento della valutazione a seguito di una crescita della domanda tale da incidere significativamente sui prezzi di mercato.<sup>40</sup>

Una prima frequente forma di transazione constava nella cessione fra beni-merci e titoli di credito su terzi. Lo faceva, ad esempio, Giulio Donà che consegnava ai banchieri un *instrumentum* parimenti stimato per un credito che vantava su Pietro Querini, in cambio di 60 perle vendutegli per l'ammontare di 271 ducati £ 2 e soldi 18 di piccoli.<sup>41</sup> La cifra insolita si riferiva a una concorde valutazione nello scambio fra i due beni, ovvero due crediti espressi in coefficiente monetario ma concretizzati in altra forma. È inoltre probabile che il Donà si recasse dagli ebrei con la chiara intenzione di acquisire perle al fine di impiegarle come beni (equipollenti e alternativi alla moneta) a fine di scambio e/o garanzia in affari da intrattenere con altri mercanti. Di conseguenza l'attività di compravendita pura di perle e gioie attraverso banchi e botteghe ebraici non era infrequente, proprio perché la loro capacità di intercettarli sul mercato rendeva quelle *stationes* naturali collettori a cui approvvigionarsi in caso di necessità per transazioni anche fra soli cristiani.

Il sistema si era perfezionato rapidamente, tanto che aveva iniziato a comprendere fra i beni cedibili anche diritti su rendite di beni fondiari o quote del debito pubblico. Sceglieva questa seconda soluzione nel 1564 il nobile Antonio Minio che per un diamante da 100 ducati assegnava a Mandolino dal Banco obbligazioni presso il Monte Novissimo di Venezia; tanto sue, che di altri sulle quali vantava diritti e cessioni.<sup>42</sup> Che poi questo tipo di garanzia su oggetti fosse solida lo comprova ulteriormente il suo progressivo impiego anche all'interno del gruppo ebraico, che iniziò a ricorrervi tanto per affari privati, quanto comunitari, ovvero per la gestione economica degli interessi dell'*universitas*.<sup>43</sup>

Che fossero perle, diamanti, *arzenti* oppure «ori e zoglie» la tipologia di merci aveva quindi pienamente acquisito un valore equivalente o superiore alla moneta all'interno del mercato creditizio e finanziario veneziano, così da renderne l'uso pressoché usuale e regolato da precise consuetudini per chi avesse potuto e voluto farne ricorso. La garanzia di assenza della perdita ne rafforzava i vantaggi. In tal modo si poteva arrivare a fare passaggi ulteriori. Nel caso della compravendita di 48 perle orientali prima menzionata fra l'ebreo Cervo e il patrizio Pietro Marcello, la cessione da mano ebraica a cristiana era stata infatti intesa non come una vendita o un credito semplice, ma come una forma di 'affitto fruttifero', ovvero di finanziamento agli affari. Non ci si trova davanti a un cristiano che depositava capitali presso un banco al

<sup>40</sup> Ciò nonostante la piazza si approvvigionasse nella seconda metà del secolo sia dalle tratte asiatiche, che dalle Americhe attraverso il passaggio da Siviglia e dall'intermediazione dei porti mediterranei (Muzzarelli, Molà, Riello 2023, 230).

<sup>41</sup> ASVe, *NotA*, b. 8249, V, c. 3r-v (13 luglio 1562).

<sup>42</sup> ASVe, *NotA*, b. 8251, I, cc. 14v-15r (19 gennaio 1564).

<sup>43</sup> Come in ASVe, *NotA*, b. 8247, III, c. 32v (15 maggio 1560) e b. 8249, VI, c. 39r-v (13 novembre 1562).



fine di ottenerne un guadagno come rendita ricavata dagli interessi, ma di un banchiere e mercante ebreo che investiva nelle attività del patrizio veneziano compartecipando in perle, ovvero in una valuta alternativa al denaro. Cervo le consegnava al cristiano per due anni e la somma indicata altro non era che il guadagno che l'uomo si aspettava insieme alla loro riconsegna.

Se era normale che gli ebrei utilizzassero oggetti e pegni nelle loro mani per noleggiarli a terzi (Ago 2006, 116-17) per ottenere in tal modo ulteriori ricavi (così come facevano i colleghi cristiani e più in generale quanti detenevano pegni in garanzia), nel caso delle perle consegnate a Pietro Marcello il passaggio di mano serviva a consegnare nella sua disponibilità beni che come denaro-equivalenti quello avrebbe reimpiegato per il biennio pattuito. Cervo se ne assicurava il profitto indiretto. Nel caso poi che le perle fossero state smarrite tutte o in parte, l'elenco dettagliato ne avrebbe reso debito conto. Che da parte dell'ebreo fosse una forma di investimento negli affari del cristiano consta anche dal fatto che dopo un anno si sarebbe potuta contrattare una restituzione anticipata (verosimilmente se gli affari fossero andati male) e che il valore ne veniva garantito con pari somma depositata presso il banco dei Dolfin. Da sottolineare, poi, come in caso di mancata restituzione integrale la somma da rimborsare saliva da 450 a 600 ducati, con l'applicazione di una pesante penale, rincarata di un terzo. Decisamente agli occhi dei veneziani del tempo i preziosi fornivano in maniera riconosciuta garanzie e vantaggi pari o superiori alla moneta vera e propria.

#### 4. Il ruolo della clientela femminile

Un ultimo aspetto da porre in evidenza nella relazione fra ricorso alle *zoië* e mercato del credito è il ruolo ricoperto dalla clientela femminile. Le donne erano le dirette utilizzatrici di molti di quegli oggetti, se li si considera nella loro funzione rappresentativa: ornate e 'mostrate' dai mariti e dalla famiglia (d'origine prima, acquisita poi) ne incarnavano la posizione sociale e economica (Fig. 6). In una società come quella rinascimentale in cui lo *status* era strettamente connesso con la rappresentazione materiale che se ne dava attraverso l'abbigliamento e la sua simbologia, l'esposizione pubblica delle donne parlava prima ancora che di loro stesse, del rango e del ruolo dei maschi della casa. Un problema che da secoli veniva esasperato e al quale inutilmente si era cercato di porre limite attraverso le leggi suntuarie, la cui ripetizione periodica non faceva che ribadire come restassero inascoltate o fossero aggirate. A Venezia ciò accadeva anche nel caso dei massimali posti alla dote, rivisti più volte nel Cinquecento (Bellavitis 2012, 6-9). Un atteggiamento che non era estraneo allo stesso ambiente ebraico veneziano, stando al resoconto dello scrittore inglese Thomas Coryat (1905, 372 e Ravid 1997, 121), che della sua visita al ghetto veneziano nel 1608 registrava anche la presenza femminile, fatta di donne bellissime e «so gorgeous in their apparel, jewels, chaines of gold, and rings adorned with precious stones, that some of our English contesses do scarce exceed them.» Il riferimento era alle figure notate all'interno della sinagoga levantina, ma non diverso doveva risultare l'aspetto delle correligionarie della *nazione tedesca* (Palumbo Fossati 2013, 283-285 e Boccato

2012), la componente della minoranza dalle cui mani i monili dovevano essere passati attraverso banchi e botteghe di *strazzaria*.

Fig. 6. Francesco Montemezzano, *Ritratto di donna*, The MET (New York), Public Domain



La natura di quei beni e il loro impiego a livello finanziario faceva sì che a farne ricorso fossero dunque non solo i rappresentanti maschili delle famiglie veneziane e straniere in città, ma le stesse donne. Così come per i padri, i fratelli e i mariti, anche per loro i *feneratori* e gli *strazzaroli* costituivano un punto di acquisto e smercio per merci usate anche di alto valore. Se era normale per un uomo recarsi presso i negozi prospicienti il Ghetto Novo per far compravendita di ogni sorta di bene usato, allo stesso modo lo era per la clientela femminile adottare a loro volta le altre strategie di scambio fra beni denaro-equivalenti e alternativi alla moneta. Del resto, come sottolineato da Isabella Palumbo Fossati (2012, 203), per una donna dover legare la propria identità a dei beni mobili poteva anche facilitare lo sviluppo di personalità individuali più che familiari; da far agire in concreto quando ve ne fosse stato spazio economico e giuridico.

Di questa tendenza ci offre esempio un campione di oltre 130 contratti notarili selezionati per il periodo 1556-1564 sulla base del coinvolgimento esclusivo (o totalmente preponderante) di gioielli e pietre preziose, e tratto dallo spoglio sistematico dei protocolli di uno dei notai più attivi con la parte ebraica.<sup>44</sup> In esso la quota femminile fra le attrici principali quando l'affare coinvolge pietre e gioielli sfiora il 17%, con un dato nettamente superiore a quanto si rileva per altre tipologie contrattuali fra la parte ebraica e quella cristiana. In queste ultime, infatti, la prevalenza maschile è di norma netta per ogni categoria di contratto e di merci diverse da quelle qui esaminate: solo in meno del 5% dei rogiti compaiono contraenti donne; si aggiunga poi che si tratta solitamente di atti di procura. In secondo luogo, il campione qui esaminato consente di spaziare in maniera interessante fra classi di clienti più diversificate rispetto ad altri tipi di contratto, proprio per la natura legata ad attività finanziarie connesse al credito mascherato, trasversali a livello sociale.

Più nel dettaglio: se la cessione di oggetti per motivi di vendita reale o fittizia a fine creditizio restava fondata largamente sull'abbigliamento, la biancheria e i tessuti per l'arredamento, una volta che si focalizzi l'attenzione sulle clienti appartenenti al genere femminile queste tipologie restavano sì maggioritarie, ma la frequenza con la quale compaiono anche pietre sciolte e gioie aumenta notevolmente. Se da un lato gli uomini impiegavano spesso il comparto tessile familiare, a volte accompagnato da gioielli di loro proprietà o da beni della casa (che durante il matrimonio potevano amministrare anche se di proprietà della moglie), dall'altro le donne, invece, quasi sempre assieme ai vestiti e a parti del corredo utilizzavano anche i monili; quando non incentravano tutta l'operazione soltanto su preziosi di valore variamente stimato. Si trattava degli oggetti di maggiore spendibilità che le avevano adornate più volte, quasi sempre provenienti tanto dalla quota dotale dei beni mobili (Ago 1995, 120-

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<sup>44</sup> Il campione è tratto dallo spoglio dei protocolli rogati per il periodo in esame dal notaio veneziano Giovanni Battista Monte (ASVe, *NotA*, bb. 8244-8252). Quest'ultimo scelto in virtù del suo rapporto privilegiato con gli operatori del ghetto, risultando il notaio da loro più ingaggiato e pertanto capace di fornire il campionario più rappresentativo dal punto di vista quantitativo e qualitativo. Al fine di ricavarne un saggio significativo per la tipologia di beni qui in esame, dall'insieme della documentazione in cui compare almeno un contraente ebreo si sono dapprima selezionati i contratti relativi a compravendite e crediti mascherati, e poi fra questi ultimi quanti vedano il ricorso solo a gioie e pietre preziose; o quantomeno in cui queste merci siano preponderanti. Si sono perciò scartate tutte le transazioni in cui il ruolo di gioielli e pietre sia accessorio rispetto al valore totale dell'operazione.

126), come da oggetti appartenenti al patrimonio di famiglia ed eventualmente assegnati loro al momento della restituzione della dote con la vedovanza. Un'operazione quest'ultima spesso preferita al contante o all'attribuzione di proprietà e rendite sugli immobili, che la famiglia del marito avrebbe cercato di trattenere per sé (Bellavitis 1998b, 153).

La prima e più numerosa categoria di donne a rivolgersi ai prestatori e agli *strazzaroli* ebrei risulta quindi, senza sorprese, quella delle vedove. A confronto con il diritto comune (Klapisch-Zuber 1988 e Ago 1996 sul ruolo dei beni mobili nelle doti), quello veneziano proteggeva la proprietà femminile in maniera più stringente grazie a una serie di strumenti giuridici tipici della Serenissima che davano alle donne maggior controllo sui beni di loro esclusiva proprietà, ovvero in particolare quanto a loro giungeva attraverso la dote al passaggio dalla casa del padre a quella del marito.<sup>45</sup> Alle figlie di Venezia, che di norma venivano liquidate dall'asse ereditario nativo con la consegna da parte della famiglia d'origine dei beni dotali, era concesso possedere sia beni mobili che immobili. Ne segue che all'ascendere della scala sociale portavano ai mariti tanto diritti propri e d'uso su immobili e rendite (specialmente a partire dalle seconde nozze), quanto oggetti per la casa, vesti preziose, gioielli e perle (Cecchini 2012a, 42). Di questi ultimi e di tutti i beni mobili di proprietà della moglie giunti con la dote recava di norma puntuale elenco uno speciale documento-inventario (detto *vadimonio*) (Cecchini 2012a, 43) che avrebbe fatto fede spesso molti anni dopo, se la vedovanza fosse sopraggiunta e si fosse reso necessario identificare la quota dotale che la famiglia acquisita avrebbe dovuto rendere a quelle donne che avessero deciso di chiederne la restituzione nella prospettiva di tornare alla famiglia d'origine o di passare a nuove nozze.

Per le vedove, dunque, sia che decidessero di abbandonare il tetto coniugale oppure di restare ad abitarvi a spese della famiglia maritale (lasciando ad essa la gestione della dote stessa – o di una sua parte –), l'uso dei beni mobili dotali (e parzialmente anche di quelli immobili) diventava più autonomo, senza i limiti prima imposti dalla gestione del coniuge capofamiglia (Lanaro e Varanini 2009, 91-95).<sup>46</sup> Poter disporre del denaro superava la più semplice condizione del riceverlo (guadagnato o donato),

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<sup>45</sup> Per l'epoca analizzata in queste pagine si deve fare largamente riferimento alla riforma statutaria veneziana in materia di diritto dotale del 1535, che ribadiva ulteriormente un dato essenziale dell'applicazione pratica del diritto veneto: quanto contava non era solo e tanto non disperdere il patrimonio, ma assicurare alla linea maschile la proprietà del palazzo di famiglia. Ciò implicava che non fosse quindi scontato escludere gli immobili dalla quota dotale, soprattutto dalle seconde nozze; riservando alla prima dote il ruolo preponderante dei beni mobili. Con la riforma, la cifra massima autorizzata per la dote saliva a 4000 ducati, di cui solo 1000 vincolati al 'terzo' che sarebbe rimasto al marito e alla sua famiglia in caso di prole vivente. Cifra che si azzerava nel caso delle donne senza figli. Tutto quanto consegnato alla sposa superava quella cifra andava considerato come eredità personale della donna, che poteva usufruirne da subito, anche senza l'autorizzazione del marito (al quale restava vincolato solo l'usufrutto durante il matrimonio). Beni dotali che alla sposa restavano in ogni caso assicurati anche durante la gestione maschile e dei quali avrebbe potuto decidere al momento di testare; così come del sovrabbondante (Bellavitis 1998b, 150 e 152). Per un confronto con la più vincolata posizione delle mogli fiorentine si vedano Chabot 2005, 210-17 e Chabot 2011, 133-86.

<sup>46</sup> Sugli usi e il diritto dotale a Venezia rimando anche a Bellavitis 2001, cap. 4, Bellavitis 1998a e Lanaro 2023, 231-51. Sul tema della stima e restituzione Lanaro 2010 (riproposto in Lanaro 2023, 199-299).

per poter esplorare lo spettro di capacità giuridiche che venivano finalmente detenute anche dalla popolazione femminile (Fontaine 2014, 128).

Le gioie tornavano quindi un bene ad alto valore di mercato nella piena disponibilità delle loro proprietarie. Ma prima quegli oggetti dovevano venire svincolati dagli usi che ne avevano fatto in vita i mariti, ove ancora vi fossero sottoposti. È il caso di un rubino e un diamante montati su gioiello («ligati in oro») che nel giugno 1557 si trovavano a trattare i componenti superstiti della famiglia di Apollonio Massari: Caterina, vedova e prima titolare del contratto, insieme ai figli Giacomo e Pierantonio.<sup>47</sup> Alle gemme veniva attribuito un valore d'insieme non elevatissimo e pari a 200 ducati, e si precisa come fossero state in precedenza comprate dai Massari dalle mani del patrizio Bernardo Contarini. Ciò che d'interessante emerge, però, è il complesso insieme di passaggi di crediti che ruotava intorno a quella compravendita; la quale probabilmente non era stata che una delle diverse fasi di una sequenza di cessioni debitorie. A trattare coi Massari davanti al notaio, infatti, non vi era il nobile Contarini, ma faceva da intermediario<sup>48</sup> l'ebreo Jacob di Geremia, delegato per la gestione della somma. Pietre e clausole creditizie erano probabilmente già più volte passate dai sistemi di fenerazione del ghetto, per i quali avrebbero continuato a transitare nelle operazioni di saldo. Non erano la donna e i figli a provvedere al pagamento, che veniva invece risolto cedendo al Contarini i diritti sugli affitti delle «botteghe di legname» dei Massari in Barbaria delle Tole, tenute da Giovanni Giustinian per 50 ducati il semestre. Nei due anni seguenti (cioè sino al saldo) è verosimile che la somma sarebbe stata utilizzata per garantire diversi prestiti passati attraverso l'opera di Jacob di Geremia o altri correligionari. Non è da escludere poi che l'interesse per quei monili da parte della famiglia fosse legato a precedenti garanzie fornite al Contarini, che li aveva infine acquisiti (e poi rivenduti) per incapacità dei debitori di ripagarlo nei tempi concordati. Era del resto prassi che i coniugi ricorressero ai gioielli delle mogli a far da garanzia, in un andare e venire di mano in mano, di credito in credito, sino alla vendita in caso di bisogno. In quel contesto banchi e botteghe ebraici del ghetto costituivano lo sbocco naturale per queste operazioni, tanto per la capitale come per i sudditi di *Terraferma*. Accadeva qualcosa di simile, ad esempio, anche alla nobile Caterina Venier, il cui marito Giovanni Minio non esitava nel 1563 a vendere a Mandolino Dal Banco suoi gioielli per 700 ducati.<sup>49</sup>

Che alle vedove restassero in eredità oltre ai beni anche i vecchi affari dei mariti da sbrogliare è quanto accade pure nel caso di Marietta, vedova del mercante di vino Giovanni Manzoni e tutrice dei figli minori.<sup>50</sup> La cifra in gioco era modesta, pari ai 62 scudi (ovvero 68 ducati al cambio corrente) coi quali si stimavano tre anellini d'oro con montati rispettivamente un rubino, un diamante e uno zaffiro, che Giovanni

<sup>47</sup> ASVe, *NotA*, b. 8244, IV, cc. 28v-29r (3 giugno 1557).

<sup>48</sup> Non mi occuperò in questa sede del discusso ruolo ricoperto dai garanti e dagli intermediari, limitandomi a rimandare a Fontaine (2014, 97, 104-11 e nello specifico delle donne 147-48). Per Venezia si veda Pompermaier 2018.

<sup>49</sup> ASVe, *NotA*, b. 8250, II, c. 8r-v (15 febbraio 1563). Il pagamento era al solito dilazionato, unendo compravendita e prestito lungo sette anni e quattro mesi. I gioielli ceduti contavano «un fil de perle n° sessantase de carati do e mezo l'uno; et uno altro fil de perle de carato uno; tre rubini, un diamante ligadi in oro; et una catena granda da cencer d'oro; et un paro de manini d'oro.»

<sup>50</sup> ASVe, *NotA*, b. 8245, III, cc. 7r-8v (22 giugno 1558).

aveva acquistato dall'ebreo Mel d'Ariano. Anche Marietta non era in grado di far fronte immediata a quella che più che una compravendita sembra un passaggio di beni mobili a stabile valutazione e quindi preferibili al denaro, e decideva quindi di assegnare al creditore una garanzia nell'attesa del tempo pattuito per il saldo, pari a otto mesi dopo. A difendere Mel da eventuali perdite gli veniva assegnato per intero un credito dei Manzoni nei confronti del maestro calderaio Bernardino, titolare della bottega 'all'insegna del sant'Antonio', con scadenza a undici mesi e per una cifra più che doppia, pari a 150 ducati. La cessione degli anelli non era quindi un semplice baratto o un contraccambio su stima, ma celava al suo interno un insieme di operazioni creditizie che comprendevano una serie di interessi mascherati su più passaggi che se non arrivavano a doppiare la somma, certo implicavano le perdite di Mel nel tempo in cui quei crediti non avrebbero circolato.

Il passaggio poteva andare anche in direzione contraria, con donne che decidevano di vendere agli ebrei uno o più dei preziosi rimasti in mano loro. Ciò poteva accadere per una necessità di monetizzare e recuperare contante, facendo ricorso ai beni tesaurizzati, come la vendita di perle, pietre e argenteria da parte di Giacomina *de Rubeis* a Salamoncino e Ceruo Dal Banco<sup>51</sup> o le perle cedute agli stessi da Marietta, figlia del *quondam* Giorgio da Creta.<sup>52</sup> A dei cugini dei suddetti vendeva invece una donna ancora nubile e rimasta senza il padre, Medea Segato, assicurandosi 600 ducati per due diamanti e uno smeraldo «ligadi in oro» e per due orecchini con perla («due perle grosse da rechie») che da soli valevano 520 ducati.<sup>53</sup>

Si tratta di esigenze che sembrano affliggere con maggiore frequenza le donne delle classi cittadine e popolari di Venezia, che avevano necessità di recuperare moneta o più spesso di assicurarsi una rendita sicura dalla rateizzazione dell'incasso della vendita: quei settori sociali che non disponevano dei patrimoni del patriziato o delle grandi famiglie cittadinesche dei 'cittadini originari', ma avevano tesaurizzato a sufficienza dai loro traffici. Erano quindi di norma le botteghe degli *strazzaroli* a meglio assolvere a questo bisogno, nella loro doppia natura di piccolo commercio e fornitura di credito mascherato. Paola, vedova di un *centurer*, ad esempio, ricorreva ai fratelli ebrei Elia e Maggio *strazzaroli* giunti in ghetto da Padova per acquisire 340 ducati dalla cessione di indumenti (per 80 ducati) e di argenterie e tre *fileti* di perle (per altri 260 ducati).<sup>54</sup> A pagare non sarebbero stati i due, ma il banchiere Salamoncino Dal Banco, che se ne faceva carico in cambio di un'acquisizione di diritti su altri beni conservati presso la loro bottega e di pari stima. Lo stesso schema aveva seguito anche una tal Caterina *furlana*, che però per i 500 ducati ricavati dalle sue perle e dai suoi argenti si rivolgeva direttamente a un altro ramo della famiglia Dal Banco,

<sup>51</sup> ASVe, *NotA*, b. 8246, III, cc. 12r-13r (4-5 luglio 1559), la donna vendeva un filo di 55 perle per 200 ducati e argenti lavorati, un diamante e un rubino per 310 ducati.

<sup>52</sup> ASVe, *NotA*, b. 8247, II, cc. 5v-6v (7 marzo 1560). La donna, probabilmente sola visto che a lei non viene associato né un marito né prole (l'unico riferimento alla famiglia è al padre già defunto) vendeva in una *tranche* per 200 ducati una veste non ancora cucita e tessuti da tappezzeria per il muro, insieme a 60 perle e due *manini* d'oro del peso di 2 onces; nel totale, 120 ducati, venivano attribuiti alle gioie. La somma le sarebbe stata pagata a rate in cinque anni e fungeva nel mentre da rendita. Marietta, tuttavia, liberava immediatamente i due *manini* per 20 ducati, così da far stimare in 100 ducati le perle.

<sup>53</sup> ASVe, *NotA*, b. 8250, III, c. 43r-v (19 maggio 1563).

<sup>54</sup> ASVe, *NotA*, b. 8250, I, cc. 38v-39v (5 febbraio 1563).

ottenendo dalla dilazione di pagamento un interesse esplicitato del 9%; più vantaggioso del 6% normalmente applicato sui prestiti a garanzia fondiaria.<sup>55</sup>

Altre volte, invece, in momenti di maggior fortuna qualche donna avrebbe provato a (ri)comprare dei monili. Li avrebbero potuti impiegare di nuovo in seguito, per tornare a fornire garanzie e mettere in moto gli *asset* del credito familiare. Come nel caso di Vittoria, figlia del *quondam* Alberto da Venezia, interessata ad acquistare 50 perle da due carati ciascuna e stimate 70 ducati, che avrebbe pagato a rate in oltre un anno. Forse erano state sue e ricomprava un pegno perduto, o forse poteva decidere di acquistare dei beni capaci di garantirle accesso al mercato dello scambio non in denaro.<sup>56</sup> In entrambi i casi le sarebbero tornate utili quando avesse avuto bisogno di denaro.

Spesso, infatti, si trattava anche da parte femminile della volontà di investire in vendite capaci di generare rendite e crediti spendibili a utilità loro e della famiglia. Lo faceva, fra le altre, Franceschina, vedova di Gianfrancesco Salamon, che insieme ai figli vendeva a Mandolino di Consiglio Dal Banco beni per 1100 ducati, dei quali «ori, zoie et arzenti» per 900 ducati e «robbe da strazzaria» per altri 200, con un netto vantaggio d'incasso a favore dei monili.<sup>57</sup> Tuttavia, anche quando nel caso delle donne si impiegavano gioielli e perle la posizione più vantaggiosa restava nelle mani degli strati dell'*élite* economica patrizia e dei cittadini originari veneziani. Ciò nonostante, come si è visto, piccoli monili e pietre o perle di minor valore fossero diffusi fra ampi strati della popolazione (compresi gli artigiani e il ceto popolare), che li acquistava sia per motivi di *status* che di tesaurizzazione e impiego a garanzia. Sono allora le componenti dei vertici sociali veneziani quelle che potevano trarre maggior profitto (in termini quantitativi)<sup>58</sup> dalle loro *zoie*, in quanto proprietarie di beni dal più marcato valore intrinseco e titolari di un maggior ventaglio di oggetti. Questo valeva sotto ogni profilo di utilizzo, che si trattasse di recuperare contante (immediato o dilazionato), di utilizzarli al posto del denaro per affari, o ancora di impiegarli a fini di investimento.

Bastava un solo filo di perle a Camilla, vedova del «magnus cancellarius» di Cipro Gaspare Spinelli, per ottenere dallo *strazzarolo* Elia 700 ducati.<sup>59</sup> Pochi mesi dopo ne avrebbe ricavati altri 400 da un secondo filo.<sup>60</sup> Fra il gennaio e il novembre 1562 erano invece oltre 2740 i ducati ottenuti dalla vedova e dalle figlie del *quondam* Domenico Valier: solo il 30% proveniente da *cedole* e crediti su *scritta* e gli altri frutto della cessione di gioielli.<sup>61</sup> Pellegrina e Valeria, insieme alla madre Leandra, avevano

<sup>55</sup> ASVe, *NotA*, b. 8247, VI, cc. 5v-7r (27 agosto 1560).

<sup>56</sup> ASVe, *NotA*, b. 8249, III, cc. 19v-20r (23 marzo 1562).

<sup>57</sup> ASVe, *NotA*, b. 8248, V, c. 23r-v (1 settembre 1561). Il saldo era previsto in quattro anni e mezzo.

<sup>58</sup> Sotto l'aspetto qualitativo è discutibile che seppur su cifre minori non ne ricavassero altrettanto vantaggio le famiglie appartenenti ai gruppi artigiani e popolareschi che ne traevano forme indirette di rendita temporanea, o che usassero gli oggetti come pegni o per la compravendita pura.

<sup>59</sup> ASVe, *NotA*, b. 8250, I, cc. 43v-44r (8 febbraio 1563).

<sup>60</sup> ASVe, *NotA*, b. 8250, II, cc. 37v-38r (11 e 16 marzo 1563).

<sup>61</sup> ASVe, *NotA*, b. 8249, I, cc. 33r-35r (19 gennaio 1563) e *Ivi*, VI, c. 49r (17 novembre 1562). Il computo fra diverse valute è basato sul cambio fra scudo e £ di piccoli fissato dai contratti in £ 6 s 16 il ducato; a fronte di un cambio fisso di £ 6 s 4 fra lira e ducato.

dapprima venduto un gruppo di monili per 820 ducati, comprensivo di «una croseta d'oro cum diamanti, anel d'oro con diamanti et rubini et una perla, un anel d'oro cum un diamante in punta grande, et una centa d'oro»; poi due fili di perle (uno da 51 unità e l'altro da 46) per 392 scudi e mezzo; da ultimo una crocetta incastonata da sei diamanti del valore di 428 scudi. Le donne avevano inoltre provveduto a diversificare sia i compratori che i tempi di pagamento rateale, distribuendo i gioielli fra due rami della famiglia Dal Banco e vedendosi assicurare i saldi con scadenze da otto mesi a un anno, con una capitalizzazione ben più veloce dei normali tempi del mercato veneziano.

Alle donne di maggior sostanza economica cifre di tale portata lasciavano aperta la possibilità di investire nell'attività creditizia anche non come operatrici direttamente interessate a singoli affari, ma – al pari degli uomini – affidando a operatori terzi somme di diversa portata; se possibile suddividendole fra più banchi e società per minimizzare i rischi. Quote di un banco, di una bottega o una di società potevano essere coperte con il deposito o la cessione persino di un solo oggetto di grande valore intrinseco; o in alternativa si sarebbe potuta usare una vendita o un *contraccambio* per acquisire la somma in denaro o la titolarità dei diritti. L'ultimo punto che voglio evidenziare riguarda allora la capacità delle donne veneziane, sotto il profilo economico e giuridico, di agire in prima persona come investitrici non solo in vedovanza (Bellavitis 1998b, 152-53). Lo faceva Betta Mocenigo, moglie di Andrea Marcello, assegnando 2000 ducati al banco di Mandolino *quondam* Angelo Dal Banco senza scadenza predefinita, ma fintantoché fosse stato vantaggioso alle parti e la donna non avesse deciso «a suo beneplacito et requisition» di riottenere il suo.<sup>62</sup> Il tutto anche se ufficialmente la somma era stata prestata «gratis et amore.» secondo una prassi consueta per mascherare depositi fruttiferi presso i banchi. La Mocenigo avrebbe quindi continuato a percepire i profitti della sua quota ritirandoli dal beneficiario<sup>63</sup> e non è affatto da escludere che vista la tendenza più marcata da parte femminile a impiegare beni denaro-equivalenti del comparto dei gioielli e del lusso per gestire gli affari, parte di quella cifra fosse in origine circolata dal banco di Mandolino in forma di preziose vesti, gemme e monili.

## 5. Conclusioni

Nelle pagine precedenti si è analizzato l'uso dei preziosi quali alternativa alla moneta nel contesto veneziano cinquecentesco, in particolare focalizzando l'attenzione sul caso di studio del mercato del credito e finanziario attivo nel contesto dei banchi e delle botteghe del ghetto ebraico. Pietre, perle, gioielli e argenterie costituivano beni di facile accantonamento, comodo trasporto e valore sufficientemente stabile. La loro tesaurizzazione, inoltre, svolgeva molteplici ruoli in cui l'oggetto rispondeva a più esigenze che spaziavano dall'ambito culturale a quello socio-economico. Innanzitutto potevano costituire forme di investimento, quindi erano impiegabili per svolgere

<sup>62</sup> ASVe, *NotA*, b. 8249, II, cc. 16v-17r (10 febbraio 1562). Si noti come il marito fosse estraneo all'affare e non venisse richiesto un suo assenso formale; a operare per Betta, assente di fronte al rogito, era il notaio a ciò da lei delegato.

<sup>63</sup> Come dalla procura in ASVe, *NotA*, b. 8250, III, c. 44v (23 maggio 1563).



funzioni di comunicazione sociale, e infine costituivano un'ottima riserva di oggetti utilizzabili come denaro-equivalenti da sfruttare per operazioni di varia natura.

Ciò che si è cercato di dimostrare è l'impiego di quegli oggetti con quest'ultima accezione e non tanto in forma di garanzia semplice (pegno). Si è altresì preferito inserirli nel settore del credito e delle forme fiduciarie più avanzate, per dimostrarne l'equipollenza – se non la preferenza – rispetto al ricorso alla moneta metallica, allo scambio puro di cedole e scritture, o alla compravendita di crediti. I gioielli e le pietre erano del resto trasversalmente spendibili anche al di fuori della propria cerchia fiduciaria ristretta, poiché al contempo riconosciuti come appetibili dal mercato e quasi privi di rischi di svalutazione. In tal modo, facilmente si sarebbe potuto procedere anche al loro impiego o noleggio con soggetti terzi, per mezzo di intermediari come gli operatori ebrei. Tale flessibilità risultava spiccata sia in confronto ad altre tipologie merceologiche (anche del comparto del lusso, come i tessuti di pregio), sia al mercato dei cambi; quest'ultimo sottoposto al rischio delle fluttuazioni e di stime meno durevoli di quelle dei beni mobili. Inoltre, nella prima parte si è delineato come a facilitare ulteriormente tale tendenza vi fosse un'accessibilità nel complesso larga e agevole a quella tipologia di oggetti da parte di ampi strati sociali (seppur con le debite tare), grazie alla natura mercantile e internazionale del mercato veneziano.

L'arrivo in laguna nel primo Cinquecento di un gruppo specializzato nell'uso dei beni mobili in associazione al credito come quello dei feneratori e banchieri ebrei, nonché dei correligionari titolari di botteghe di *strazzaria*, fece sì che in quell'ambiente favorevole l'impiego delle *zoie* come bene di scambio finanziario potesse fare un ulteriore salto di qualità. Se ne avvantaggiarono ben presto le donne, che grazie alle peculiarità del diritto veneziano in ambito dotale e successorio si vedevano assicurate garanzie legali sufficienti affinché ben presto dei gioielli che le adornavano potessero iniziare a fare uso come beni alternativi alla moneta, al pari di quanto nelle possibilità e nell'operato di mariti, padri e capifamiglia.

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*Alternate currencies, paper instruments and warfare in Trecento Italy*

The topic of alternate currencies in the late medieval Europe is often linked to money supply, which has long been the subject of spirited debate. Scholars have devoted a great deal of study over the years to the late fourteenth and fifteenth century «bullion famine, a discourse stimulated in the first instance by the famous «prosperity versus hard times» debate about the effects of pestilence and «crises» of the era. Monetary historians have cited numerous interrelated factors, including mint production, balance of payments, international trade, money hoards, among others, that reduced the supply of specie and hampered financial transactions.<sup>1</sup>

This essay examines alternate currencies used during the «crises» of the second half of the century in *trecento* Italy to make payments to soldiers. Scholars generally agree that war tightened markets and created *stretzezza* of money supply. But there remains much that we do not know and variables that have not yet been fully investigated, including the fundamental issue of how soldiers were paid (Caferro 2023, 123-146). The lacuna reflects a compartmentalization of study that has separated war into a self-contained category known as military history, which, since Machiavelli and the nationalist writers of the *Risorgimento* who established the field (Ricotti 1844, Canestrini 1851), has focused primarily on moral issues related to the reliance in the *trecento* on mercenary soldiers, often *ultramontane*, from foreign lands, whose *auri sacra fames*, greed for gold coin, replaced native martial spirit and contributed to a dramatic rise in the costs of warfare. The more civic-minded (virtuous) communal period is the subject of excellent essays, and recent works have broadened our understanding of the later period (Maire Vigeur 2004; Settia 1993, 2002, 2008; Varanini 2006, 2007, 2015; Grillo 2009, 2018; Ansani 2019, 2021).<sup>2</sup> But *trecento* Italy remains a species of «negative intermezzo,» «una parentesi,» in an evolutionary account of Italian warfare, dubbed the «age of the *compagnie di ventura*, » characterized by marauding private bands, fueled by the desire for gold, which stood as precursors to the rise of native *condottieri*/lords of the fifteenth century (Mallett 1974, 25-50; Covini 2000, 21; Varanini, 2018, 258).

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<sup>1</sup> Day 1978, 3-54, saw the most acute shortage of gold and silver as occurring during the years 1395 to 1415. Munro 1992, emphasized monetary contraction in England and the Low Countries from about 1370 to the 1470s. Spufford 1988, stressed the effects of a silver famine in Europe during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. See also Miskimin 1969, 138-63. For a more positive assessment of money supply in France, see Sussman 1998, 26-54 and 1993, 44-70

<sup>2</sup>The list is not all inclusive.



The lack of communication between scholars on the military side, with their specific studies, and those on monetary side, with their own specific studies, is striking. As the monetary scholar Rory Naismith recently stated the «highly technical studies» of medieval money «sit at a remove from the mainstream of historical and archaeological research» (Naismith 2019, 1-17). Anglophone scholars who have combined the two often highlight the effects of the Hundred Years War, whose very name gives it pride of place in discussions, just as its main protagonists, England and France, have served as focal points of consideration of money supply, from which broader European patterns have often been extrapolated (Mayhew, 1995; Spufford, 1998). Nevertheless, the Hundred Years War, its name notwithstanding, was characterized by long truces and few campaigns in the field. War was far more frequent in *trecento* Italy, owing to numerous contentious states jostling for space on the geographically small peninsula, which, as Jacob Burckhardt famously noted, was connected to the destabilizing «external» political forces of the papacy and empire that lay at the root of much discord. From an economic and monetary perspective, the two should, I believe, be viewed as inputs and outputs into Italy that deserve closer study, alongside the concomitant involvement in the *trecento* of the French and Hungarian Angevin royal houses in the civil war in the Kingdom of Naples – the latter (Hungary) a major source of gold in the fourteenth century (Štefáňik 2011-2012, 11-40). The methodology provides an escape from the evolutionary schema that obscures more than it reveals about the true nature of war.

The present essay takes a closer, albeit necessarily prospective, look at the realities of payments to soldiers, which included in kind compensation as well as the use of paper instruments, most notably the bill of exchange, whose utility as a «flexible friend», to paraphrase an important recent essay, comes into focus on the battlefield. The combination of the need for large sums of money and speedy turnover of them forced states to employ numerous expedients, perhaps more so for war than for any other activity. It is important to note as well the use of *bollette* (Milan) and *apodisse* (Florence, from Greek word, *Ἀπόδειξις*, meaning proof), notarial documents (slips of paper), in payments to soldiers and communal officials more generally, which functioned as receipts and, internally, as an aid in communal accounting to keep track of money spent. Full consideration of these instruments, which morphed into more than mere receipts in the *trecento*, lay beyond the scope of this paper, but show at base that for all the discussion of *auri sacra fames* and warfare, there was a significant contemporary paper trail that remains to be explored and a terminology regarding the instruments that was not yet fixed but polysemic.

## 1. War, specie and in kind payments

What may be said without hesitation is that war placed burdens on stocks of gold and silver and that supplies in Italy varied from region to region, city to city, becoming tightest in smaller, less commercial centers.<sup>3</sup> Bologna's frequent wars

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<sup>3</sup> Scholars have noted especial shortages in Perugia, Bologna, Lucca, Siena and Naples. See Caferro 2008, 193-4; Bernocchi 1976; Mandich 1994; Cipolla 1982; The state archives of Perugia (ASPe),

involving the papacy and Visconti brought complaints about shortages of specie in 1351-1353, 1360-1364 and for the much of the rest of the century (Sorbelli 1901, 151-152; Borlandi 1970, 391-478). The War of Eight Saints (1375-1378), pitting the papacy against Florence, Milan and much of central Italy, set off noteworthy shortages in Perugia and Siena – the latter resorting to the clipping of coins. The subsequent Genoese/Venetian War of Chioggia (1378-1381) closed eastern trade routes, affecting money supply throughout Italy. Francesco Petrarca condemned the wars between the maritime republics in the 1350s on distinctly economic grounds, as threatening Italian domination of trade at sea (Petrarch 1982 vol 2, 102). Meanwhile, the combined effects of continuous civil war (beginning in 1347) and the Great Schism (1378-1415) in the Kingdom of Naples caused profound shortages of money in the region, such that the French pope Clement VII instructed his military captain Otto of Brunswick in 1387 to take gold and silver from monasteries and churches belonging to the Italian pope in the Kingdom to pay his soldiers (*Cronica Volgare di Anonimo Fiorentino* 1937, 55). During its war against Florence in 1390-2 and the buildup to it in 1389, the city of Siena relied on specie sent to it from its ally Milan and passed legislation mandating the acceptance of Milanese money for rents, purchases and transactions (Favale 1936, 329). As the scale of wars increased in fifteenth century Italy, reports of scarcity of bullion became still more pronounced. Giangaleazzo Visconti of Milan resorted to debasement of his coinage at the turn of the century, while his main enemy, Florence, as Anthony Molho has noted, reported shortages during wars in the 1420s and 1430s (Molho 1971, 133-35, 154-57; Bueno de Mesquita 1941, 294).<sup>4</sup>

To alleviate the strain, states resorted to payments in kind to meet their obligations to soldiers. The practice is well-documented, and, to be sure, not restricted to periods of *stretexxa*. It was, as the papers of this conference show for other periods and contexts, routine practice. Contracts between soldiers and their employers often contained a specific *menda* clause by which employers compensated soldiers for the loss or injury to their horses apart from their salaries (Waley 1975, 340-341; Mallett 1974, 76-87). Soldiers famously paid themselves in the form of plunder and looting, which included the capture of animals (*bestie minute, bestie grosse*), household goods and valuables. Looting was intrinsic to warfare, an alternative means of payment that is difficult to quantify, but was instrumental in sustaining soldiers in the field in the face of uncertain and delayed wages. Nevertheless, the increased rhythm of conflict in our period, the coalescing of demobilized soldiers into marauding companies during times of nominal peace, increased the recourse to in kind payments. In 1370, Siena, a frequent target, sent mule loads of food and drink: wine, wax, chickens and geese, arrows, goblets, dishes and silver utensils, expensive cloth, ceremonial armor, to soldiers in 1364, 1375, 1385 and 1392. It gave 100 *moggia* (roughly 2400 bushels) of grain to a band as well as 2,000 florins worth of horses in 1379 (Cafferro 2008, 167-209). During the War of Chioggia, as Reinhold Mueller has

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Consigli e riformanze, 31 fols. 26v-32v; *Corpus Chronicorum Bononiensium*, 387; Grohman 1988, 77; Borlandi 1970, 391-472; Cafferro 1998, 129, 161.

<sup>4</sup> For Venice's money supply, see Stahl 2000, 47, 63-78, 371-374

shown, the traditionally specie rich Venetians were constrained to pay a part of soldiers' wages in grain (Mueller 1981, 32; Stahl 2000, 69-75).

The most common practice was compensation in cloth, which already functioned more broadly as a means of exchange in international trade, including between the Venetians and the Mongols (Kuroda 2009, 248). The city of Lucca paid the captain Alberigo da Barbiano 400 florins of the 4,400 florins owed him in 1383 in expensive wool cloth, and half of the salary of its captain Braccio da Montone, two decades later, in silk cloth.<sup>5</sup> An inventory of personal possessions of the soldiers captured at the siege of Perugia (1375) included large quantities of silk cloths, silver cups and dishes, ceremonial armor and enameled *barbute*/helmets – items that had value and could be transported in the satchel bags of soldiers' mounts (“Cronaca della Città di Perugia (Diario Del Graziani)” 1850, 547-53; Caferro 2008, 193-94). The personal possessions of the English captain William Gold included silk cloth of various types as well as rubies, sapphires, and diamonds (Thomas 1932, 253-55). Michael Mallett has shown that compensation in cloth became part of the formal contracts (*condotte*) between soldier and employers in the fifteenth century (Mallett 1974, 137, 139; Mallett and Hale 2006, 127). King Alfonso of Aragon, lacking specie for his war in Naples (1420-1458), paid advances (*imprestanze*) to his soldiers in a fixed ratio of coin and cloth (Ryder 1976, 278-79; Ryder 1984, 3). The desire by soldiers for luxury and ornamental items is well known and likely connected to their sense of status and display on the battlefield (Caferro 2008, 194). The extant account books of the mercenary captain Michelotto Attendoli reveal business with Bernardo Bardi of Florence (1432-1433), from whom he purchased silver cups and plates, golden rings, an enameled silver ornamental helmet, and a silver salt cellar.<sup>6</sup> Nadia Covoni has noted that in the fifteenth century Milanese soldiers patronized the luxury market even when they lacked food (Covini 1998, 360-61).

Soldiers also received land in lieu of specie. The papacy, perpetually short of funds, was a leader in this type of compensation in the fourteenth century. During the War of Eight Saints the papacy gave his ally Galeotto Malatesta of Rimini the towns of Santargello and San Sepolcro; his captain of war John Hawkwood the towns of Cotignola and Bagnacavallo, and bestowed a benefice in the English church on the illegitimate son of Hawkwood's co-captain, John Thornbury. The benefice (1377) is historically significant because it had been promised to the church reformer John Wycliff, whose bitter disappointment constituted an important moment in his alienation from the established church (Jones 1974, 97-8; Caferro 2006, 181-182). Queen Giovanna of Naples likewise bestowed lands upon her military captains in lieu of specie. The most egregious example is the Florentine Niccolò Acciaiuoli, who served as grand seneschal of the kingdom, and fought for the queen and her husband. In return, Acciaiuoli received lands throughout southern Italy, from Calabria to Puglia (Terre di Lavoro, Molise, Bari, Matera, Gioia, Capriati, Canosa, Ginosa, Spinazzola, Nocera, Gragnano, Tramonti, Pino and Pimonti), as well as lands in the

<sup>5</sup> The state archives of Lucca (ASL), ATL 571 #1052, 1054

<sup>6</sup> Archivio di Fraternalità dei laici (Arezzo) (AFL) # 3569 (entrata and uscita) fols. 79r-79v; Caferro, 2008, p. 194. For a comprehensive recent study of the workings of the fifteenth-century mercenary company of Attendoli, see Orlandi 2018, 135-161

Greek Peloponnesus (Morea) (Tocco 2001, 86). Many were strategically and economically important.<sup>7</sup>

The recourse to land should not, however, be confused with any broader process of «reifeudation» or «return to land/turn away» from commerce. In *trecento* Italy, grants of land for military service were decidedly *ad hoc*, a contingency best understood as capitalization of land in the absence of specie. This included the pawning by state officials of subject lands to citizens in return for cash and also the outright sale of land to third-party outsiders. The Siense pawned the town of Marsigliana to the powerful local noble lord Ranieri da Baschi for 5,000 florins to help pay for the War of Eight Saints. The maneuver backfired as Ranieri da Baschi used the pawn as a base to attack Siena in alliance with the pope.<sup>8</sup> The reality of *trecento* war is that many of the transfers of land occurred not as the result of capture by enemy armies, but from sales by states seeking money to prosecute war. Queen Giovanna of Naples sold Avignon to Pope Clement VI in 1348 for 80,000 florins in order to pay for the troops who defended the *Regno* against the Hungarian Angevin invasion (Léonard 1932 vol. 2, 125-32, 136-39, 452). Two years later, Robert of Taranto, brother of Giovanna's husband Luigi, sold Achaea (Acaia) to Venice for 66,000 ducats to help raise money for ransoms of hostages taken during the war. Queen Giovanna of Naples in 1351 sold, through Acciaiuoli, the town of Prato to Florence for 17,500 to pay expenses related to the Hungarian invasion (Tocco 2001, 87, 108-117; ASF, Provvisioni, registri 38 fols. 183r-185v).

## 2. Paper instruments and the bill of exchange

Conspicuously absent from studies of *trecento* war is the use of paper instruments to move funds, extend the money supply and compensate soldiers. As noted above, the association of war with mercenaries and mercenaries with greed for gold has limited discussion, despite the fact that Italy, owing to its international merchant banking sector, was the leader in the use of bills of exchange. Indeed, Peter Spufford in his influential *Money and its Uses in the Medieval Europe* stressed the importance of the bill of exchange in transferring funds, particularly for the papacy, to avoid dangerous and uncertain shipment of specie. But he argued pointedly against the use of the bill to transfer relating to war on the grounds that it involved sums that were «too large for the commercial system» and therefore had to be done by actual shipment of gold and silver. The assessment is curious because Spufford, who acknowledged the diversity of available fiscal instruments throughout Europe and the limits of coin as a part of the overall money supply, used as his example a citation from the Florentine chronicler Giovanni Villani, who recorded the physical shipment of a large cargo of specie by the papacy from Avignon to Italy for war in 1328 (Spufford 1988, 1-2, 255). The shipment warranted Villani's attention, however, because it was in fact stolen by thieves (Selzer 2001, 233).

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<sup>7</sup> See Tocco 2001, 86, 98. The Venetians made grants of land to their captains in the fifteenth century. Mallett 1974, 76-106

<sup>8</sup> The state archive of Siena (ASS), Consiglio Generale fols. 91r-92v

The distinction between ecclesiastical and secular transfer of funds is artificial. Funds transferred by merchant banks for the papacy throughout Europe were used for both military and pacific purposes. The crusading movement against the infidel remained operative in *trecento* Italy and was a basic aspect of papal policy, for which large, safe transfers of funds were critical. And the pontiff also defined as crusades his wars against Christian enemies, most notably the Visconti of Milan, whom he frequently excommunicated. To oppose the territorial ambitions of Archbishop Giovanni Visconti in Bologna and the Romagna in 1350-1351, the papacy transferred money by bills of exchange drawn on several merchant banks, including the Alberti *antichi*, Alberti *nuovi*, the Rinuccini and Davizzi firms of Florence as well as the Guinigi firm of Lucca. Yves Renouard estimated that of the 184, 500 florins sent from Avignon to Italy, 175,000 florins went through these banks. Giovanni Alberti, a director of the Alberti *nuovi* bank, served as papal treasurer in charge of financing the pope's war in 1350 (Renouard 1941, 251-255). According to Renouard, the Florentine banker Francesco Rinuccini became deeply involved in papal finance with the advent in Italy of the papal legate Cardinal Alborno in 1353, who was tasked with retaking the papal lands. Rinuccini transferred funds from Avignon to Perugia and Florence for the wars. The Alberti, Strozzi, Soderini, Castellani, Ricci and Cocchi banks also helped finance Alborno, who stayed with Alberti in Florence when he first arrived in Italy (Renouard 1941, 112-16, 230-33, 260-67).

The transfer of funds during war was, indeed, riskier than in times of peace, further justifying the recourse to paper transfer. And extant Alberti *nuovi* accounts show that payments related to war in the *Regno* in October 1348 were effected in part by *lettere di pagamento* alternately referred to as *lettere di cambio*, brought by courier and redeemed at the Alberti branch in Naples (Goldthwaite, Settesoldi, and Spallanzani 1995 vol. 1, 187-89, 191-92, 204, 236-37). To be sure, cash remained crucial. The same accounts show payments ranging from 205 to 6200 in gold florins (*contanti*) to various German mercenaries. Interestingly, Niccolò Acciaiuoli, the grand seneschal of the *Regno*, was the intermediary and paid a fee of 15 florins to the Alberti for the «risk» of transporting 2,500 florins in specie to the city of Nocera (Goldthwaite, Settesoldi, and Spallanzani 1995, 188). The sources also show that the transfer of specie from Avignon involved Genoese merchants, with Florence serving as the direct destination, with transport then to the Porto Pisano, where the money was loaded on to armed ship to Naples (Léonard 1932 vol. 2, 457-48). Transfer of specie was in short difficult.

Given the scarcity of surviving account books for our period, it is difficult to make comprehensive judgments. Nevertheless ambassadorial dispatches, which survive in copious number, provide a useful if underemployed source of what was happening on the ground. They show that *paper instruments*, described specifically as bills of exchange, were in fact used directly in the payment of soldiers. A dispatch in the Sienese archive, dated July 1381, sent by the city to its envoy Mino, tasked with paying the English mercenary captain, John Hawkwood, makes clear that the city fulfilled the remaining 1500 florins of its 4,000 florin debt with «*lettere di cambio*.” The dispatch reads as follows.

Ricevemo vostra letara e uno di Mino e con esse sei *lettere di cambio* di fiorini 1500 parte in noi parte nel detto Mino per e quali ne scrivete danno a Messer Giovanni Acuto per lo resto di avere di fiorini 4,000 e che da lui se ne prende carta di quitenza e vero che le lettere so' fate al usanza di due di veduta nondimeno avemo preghato Mino ce ne serva accio che ci potiamo spacciare e credamo ce ne servita si che oggi possiamo fare il paghamento (ASS, Concistoro 1802 #22).

Siena sent six bills of exchange to the mercenary captain to make good the debt and sought a receipt (*quitenza*) from him in return. The nature of the bills is unclear. The letter suggests that some originated with the state, others from the ambassador Mino. No bank is mentioned. The dispatch does, however, indicate that the bills were to be redeemed at usance, a typical feature of bills of exchange, critical to the money market aspect of them, which was here two days and raised concerns for the Sienese, who wanted to pay Hawkwood immediately. It is likely that the bills were in fact made out by bankers to be redeemed at a bank, and likely functioned, whether formally endorsed or not, as a species of check. They were used to satisfy a debt and thus did not serve merely as a credit instrument related to speculation in the international money market, as Raymond de Roover's classic, oft-cited and carefully diagrammed bill of exchange of the fifteenth century, involving two international banks and four related parties. The city of Siena was held responsible for making payment, overseeing the transaction, which probably entailed paying the bankers for the service. This conclusion is strengthened by archival evidence from Florentine communal (*cameral*) budgets that show that the city paid bankers a fee for exchanges done by them, although it is not entirely clear whether the term *cambio* used in account books refers to bills of exchange or manual exchanges of coin (ASF, balie 6 fol. 57r; Dieci di balia 1 fol. 10r; Dieci di balia 4 fols. 222r-225v; Caferro 2018, 110). What is evident, however, from the budgets is that Florence regularly made such payments to bankers. In 1390, during great war with Siena and Visconti, Nanni Mati, a *famulo* in charge of payments of the *balia* that directed the war effort, is cited as «making exchanges (*cambii*)» to Florentines, who lent money «to the city at the request of the Ten of balia» (ASF, Dieci di balia 4 fol. 225v). The list includes the bankers Francesco Ardinghelli, Benedetto and Nerozzo Alberti, Manetto Davanzati, Giovanni di Piero Baroncelli, all of whom appear to have received modest sums for *cambii*, most likely representing a commission on the transactions.

Although the precise mechanism requires further study, what is clear is that the Florentine banking community, much of which is unknown at this time, was intimately involved in the prosecution of the war. At the same time ambassadorial dispatches give further evidence of the use of bills of exchange in payment of soldiers. A Lucchese dispatch from 1372 instructed representatives of the city in Genoa to pay 500 florins to Genoese crossbowmen in bills of exchange drawn up by a bank in Lucca (Fumi, 1903 vol. 2, 14). In this instance, the bank is mentioned, but it is not clear whether the bills went directly to the soldiers or to another bank in Genoa. As earlier, however, the city itself was responsible for the transaction.

Lucchese dispatches from a decade later show that English soldiers received bills of exchange from the rich Lucchese exile, Alderigo Antelminelli that went unpaid.

The soldiers demanded that the city of Lucca take responsibility for them. The involvement of Alderigo Antelminelli is noteworthy here because he was an exile, who possessed great wealth from his iron and silver mines in the strategically important regions of Lunigiana and Versiglia, took part in a lucrative Lucchese exile trade network in Bruges, but forcibly attempted to seize Lucca in 1369, alongside the same soldiers who now demanded money from him (Galoppini 2006, 195, 198). Close relation between exiles and enemy soldiers was an important feature of *trecento* Italian society that has garnered attention primarily in terms of its juridical and social/political valence. But the connection also warrants scholarly attention for its economic dimension, which corresponds to mounting evidence that prominent exiles maintained lucrative merchant networks, «modeled on political factions» at home, that were often hidden from view, not easy for modern scholars to uncover, but nevertheless crucial to their association with enemy armies, and the mercenaries in them, justifying further the great fear evoked by contemporaries (Apellániz 2015, 125–145).

The case of Alderigo Antelminelli clearly shows that the two sides did business together. The English captain, John Hawkwood, claimed deposits worth 7,300 florins held by Alderigo; his fellow English captain Richard Romsey claimed to have received a bill of exchange from Alderigo, written in Alderigo's own hand, at Città di Castello. The soldiers complained to Lucca and sought restitution directly from city officials, with the threat that they would ride on Lucca with their band of mercenaries and extort a bribe. Prolonged negotiations followed (ASL, ATL 439 #1167, #2119, ATL, 571 #1183-189; Caferro, 2006, 243-46). The talks were formal and legal in nature. Lucchese officials required that both men produce documentation of their transactions with Antelminelli and consulted a prominent local jurist about how to proceed. Richard Romsey sought not only the value of the unpaid bill of exchange, but also interest and damages, amounting to more than 1000 florins on the original sum of 2,000 florins. Lucca ultimately paid the men, and in the case of John Hawkwood, the most feared captain of the day, gave him a lifetime yearly pension soon after.

Further insight into the use of the bill of exchange in the field appears in a letter written by Giovanni Appiano of Pisa to the city of Siena in April 1390 at the beginning of Florence's war with Milan, when money supply was tight and Siena accepted Milanese money to augment its own supply. Appiano complained about bad bills of exchange issued to him by Andrea di Ser Michele that left him and his brigata unpaid (ASS, Concistoro 1827 #14b). Once again the captain held the city responsible for making good the payment. In this case, however, the banking firm from which Appiano sought to redeem his bills – Antonio di ser Bartolomeo and associates (*Antonio Ser Bartholome et sotiis cambiatoribus*) – is mentioned although nothing is unfortunately known about them. Interestingly, however, Appiano uses the terms bill of exchange and promissory note as synonyms, suggesting again that modern scholarly terminology that distinguishes carefully among terms did not apply to *trecento* Italy. It is also noteworthy that the issue of these bills to soldiers by the Sieneese coincided with local legislation that, as noted above, required the acceptance of Milanese money for transactions, and included the requirement that vendors accept payments of bills of exchange *di lunga scadenza*, those that matured later rather than sooner (Favale 1936, 329).

The evidence supports scholarship that stresses the flexibility of the bill of exchange and its polysemic nature in the fourteenth century, during which it had multiple meanings and uses. Raymond de Roover's classic discussion concerned itself with the role of the bill as a credit instrument used to play the international money market, a subject with modern parallels and utility for comparing the past to the present, a preoccupation of many economic histories. De Roover conspicuously placed his discussion of the bill in a chapter entitled «Banking and the Money Market at the time of the Medici» (De Roover 1966, 110). Recent studies, using the copious documentary evidence in the Datini archives, have demonstrated how the famous merchant of Prato played the international money market, greatly increasing our knowledge of rates in the late *trecento* and early *quattrocento*, and indeed how war at times affected those exchange rates (Bettarini, Bradley and Moore 2020, 14-15; Booth, 2009; 123-144; Bell, Brooks and Moore 2017b, 373-96). Peter Spufford, following the general convention, stressed the evolutionary aspect of the bill, how it grew from the letter of payment (*instrumentum ex causa cambii*) used by Genoese merchants in the thirteenth century at Champagne fairs, and evolved in time as a broader credit instrument, in effect replacing the former altogether (Spufford 1998, 254).

The argument here, as in other papers at this conference, is that medieval terminology was not exact and scholarly attempts at precise definition reflect modernist realities that do not readily map onto the distant past. «Attempts to sort out elements ... in a modern sense runs the risk», to quote Giorgio Chittolini in a different context, «of generating anachronism» because the «line of the demarcation... was not yet drawn». (Chittolini 1995, 46) As M.M. Postan argued already back in 1930 (Postan 1930, 37), the distinction between a bill of exchange, a promissory note and a letter of payment was decidedly unclear in its day. The terms were used interchangeably. Postan's interpretation was supported by the French economic historian Jean Favier, writing from the perspective of the French papacy during the Great Schism. He described the use of the bill of exchange as the same as an assignation or letter of credit (Favier 1966, 461-471). Meanwhile, Yves Renouard, while accepting de Roover's narrow definition for the later period, argued that bills of exchange and promissory notes were «for a long time referred to indifferently under the name of letters of payment» and that the distinct term, bill of exchange, did not emerge with its current meaning until the fifteenth century» (Renouard, 1941, 73). He added that «whether the bill of exchange was created by the companies or drawn on them... or for their benefit, they allowed others to obtain compensation...without the transport of money» (Renouard 1941, 74). Marco Spallanzani, Federigo Melis and Jacques Heers spoke of the bill of exchange used as a check as a feature of fourteenth century and fifteenth century banking; the first based primarily on findings in the Castellani family papers in Florence; the last based on surviving variations of bills of exchange found in the account book of the Genoese banker Giovanni Piccamiglio (Spallanzani 1978; Melis 1972; Heers 1959, 345-356). Melis found bills drawn on a Pisan bank from 1369 and 1374 and a bill from 1394 with instructions on it for payment to a third party, noting that such instructions could also have been made on a separate piece of paper. The number of examples is relatively small, but, as Spallanzani pointed out, there is little reason for



these type of bills to have survived, given their purpose (Spallanzani 1978, 146). The scarcity of surviving account books for our period exacerbates the problem, as does the difficulty, noted by Renouard and Goldthwaite, of interpreting the few extant accounts.

Similarly, Adrian Bell and his co-authors stressed the diversity of non-specie options employed in contemporary England, which lacked a banking system comparable to that of Italy (Bell, Brooks and Moore 2017b, 137-38). They noted how the English lord Humphrey of Bohun, fighting on Crusade in Prussia in 1363, settled a debt by entering into an agreement with Prussian merchants to be repaid in Bruges months later. The repayment was done by a merchant, from profits on the sale of Flemish wool, who was later repaid by Bohun, while the Prussian merchants used their money to buy Flemish wool in Bruges to send back to Prussia. Bell and his co-authors document the concurrent and overlapping use of what they call promissory notes, letters of payment and bills of exchange in late Middle Ages into the Early Modern period, arguing that the development of commercial paper had a similar impact in later medieval England as the «commercial revolution» did in Italy. Richard Goldthwaite, speaking of Florentine merchants, admitted that their use of the bill of exchange in its early incarnation. prior to the later years dealt with by De Roover. «baffles many economic historians... and even specialists find it difficult to explain the various ways it was manipulated other than for straight exchange» (Goldthwaite 2009, 221). Reinhold Mueller called the bill of exchange «many things to many people» and for this reason excused the lack of completeness of his discussion (Mueller 1997, 288). Both scholars referenced Benedetto Cotrugli, the fifteenth century merchant and author of *Libro de l'arte de la mercatura*, who described the bill of exchange as «a condiment of all things mercantile, as necessary to commerce as air is to the human body,» and «a delicate invention» involving «the most subtle of activity».<sup>9</sup> Even Raymond de Roover, in a less cited part of his discussion of the Medici bank, noted the existence of an «adjunct» business bank that included what he called “letters of credit” to pilgrims, travelers and churchmen (De Roover 1966, 135-38).

De Roover does not, however, explain what these «letter of credit» looked like, how they functioned or even what the term meant, focused as he was on the fully evolved bill of exchange of the fifteenth and sixteen centuries used to play the money market. Indeed, De Roover's cursory decription of the paper instrument does little to distinguish it from bills of exchange noted above, which may have been one and the same. But the fourteenth bill of exchange did, like its later counterpart, have the capacity to tranfer money internationally. Lucchese archival sources in fact indicate that bills of exchange drawn on the Guinigi bank were used to send the profits of English soldiers back home for investment. Extant evidence shows that the bills were drawn on the Guinigi bank and received by a representative, «Francesco Vinciguerra of London,» as the documents call him, who was part of the Lucchese merchant community in Bruges that had close ties to London (Kaeuper 1993, 9, 81-

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<sup>9</sup> «... condimento di tucte le cose mercantili, senza lo quale, come l'humana compositione senza li elementi essere non puo, cosi la mercantia senza ii cambio...cambio e' gentile trovato... e una industria subtilissima». Cotrugli 1992, 165-66.

82; Meek 1978, 195-202, 213; Lambert 2018, 91-93). Vinceguerra, a merchant, is perhaps best known for the business he did with the bishop of Durham, to whom he fell ultimately fell into debt (ASL, ATL 439 #1329 Caferro 2006, 215-16). During this same time, Francesco Vinceguerra appears in English records in 1387 for the purchase of tallies (money paid by royal officials into the kings treasury) on customs, compared by scholars to a «bearer check», which he sent to a broker at Hull, who bought wool (Jenkinson, 1911, 367-80). Vinceguerra thus appears to have had experience in use of both Italian and English alternate currencies.

The money English soldiers sent through the Guinigi bank went first to Bruges, as was the custom, then to England, where relatives or *feofees* of the soldiers, who served as beneficiaries, bought land in soldiers' name. John Hawkwood's feofees included Robert Rykedon. John Sargeant, Robert Lindsay and his older brother with the same name (John Hawkwood), all, like the famous captain, from Essex. They bought numerous manors in Essex, Buckingham, and adjoining counties. They helped build the parish church at Sible Headingham, replete with emblems of Hawkwood, as well as the well-known market place of Leadenhall (Caferro 2006, 323).

The overall degree to which such transfers occurred is again unknown. In his study of German mercenaries in *trecento* Italy, Stephan Seltzer's argued that the men physically brought their earnings home, citing proximity and a relative lack of banking activity in German lands. Nevertheless, Seltzer notes transfers of payments made through the Milanese Del Maino bank to the city of Ulm for the mercenaries Wilhelm and Johann von Reitheim, who fought in Italy in the late *trecento*, and the transfer of funds by the Italian Pope Urban VI from the dioceses of Cologne, Salzburg and Lutich to pay two German soldiers, who fought for him in Italy during the schism (Seltzer 2001, 263-64).

The evidence from the fifteenth century is still more compelling, and it is a statement on the unfortunate scholarly status quo that this material remains largely unintegrated with that of the *trecento*, and with monetary history more generally. In a little-cited but important study of the Milanese army under Muzio Attendoli Sforza and his son Francesco, Peter Blastenbrei noted that in the absence of specie in the fifteenth century, soldiers received payments in kind, including grain, wine, iron, wax and cloth, as well as in bills of exchange (*Wechselbriefen*). (Blastenbrei 1987, 207-08). Alan Ryder's study of Aragonese finance of King Alfonso's war in the Kingdom of Naples (1420-1458) speaks of profound shortages of specie that required payments in cloth purchased primarily from Florentine merchants in return for bills of exchange. Ryder refers to the measures taken by the crown of Aragon as «radical new techniques» derived from dire necessity (Ryder 1984, 13). As is clear from our foregoing discussion the measures were not so radical. King Alfonso appears to have used bills drawn on commercial centers such as Valencia, Barcelona and Palermo, sometimes underwritten by prominent government officials or citizens, who took partial financial responsibility for them. Some offered high interest rates, but the bills were reluctantly accepted by merchants, who feared lack of payment. Using documentary evidence in the archives of the crown of Aragon, Ryder describes a complex system that involved merchants in Naples, Aragon, and Sicily, but does not clarify how the bills of exchange actually functioned. He found in the archive bills

that appear to have been issued by the crown itself as well as bills received by the crown from merchants. Ryder discusses the bills alongside mention of promissory notes, but makes no distinction between the two.

The evidence relating to war corresponds at base to John Bolton and Francesco Guidi-Bruscoli's careful examination of fifteenth century bills of exchange employed by the Borromei bank that had flexible uses, which in the case of the Borromei, included changing dates of maturity contrary to the rules of *usance*.<sup>10</sup> In opposition to the scholarly orthodoxy established by Spufford and De Roover, the flexibility of the bill of exchange included use for payments relating to war, which has been associated so closely with gold and specie.

### 3. Conclusions

The need to better integrate the study of war with study of monetary history is manifest. Soldiers received compensation in a number of ways. The bill of exchange was used in the field in *trecento* Italy, and, Spufford notwithstanding, used to transfer funds relating to war. The degree to which this was done awaits further research, which will require systematic and interdisciplinary study of the economy of war in terms of overall economic history, to which it was intrinsically connected, especially for *trecento* Italy, for which pandemic has too often obscured concurrent contemporary phenomena. Given the enormous expenditure attendant warfare, we may rightly imagine that the sums were significant. The bill to the soldier represented, like cloth and in kind payment, a value that could be redeemed. Accompanied perhaps by verbal or written orders clarifying its use, the bill helped expand money supply and had the advantage that the soldier alone, or his representative, would receive value for the bill, making it function, whatever the details, like a check and thus safe from theft by another, an occupational hazard during war. War required not only enormous expenditure but rapid turnover of funds, as an unpaid soldier was invariably an unreliable one. The need for speedy turnover rendered still more likely the recourse to all available fiscal instruments – from in kind payments, to bills of exchange and other paper or even verbal instruments. The fiscal confusion attendant warfare cannot be stressed enough.

Meanwhile, as this preliminary investigation has hopefully shown, future study will need to measure the recourse to such expedients in terms of additional measures, including the use of notarial documents, *apodisse* and *bollette*, whose precise function in *trecento* Italy remains to be studied. The former (*apodixa* in Latin) appears in an ordinance issued by Charles of Anjou of Naples in the thirteenth century (1277) as a «written order» used by his treasurers to make payments, coupled with an *antapocha*, from the recipient to show that the payment was actually made (Del Giudice, 1869, 163; Durrieu, 1883, 3-33). Anjou's ordinance received scholarly attention because it required that the document be made out in French (his native tongue) rather than in Latin, the official language of his kingdom, a decision with linguistic implications that appealed to scholars of language. In fourteenth century Florence, according to the

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<sup>10</sup> Bolton, Guidi-Bruscoli 2021, 1-19. For cashless payments in the Low Countries, see Puttevils 2015, 337-61; Gelderblom and Jonker 2018, 224-27

operative definition, the *apodissa* was a receipt, quittance (*ricevuta*, *quietanza*), coupon (*cedola*) used to approve payment and received by soldiers and government workers (Biscione 2009, 46). Tommaso Zerbi, in his important but much overlooked study of the Guissano bank in the Anglophone academy, gave detailed attention to the practice by the Visconti of issuing *bollette* (bills) as receipts to pay their soldiers and communal officials through the Guissano of Piacenza, which served as one of the Visconti's treasurers. Zerbi's close reading of the surviving account books (1356-1359) shows that soldiers, who had received advance loans, had that money and additional sums deducted from their *bollette*, when they redeemed them at the «sportello» of the Guissano bank. In Zerbi's rendering, the deductions constituted disguised interest charges on loans, which ran as high as 31 percent for the bank (Zerbi 1935, 238-39; Mainoni 1980).

Thus, for all the discussion of the nexus between war and gold, soldiers dealt routinely with paper instruments – the precise extent and nature of which requires more detailed inquiry. The bill of exchange, as our examples suggest, was an unpopular expedient, as soldiers often protested them to city authorities, who in turn used them in cases of serious lack of funds.<sup>11</sup> Specie remained the preferred means of making military payments, and it was the ability of states like Florence in the *trecento*, through institutions like the public debt (*monte*), outside investment and an international merchant network, to amass the liquidity that allowed it to achieve military and political hegemony over its cash strapped neighbors.

The example of *trecento* Florence raises a final question relating to war, economy and monetary history, with which it seems suitable to end our discussion. Florence has long stood as an example of how the steadily rising costs of *trecento* war served as a prime mover in the development of the territorial state, which corresponded with the city's cultural rise as the home of the Renaissance and the attendant scholarly debate over the nature of the economy. Nevertheless, the monetary historian Carlo M. Cipolla remarked, that «a student of history who limited himself to the documents of the mint» for the city in the *trecento* would find little trace of war, and in fact would «be under the impression that nothing happened» (Cipolla 1982, 88). Cipolla's conclusion coincides with anecdotal evidence from the contemporary chroniclers like Matteo Villani, who pointed proudly to Florence's ability to make large timely monetary in cash payments, such as the 40,000 florins demanded by Emperor Charles IV in March 1355, while its neighboring cities defaulted on their obligations (Villani, 1995, 594-5). The boast matches scholarly claims that Florence possessed significant amounts of bullion at this time (Goldthwaite 1982, 54, 55, 304-305). Nevertheless, Florentine mint production of the gold florin declined precipitously after 1351, mirroring declines in overall mint production in contemporary France and England, which monetary historians have attributed to negative balance of payments and a downturn in their economies (Bernocchi 1976 vol. 3, 67, 75; De La Ronciere 1982, 500-502). The evidence begs consideration, basic to this essay, of how the city met its military payments, and more broadly, how money supply was related to mint production. It is clear, as the foregoing discussion has hopefully showed, that there is

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<sup>11</sup> Blastenbrei also makes the case for the dislike among soldiers for bills of exchange in the fifteenth century. See Blastenbrei 1987, 207

much more to be learned about the economy of war and its intersection with the economic circumstances of *trecento* Italy more generally.

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## Introduction

La part en nature des rémunérations n'est pas un simple palliatif à l'absence de monnaie. Elle est présente à la fois dans les villes et dans les campagnes. Mais elle est souvent celle qui se volatilise des études des historiens, d'où le titre de cet article, en forme d'hommage à Ken Loach.<sup>1</sup> Cette invisibilisation est particulièrement nette dans le cas des longues séries de reconstitutions des salaires, qui n'ont souvent pris en compte que la part monétaire de ces rémunérations. Pour sortir des abstractions comptables qu'ont contribué à constituer ces séries et sur lesquelles un certain nombre d'études ont désormais mis l'accent (Humphries, Weisdorf 2019; Hatcher, Stephenson 2019; Maitte 2021), il faut retourner aux sources pour étudier les différentes formes des paiements en nature. Celles-ci diffèrent grandement à la fois dans leur contenu et dans leurs significations et l'on ne peut donc en saisir le sens et l'importance que par une contextualisation fine.

Si l'on veut simplifier, la rétribution en nature a souvent été considérée:

1) comme une forme normale de rétribution dans le cas des apprentis et des domestiques qui, membres de la famille, recevaient le logement, le couvert, le vêtement et son blanchiment selon des modalités cependant variables qui n'ont pas vraiment été comparées. Or, des études récentes, sur l'apprentissage par exemple, proposent de le considérer comme une forme à part entière de rémunération.

2) ou, au contraire, comme une forme dégradée de rémunération, impliquant un jeu sur la valeur des produits en défaveur des salariés: c'est le «truck system» dénoncé, interdit dans différents contextes (loi de 1887 en Wallonie) et cependant largement pratiqué jusqu'au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle au moins.

Avant d'étudier cette dernière forme, je voudrais préalablement montrer que la rémunération d'une partie du salaire en nature peut impliquer des milieux de cour, des métiers hautement qualifiés et qu'elle a aussi une valeur symbolique forte que l'on ne peut ignorer. Pour cela, je présenterai trois cas d'études différents, pour les comparer en étudiant à chaque fois les formes diverses des rémunérations en nature et les significations économiques et sociales qui y sont attachées. Fortement composite, cette étude présente des pièces apportées à la communauté historique comme autant de fragments destinés à alimenter le dossier plus large qui a occupé cette semaine Datini.

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<sup>1</sup> Ken Loach, film: *La part des Anges*, 2012.

## 1. Du gibier à la récupération des déchets: les multiples formes de rémunérations en nature des employés à la *Galeria degli uffizi* des Médicis

### 1.1. La *galeria dei lavori* et le chantier de la «chapelle des princes»

Le premier cas porte sur les employés des boutiques artisanales de la *Galeria dei lavori*. En effet, les archives florentines conservent des listes annuelles d'artistes et d'artisans – ce vocabulaire actuel n'est pas utilisé dans les sources – de travailleurs, voire d'esclaves oeuvrant pour les Médicis. On y trouve, d'une part, tous ceux qui sont payés sur facture ou à travail fait et, d'autre part, tous ceux qui sont rémunérés, d'une manière ou d'une autre, au temps. La comptabilité, issue du nouvel organisme administratif créé par le *motu-proprio* de 1588, indique alors pour chacun le nombre de journées ou de demi-journées travaillées par semaine, le montant du salaire journalier, afin de verser le samedi le montant de la semaine à peine écoulée.

Ces archives n'ont été, à ce jour, que très peu été exploitées (Kieffer 2012),<sup>2</sup> alors même que la longévité de cet enregistrement est tout à fait exceptionnelle, comparable à celle de la Fabrique de Saint Pierre de Rome (Vaquero Piñeiro 1996; Rota and Weisdorf 2020) ou à celle du *Duomo* de Milan (Mocarelli 2008 et 2019): de la fin du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle (1585) jusqu'à la fin de la dynastie en 1737, les registres relèvent la présence, sur un modèle unifié, des artistes/artisans initialement employés au *Casino de San Marco*,<sup>3</sup> puis progressivement déplacés (à partir de 1583-1585) vers la Galerie construite par Giorgio Vasari, l'actuelle Galerie des Offices. Celle-ci a donc au moins trois fonctions différentes: elle conserve sa fonction initiale de centralisation des principales administrations duciales, elle devient aussi un lieu d'exposition des œuvres collectionnées par les Médicis, et elle est aussi un lieu de production étudié surtout par les historiens de l'art (Butters 1996; 2000; Giusti 2015).

Les ateliers qui s'y trouvent témoignent des principaux secteurs d'activités liés au mécénat lancé par Côme 1<sup>er</sup> dès son accession au titre de duc (1537), puis de grand duc (1569) et continué par ses fils, François 1<sup>er</sup> (grand duc de 1574 à 1587), puis Ferdinand 1<sup>er</sup> (grand duc de 1587 à 1609): menuiserie, en particulier d'ébène, sculpture, enluminure, orfèvrerie, taille de pierres dures, fabrique d'armes, d'horloges... dont les membres sont fréquemment invités à collaborer ensemble pour réaliser les pièces demandées par le souverain. À partir de 1588, s'y installe également une *Fonderia*, double de celle qui reste à San Marco, dont les activités vont de la pharmacopée à la production ou la conception de verres. Puis, à partir de 1604, les listes comportent également tous ceux qui oeuvrent – maçons, charpentiers, tailleurs de pierre pour l'essentiel – à la construction de la «chapelle des princes», inachevée jusque 1836 (Baldini, Giusti, Papaloni Martelli 1979). Ces listes comptables regroupent donc des ateliers dont la localisation géographique reste toujours sujette à discussion pour les historiens d'art. Elle témoigne surtout du fait que les «métiers

<sup>2</sup> Archivio di Stato di Firenze (dorénavant ASF), Guardaroba Medicea (GM). Je remercie Kieffer de m'avoir fourni la partie textuelle de sa thèse.

<sup>3</sup> Il s'agit d'une vaste demeure à usages multiples construite pour les Médicis entre l'actuelle rue Cavour et rue San Gallo, non loin du jardin de San Marco.

s'inséraient dans l'organicité de la cour, déterminant ainsi un changement de statut des activités artisanales: elles se transformèrent en services ou en manufactures tournées vers la production curiale» (Kieffer 2012, 142).

Sans refaire l'histoire, assez bien connue, du mécénat artistique des Médicis, il s'agit d'utiliser ces sources exceptionnelles pour une histoire du travail et en particulier des rémunérations. Si j'ai déjà consacré un article à la question de la part monétaire de ces rémunérations (Maitte 2021), je voudrais au contraire ici étudier tout ce qui en constitue pour les différents employés la part en nature afin de souligner leur diversité de contenu et leur importance pour les bénéficiaires.

## 1.2 Les travailleurs: des artistes aux esclaves

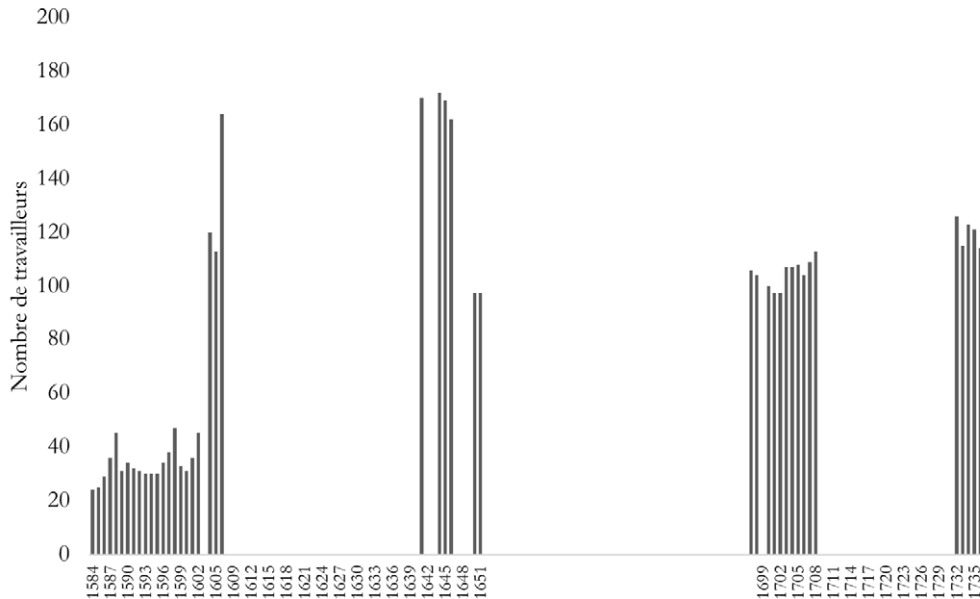
Il faut préalablement insister sur la diversité des personnels employés: si aucun n'est membre d'une «corporation» de métier, puisqu'ils sont au contraire recrutés individuellement par le grand duc pour travailler dans ses ateliers et sur ses chantiers, les uns et les autres présentent des caractéristiques très différentes. Le caractère exceptionnel de cette source vient d'ailleurs de la diversité des travailleurs qu'elle permet de saisir d'un seul regard et qui, dans d'autres circonstances, ne dépendraient pas d'un même employeur. Quoi de commun entre l'artisan que la reconnaissance princière inclut sur les rôles de la cour et les modestes concasseurs de cailloux dont certains peuvent être – entre 1596 et 1609 – des esclaves? Rien, si ce n'est qu'ils sont employés par le même « patron » qui veut centraliser sa comptabilité. Le règlement de 1634 précise bien que, «outre les travailleurs – *lavoranti* – que l'on paye à la journée, la Galerie emploie également certains maîtres provisionnés sur le Rôle de Son Altesse: Iacopo dit le Monnicca, Mattio Cosler horloger, Cosimo Marre ébéniste, Domenico Guidi joaillier, Nero Lapi idem, et d'autres». <sup>4</sup> Cela a été le cas dès le début de l'organisation (Butters 2000, 170-171) et signifie donc que ces chefs d'ateliers provisionnés -relativement peu nombreux- ne figurent pas sur les listes des paiements hebdomadaires, à moins qu'une partie de leurs gages ne leur soit payée à échéance fixe, hebdomadaire ou mensuelle.

Les effectifs fluctuent de façon importante avec le temps: si le personnel des boutiques est plus ou moins constant, celui du chantier de construction varie assez fortement. Le graphique 1 montre les variations d'ensemble des travailleurs présents sur les listes; chose exceptionnelle, nous avons affaire à des dizaines de noms et pas seulement à quelques-uns, raison pour laquelle d'ailleurs, n'ont été pour l'instant pratiqués que des sondages dans ces sources très longues à dépouiller: une période de plus de vingt ans entre 1584 (date du premier registre) et 1606 sur laquelle je focaliserai ici mon attention; dix ans (1641-1651) au milieu du siècle, douze ans à la fin XVII<sup>e</sup>-début XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle (1697-1708) et enfin les six dernières années des registres comptables (1732-1737).

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<sup>4</sup> ASF, GM, 468.

Graph. 1. Le nombre de travailleurs payés et présents sur les listes des registres comptables florentins, 1585-1737



### 1.3 La diversité des rémunérations en nature

Sans revenir sur la diversité des formes de rémunérations monétaires (Maitte 2021), il faut insister sur le fait que la plupart des employés reçoit une partie de leur rémunération en nature, celle-ci étant très diversifiée; cette diversification est aussi en relation avec leur statut.

#### 1.3.1. Des esclaves seulement nourris logés?

Peu nombreux au début de 1596 (2 seulement pendant une bonne partie de l'année<sup>5</sup>), les esclaves fournissent ensuite des équipes entières mobilisées de façon irrégulière jusqu'en décembre 1608.<sup>6</sup> Ils sont entre quatre et treize en 1598 (un peu moins de 30% de la main-d'œuvre lorsqu'ils sont plus nombreux), entre trois et onze en 1599 jusqu'à ce qu'ils disparaissent pendant les derniers mois de cette année pour réapparaître ensuite.<sup>7</sup> Leur nombre oscille entre vingt-deux et quarante-six en 1606 (entre 14% et 29% de la main-d'œuvre),<sup>8</sup> soixante-dix en 1608. Venus du bague de

<sup>5</sup> ASF, GM, 191 Mustafa di Ramadano et Mustafa di Caia di Toccata cieca nommés la semaine du 21 juillet 1596: ils aident à faire le jardin.

<sup>6</sup> Les derniers sont indiqués en décembre 1608: ASF, GM 292, f° 28-29.

<sup>7</sup> Voir en particulier ASF, GM, 191: 1596-98; ASF, GM, 206: 1598-1599; ASF, GM 246: 1599-1601.

<sup>8</sup> ASF, GM 270

Livourne, construit entre 1598 et 1604, ce ne sont pas des condamnés aux galères pour «crime» de droit commun, mais bien des captifs, en majorité musulmans, razziés par les vaisseaux au service du grand duc, notamment ceux du très efficace ordre de Saint Stéphane créé en octobre 1561 (Salvadorini 1978; Angiolini 1997; Bono 1999; 2016; Santus 2019).<sup>9</sup> Voués à ramer sur les galères grand-ducales, ils peuvent également être destinés aux travaux publics pour la gloire de la maison Médicis, notamment pendant les mois d'hiver, ou quand leur nombre excède les besoins des galères. C'est vraisemblablement le cas pendant les premières décennies du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle pendant lesquelles plus de 6000 hommes furent capturés, plus de 2000 peuplant alors régulièrement le bagne (Santus 2019, 30).

Les listes des chantiers florentins montrent qu'on les fait travailler non seulement à Livourne, mais aussi à Florence, même s'il s'agit d'une partie toujours minoritaire des effectifs. Ils y sont occupés à de multiples tâches. S'ils travaillent en particulier au sciage des pierres dures pour la Chapelle au début du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle (comme peut le montrer le tableau de Jacopo Zucchi dans le *Studiolo* de François de Médicis), ils peuvent aussi s'occuper des chevaux, forger et réparer des chaudrons et s'occuper de multiples petits travaux dans les ateliers (Kieffer 2012, 177), peu précisés dans les sources. Ils sont surveillés par un garde-chiourme, un second, des marins, tous payés en monnaie.

Les formes de dépenses en nature qui sont faites pour eux ne sont pas une rémunération, mais le coût de leur survie: logés soit à la *Fortezza vecchia*, soit à la *Zecca*, sur des couches de paille, ils sont habillés par la *Guardaroba* qui leur fournit des vêtements cousus tout spécialement, ainsi qu'un petit béret rouge distinctif (Kieffer 2012, 177-178). Ils sont également nourris aux frais de leur employeur. Tout cela est attendu et classique.

Ce qui l'est moins est la rémunération qu'ils semblent percevoir, eux aussi, pour leur travail. En effet, on a trop souvent pensé que le travail des esclaves n'était forcément pas rémunéré, sur le modèle de la situation des esclaves de plantation. Pourtant, même en milieu colonial, les nombreuses études consacrées à la main-d'œuvre servile urbaine ont montré la diversité et la complexité des situations. Ici, dans les registres florentins, le travail des esclaves est mesuré, exactement comme celui des travailleurs libres, en journées auxquelles sont accolées des sommes qui correspondent «à leur vivre et travail». Cette spécification peut laisser penser qu'une partie est confiée aux garde-chiourmes pour leur nourriture alors qu'une autre partie rétribue leur travail, même si l'on ne sait pas alors quand ils reçoivent leur dû, vraisemblablement confiée chaque semaine à leur gardien.<sup>10</sup> En tous cas, la somme totale accolée à chaque esclave est, en 1598, de 16.8 sous par jour, plus élevée que les moins payés des travailleurs libres qui reçoivent, eux, 6.8 sous en monnaie. La différence de dix sols est conséquente. Une annotation de 1599 indique que le vivre est compté pour 5.16.8, indication importante de l'équivalent monétaire qui sert à

<sup>9</sup> Tous les captifs ne sont pas musulmans, certains peuvent être chrétiens orthodoxes, notamment un certain nombre de Grecs. Les chiffres du nombre total de captifs en Toscane varient entre plus de 10 000 entre 1568 et 1688 (Salvadorini 1978, 218-221) et 15 000 (Angiolini 1997, 69-74).

<sup>10</sup> À Livourne également, les captifs sont en général payés de façon hebdomadaire pour les différentes tâches qu'ils accomplissent et ils doivent même en verser une petite partie dans la caisse tenue par l'*imam* pour la sépulture des esclaves décédés cf. C. Santus 2019, 46.

mesurer le vivre. Il reste un peu moins de 11 sous, dont on peut penser que c'est le prix de leur labeur, estimé à un niveau un peu moindre que la plupart des *fattori* du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle repérés par Comanducci (Comanducci 2000).<sup>11</sup> À raisonner en termes de dépenses économiques, employer des esclaves n'est pas forcément la meilleure solution, ce sur quoi bon nombre d'économistes vont d'ailleurs raisonner à partir du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle: non seulement on les nourrit, on les loge, on les habille, mais on les paye aussi... en monnaie. Est-ce ce qui a entraîné des modifications lorsqu'ils réapparaissent en 1606? En janvier de cette année, si le garde-chiourme et les marins qui les encadrent sont toujours payés au même tarif, les 41 esclaves présents sur les listes ne reçoivent plus que 1.4 sous,<sup>12</sup> sans qu'il soit possible pour l'instant d'expliquer une telle différence. Ce qui importe est qu'une rémunération, même faible, comptée en numéraire, semble ici attribuée à des individus que l'on imaginait uniquement entretenus en nature.<sup>13</sup> À l'inverse, ceux qui sont rémunérés en monnaie reçoivent aussi pour certains une part parfois conséquente en nature.

### 1.3.2. Dons annuels et dons ponctuels

Chaque année, au moment de la Saint Jean Baptiste, le comptable dresse la liste de ceux qui font l'objet des largesses du grand duc à l'occasion de la fête du patron de la ville. En 1598, il y inscrit non seulement les maîtres des boutiques, mais aussi un *garzone*, un *compagno* et les gardes des esclaves<sup>14</sup>. Rien ne précise cependant dans les comptes quelles sont les formes de cette distribution: elle est peut-être monétaire, comme c'était le cas aussi pour les dons cette fois accordés à tel ou tel en récompense de la bonté de son travail, mais il est plus probable que le don soit distribué en nature, comme il l'est dans toute la ville.<sup>15</sup>

Des dons en nature peuvent aussi être distribués dans d'autres occasions, non rituelles et irrégulières, par exemple à l'occasion d'une bonne chasse, comme ce fut le cas en janvier 1604. Le comptable note alors scrupuleusement la «*listra della distribuzione d'un porco cignale che sua Alteza Serenissima ha donato alle Maestranze di Galleria in questo giorno e data listra al Pacolsanti sribuito per Cosimo Latini*».<sup>16</sup> Sont ainsi énumérés vingt chefs de boutiques, à peu près les mêmes que ceux qui font l'objet de la donation de la St Jean Baptiste, dont certains sont affublés d'un titre de maître, d'un prénom et d'un nom - ce qui n'est pas encore tout à fait évident à l'époque pour le

<sup>11</sup> ASF, GM 206, 4/1/1599.

<sup>12</sup> ASF, GM 270, f° 57.

<sup>13</sup> Kieffer indique d'ailleurs que certains disposent de moyens assez importants pour prêter de l'argent et en recevoir chaque mois des intérêts cf. ASF, GM, 245, c. 70. L'exemple cité montre qu'il s'agit d'argent que sa famille lui a envoyé pour son rachat et qu'il a placé. Mais il est possible aussi que les sommes liées à la rémunération du travail puissent servir à accumuler le pécule nécessaire au rachat, comme cela se passe aussi du reste en situation coloniale cf. Queirós Mattoso, 2000.

<sup>14</sup> ASF, GM 187, C. 20, c.65, c. 83.

<sup>15</sup> ASF, Carte strozziane, I, 51, c. 14v: il s'agit de la plus importante distribution de l'année (évaluée à q. 1073.4.11.8, même si ce n'est pas la seule; y sont distribués en 1590 8040 livres de poisson mariné, 11270 livres de veau et 154, 5 livres de blé de Trebbiano.

<sup>16</sup> ASF, GM, 254, c. 22.

«peuple» florentin - tandis que d'autres restent anonymes, comme ces «deux allemands qui travaillent l'ébène» ou encore cet «allemand qui travaille la table d'argent». Plus que la viande, qui vient bien entendu sans doute améliorer l'ordinaire de la table de ces maîtres, c'est le geste de reconnaissance princière qui importe.

### 1.3.3. Être nourris, chauffés...logés?

Peu après l'installation des ateliers dans la *Galeria*, une cantine (*tinello*) est installée au premier étage de la galerie, et un cuisinier appointé. Pour évaluer la considération liée à une telle installation, il vaut la peine de citer un contemporain, Priscianese, qui distingue en 1543 (Priscianese 1883, 25; 36) quatre façons de prendre les repas dans la maison d'un cardinal (on se souviendra que Ferdinand l'était avant de devenir grand duc): la «table des gentilhommes»; le *tinello* dans lequel on mange en commun «comme dans le réfectoire des frères», nettement moins considéré; «faire table», c'est-à-dire manger sur le lieu de travail et enfin «donner de l'argent», le moins convoité car cela signifie l'exclusion du cercle des élus qui peuvent, d'une façon ou d'une autre, bénéficier des bienfaits du seigneur. Ainsi, dans cette échelle de valeur, la rémunération monétaire des repas est au bas de la liste des considérations; le *tinello* installé dans la galerie, s'il se démarque profondément de la table des nobles, n'en est pas moins le second dans l'échelle des faveurs. S'il s'agit toujours de nourriture, rien à voir avec celle des esclaves bien entendu.<sup>17</sup>

Les *capibotteghe* y ont-ils droit? En fait, bien que la proximité «géographique» soit étroite entre les boutiques et ce lieu, ils ne semblent pas admis à cette table qui regroupe essentiellement les agents secondaires de la maison du grand duc: pages, *mozzi* de chambres, chambriers, porteurs de chaise, cochers, *staffieri*, bouffons...mais aussi le maître de mathématique ou le médecin de S.A.S. Ainsi, dans la liste des 103 bénéficiaires de 1590,<sup>18</sup> le seul membre des ateliers de la *Galeria* qui y figure est Pagolo Banchelli, horloger, ainsi que son aide. La réforme de l'année 1590, liée à la volonté de restreindre les dépenses, prévoit du reste que le grand duc lui passe désormais une somme en argent «*in cambio del vitto*»<sup>19</sup>: il semble ainsi se trouver rejeté dans la quatrième catégorie énumérée par Priscianese.

Est-ce à dire qu'aucun autre maître n'est nourri par le grand duc? En fait, il faut parcourir toutes les listes de compte pour trouver ce dont certains peuvent être gratifiés, notamment ceux qui sont «enrôlés» sur les listes de la cour et bénéficient donc des largesses en nature du prince. Ainsi, Bernardo Buontalenti, le célèbre architecte, reçoit chaque jour 4 pains et une fiasque et demie de vin; une demie fiasque d'huile, une livre de sel, un *mezzetta* de vinaigre, une livre de chandelle, et deux *granate* par semaine; enfin, un *c.te* et demi de bois et 150 *fascine* chaque année. Mais est-il fourni en nature par l'économat du grand duc ou reçoit-il en argent la somme

<sup>17</sup> La liste des mets servis journellement en 1590 est impressionnante, cf. ASF, Carte strozziane, I, 51 c.2: 160 livres de viande, 370 pains, 3 foies de castrat, 22 volailles, 1 sorte de fruit, 4 livres de chandelles, 1 fiasque d'huile, du potage, des «condiments et légumes»; 90 fiasques de vins pour un total de plus de 125 *scudi* par jour.

<sup>18</sup> ASF, Carte strozziane, I, 51 c. 3.

<sup>19</sup> ASF, Carte strozziane, I, 51 c. 3; c. 13v.



monétaire indiquée dans le livre de compte? La première solution semble la plus probable puisque l'on trouve au contraire quelques pages plus loin (c. 8) le «*vitto di diversi che si paga in danari, ogni mese*», parmi lesquels on trouve Iacopo Ligozzi, peintre «*p. un putto e p. stiavetto*», mais aussi Gio Domes *orafo* pour un esclave (*stiavo*). Ainsi, seul un nombre très réduit d'artisans, en relation étroite avec le grand duc, comme Buontalenti ou Ligozzi, semble bénéficier de ces rémunérations en nature qui concernent la «maison du prince»<sup>20</sup>.

Un nombre plus important est logé, ou dédommagé pour le logement. Dans une supplique adressée en 1618 au responsable de la Galerie, Jona Falchi, «*orefice di Sua Altezza*» indique qu'il souhaite continuer à être logé comme il l'est présentement «*con la casa pagata e letti come ha di presentes*» (Kieffer 2012, 145). Il n'est pas le seul dont le logement est pris en charge par le grand duc: certains peuvent être logés sur place – mais on les connaît mal, à part le responsable de la Galerie – ; plus sûrement le grand duc paye les dépenses de logement d'un certain nombre de «ses» artisans. On voit bien encore une fois l'ambiguïté entre le service en nature, assuré aux bénéficiaires, et la dépense en argent faite par le grand duc, dont on ne sait pas trop bien si elle est versée aux propriétaires ou aux bénéficiaires qui peuvent, comme le dit la liste de 1592, «loger où ils veulent»:

Ce jour de juillet 1592. Note des loyers que Son Altesse Sérénissime paye par an aux personnes suivantes et d'abord: (...) À Stefano Carroni milanais on paye 25 livres par an pour le loyer anticipé de son habitation, et qu'il habite où il veut; (...) À Antonio Maria Bianchi arquebusier, on paye 30 livres pour l'année chaque 6 mois pour le loyer de son habitation et qu'il habite où il veut; (...) À messire Giovanni Bologna, on paye 40 livres pour le loyer de son habitation et qu'il habite où il veut; (...) À Cristofano di Giorgio Gaffurri on paye 25 livres par an pour le loyer de son habitation avec une avance tous les 6 mois [...]<sup>21</sup>

Le nombre des maîtres de boutiques logés peut varier au fil des années, mais peu nombreux sont ceux qui cumulent ainsi les prestations en nature: ce sont les mêmes qui reçoivent nourriture, bois, chevaux, chandelles, éventuellement vêtements... en plus de l'autorisation, largement honorifique, de porter des armes.

### 1.3.4. Récupérer et recycler la matière première

Dans cet ensemble de formes de rémunérations en nature, il est un aspect qu'il faut relever car il est traditionnellement important dans le monde du travail: celui de la récupération d'une partie des matières premières travaillées, dès lors qu'elles constituent des «rebut». Comme le montre par exemple le travail de Renaud Seyfried dans le domaine textile (Seyfried 2019), ces formes de récupérations sont considérées par les travailleurs préindustriels comme «normales», faisant partie intégrante de leur rémunération. Ainsi, Jean-Yves Grenier a souligné la nature justement composite du «salaire préindustriel» (Grenier, 1996). Le droit de récupération des «déchets» fait

<sup>20</sup> ASF, Carte strozziane, I, 51.

<sup>21</sup> ASF, Carte strozziane, I, 51, c. x.

donc l'objet de négociations constantes, déjà pour définir ce qu'est un déchet et ce qu'il est légitime pour chacun de récupérer: un écheveau de laine, un morceau de drap, une poutre entière sont-ils des «déchets»?

L'intérêt des sources ici conservées est qu'elles montrent que ces négociations n'ont pas seulement lieu de façon informelle, au jour par jour, mais qu'elles peuvent au contraire faire l'objet de demandes précises. Ainsi, en 1618, Jona Falchi de Suède, déjà rencontré, exprime un certain nombre de revendications qui semblent aller pour lui de pair avec le fait d'être «*stabilito a ruolo*»: outre continuer à être logé, à choisir ses aides et à recevoir la même somme d'argent, il «prétend 2% d'or par once et le ramassage des débris d'or, comme Son Altesse l'a concédé autrefois» (ASF, GM 403, c. 29, cité par Kieffer 2012, 145). C'est au détour de mentions assez laconiques de ce genre que se dévoilent des usages qu'il vaut mieux certes toujours préciser pour éviter tout conflit. Elles révèlent aussi la connaissance des conditions faites aux autres artisans, y compris dans un espace temporel relativement étendu, comme semble l'indiquer le terme de «autrefois», qui ne doit cependant pas remonter à plus de deux décennies. Elles montrent enfin que, même si les conditions faites aux uns et aux autres sont fortement personnalisées, elles s'inscrivent cependant dans des pratiques qui peuvent être revendiquées comme faisant partie des conduites normales, si ce n'est «ordinaires». Qu'entend faire Falchi de cet or qu'il ramasse? Certainement le retravailler pour fabriquer des objets qu'il pourra vendre pour son compte: cela montre que, même si le grand duc cherche constamment à interdire le travail de «ses» artisans pour d'autre que lui, il n'y parvient guère; cela fait écho également aux multiples circuits d'approvisionnement et de revente secondaires des produits dont nous reparlerons dans le troisième exemple.

Au total, que peuvent représenter tous ces avantages en nature? Dans le cas de cette récupération de matière première, difficile de le savoir. De même, pour l'ensemble des prestations en nature, il est contre-productif de calculer des moyennes car ce qui caractérise tous ces employés qui font partie du «haut du panier», c'est au contraire la forte personnalisation des rémunérations. Prenons deux exemples: l'un et l'autre sont enrôlés. Le premier est Cristofano Gaffuri, fils de Giorgio lequel est arrivé de Milan en 1575, attiré par Francesco 1<sup>er</sup> pour travailler au *Casino de San Marco* aux côtés d'autres tailleurs de pierre milanais, les Caroni. Giorgio est inscrit sur les rôles de la cour, un des mieux payés des artisans qui y figurent. Ses fils travaillent avec lui quand il s'installe à la Galerie en 1586. Cristofano, sans doute l'aîné, prend la direction de l'atelier à la mort de son père en 1591: il est inscrit sur les rôles de la cour dès 1588, au contraire de ses deux frères, Gio Batta et Bernardino, avec qui il travaille. Ils sont sans doute alors en train de réaliser la «huitième merveille du monde», comme certains contemporains n'hésitent pas à appeler la table de marqueterie de pierres précieuses réalisée à partir de 1590 pour Rodolphe II, à qui elle est offerte en 1597 (Kieffer 2012, 359 et suivantes). Un compte précis de ce que cette table a coûté indique qu'il a reçu pour l'ensemble de son temps de travail 1560 *scudi* auxquels il faut ajouter le loyer de sa maison pendant 6 ans et demi, soit 162.3.10 *scudi*. En admettant qu'il n'ait reçu que cela «en nature», cela correspond quand même à plus de 10% de sa rémunération: un ordre de grandeur comparable au maximum que Mocarelli estime pour la Milan du second XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle (Mocarelli 2008). Second exemple, celui de Bernardo Buontalenti, architecte bien connu, déjà mentionné: il est provisionné

pour 10 *scudi* par semaine, soit le double de ce que reçoit Cristofano. Mais il en reçoit autant en nourriture, bois, cheval... (Butters 2000, 170). Avec la moitié de sa rémunération en nature, Buontalenti rejoint les courtisans dont Fantoni juge qu'ils reçoivent ainsi plus de la moitié de leurs émoluments (Fantoni 1994, 98-99).

Ainsi, c'est en bas et en haut de l'échelle statutaire, pour les esclaves et pour ceux qui sont inclus dans les rôles de la cour, que la part en nature semble la plus importante. Pour les uns et les autres, logement et nourriture peuvent être assurés, mais l'un et l'autre revêtent pourtant des valeurs diamétralement opposées: signe de leur entière dépendance pour les uns, signe de leur reconnaissance pour les autres. La majorité, notamment de ceux qui travaillent sur le chantier de la chapelle, ne semble, elle, rien recevoir en nature, si tant est que les registres comptables révèlent véritablement la composition de ce qui leur était distribué lors de la paye hebdomadaire. Mais en tous cas, cela confirmerait que ces travailleurs ordinaires sont les plus sujets que les autres à la dévalorisation monétaire de leurs rémunérations.

Cherchant à interpréter ces rapports entre part en nature et celle en monnaie sonnante et trébuchante dans les rémunérations des artisans/artistes de la Galerie, Kieffer voyait dans l'importance de la monnaie la marque d'un éloignement, du passage d'un rapport interpersonnel entre eux et le prince à un rapport «économique» (Kieffer 2012, 164). Mais l'on peut faire trois objections à cette hypothèse: d'une part, les esclaves nourris ne font pas l'objet d'un rapport personnel; d'autre part et surtout, le versement d'une partie de la rémunération en nature peut relever non pas du symbolique mais d'un calcul économique des employeurs, ce que nous verrons dans le troisième cas. Enfin, il peut être contre-productif de distinguer le personnel, le symbolique, de l'économique dans les relations de travail anciennes car tous ces aspects sont très souvent mêlés (Maitte, Schapira 2019), comme le montre aussi l'exemple des équipes de verriers italiens s'embauchant au gré des saisons sur les routes européennes.

## **2. Recevoir ou revendiquer une part de rémunération en nature: le cas des ouvriers qualifiés**

Le second exemple est celui des ouvriers verriers italiens qui voyagent sur les routes de la Péninsule et de l'Europe à partir de la fin du Moyen Âge profitant notamment de la mode du «verre à la façon de Venise» qui saisit une bonne part des élites européennes (Maitte 2009).

### **2.1. Le caractère gyrovague et saisonnier des équipes**

Sans refaire ici une histoire que j'ai déjà écrite, il faut rappeler que ces verriers viennent à la fois de Murano, même si la République de Venise interdit théoriquement leurs migrations, et d'Altare, petit village ligure dont la corporation, reconnue en 1495, les encadre au contraire. Les uns comme les autres sont particulièrement mobiles: ils espèrent ainsi profiter d'avantages et de rémunérations supérieures à ceux qu'ils peuvent obtenir dans leurs lieux d'origine, avec lesquels cependant ils ne coupent pas les ponts, au contraire. Ces mobilités de maintien, pour

reprennent les termes de Paul André Rosental (1990), s'organisent selon des modalités et des temporalités diverses qu'il est important de rappeler brièvement pour mettre en perspective le caractère composite de leurs rémunérations.

D'une part, dans le cas d'Altare, il existe des mobilités d'équipes entières qui partent le temps d'une saison, essentiellement en Italie centrale, exercer leur activité dans les fours de villes dont les patrons peuvent ou non être originaires du village: ceux-ci doivent payer à la corporation un droit d'utilisation de cette main-d'oeuvre, évalué et payé en monnaie. D'autre part, existent aussi des migrations de plus grande distance, qui portent les verriers au-delà des Alpes et rendent sans doute difficile le retour annuel au pays. Les contrats d'embauche, notamment ceux conservés à Savone au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle et à Liège au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, sont alors plutôt individuels, même s'il existe aussi des contrats pour un maître et son aide, ou pour plusieurs verriers en même temps. En effet, le travail d'équipe suppose solidarité et complémentarité autour du four, depuis les petits garçons qui trient les matériaux, portent les objets au four de cuisson, accomplissent toutes les besognes les plus humbles jusqu'aux maîtres qui soufflent, aidés par les grands garçons qui les accompagnent dans chacun de leur geste. Une équipe migrante d'Altare est composée au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle d'un peu moins de 20 personnes.<sup>22</sup> Si les salaires individuels de chacun sont prévus et indiqués en monnaie, les contrats de travail indiquent aussi une part en nature qui peut ne pas être négligeable.

## 2.2. Quelle part en nature des rémunérations? Les contrats signés à Altare au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle

La difficulté de connaître avec précision la nature des rémunérations vient de la relative rareté des contrats de travail écrits retrouvés, au gré des archives notariées de tel ou tel centre. Il faut en effet supposer qu'une bonne partie des accords étaient conclus aux termes d'échanges oraux dont nous ignorons pratiquement tout. Cependant, l'usage de l'écrit étant particulièrement répandu en Italie et la pratique de passer devant le notaire assez fréquente, même dans un petit village de Ligurie, certains contrats se trouvent dans les archives de Savone. Ces accords ne concernent en général pas ceux qui travaillent sur place, mais au contraire ceux qui s'embauchent, souvent grâce à des intermédiaires, auprès de patrons de four originaires du lieu mais résidant «à l'étranger». Conclues avant le départ, ils énoncent les conditions de la future relation de travail. Leur nombre relativement réduit rend difficile d'évaluer leur réelle représentativité, mais du moins lèvent-ils un peu le voile sur des conditions qui n'étaient sans doute pas si exceptionnelles que cela.

Ainsi, en 1519, un «garçon» (ce terme désigne dans l'art du verre ceux qui aident les maîtres et non les apprentis (Maitte 2017)) est engagé par Pietro Bormioli, pour deux ans. Il doit aller travailler à Marseille. Son salaire monétaire est assez élevé, deux écus d'or. Mais la part en nature n'est pas non plus négligeable puisque pendant ce temps, le patron doit «le maintenir, tant dans les périodes de santé que d'infirmité et

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<sup>22</sup> Archivio di Stato di Torino (AST), materie economiche, commercio, IV M.13, 1764.

lui fournir des sabots». <sup>23</sup> Qu'est-ce que le maintien suppose? S'il n'est pas précisé, c'est sans doute qu'il va de soi pour les contractants comme pour le notaire, et qu'il s'agit sans aucun doute du gîte et du couvert. Peut-on considérer que ces conditions sont assez semblables pour tous ceux qui travaillent au domicile de leur maître, qu'ils soient domestiques, jeunes apprentis ou compagnons?

Cela vaut aussi pour les maîtres, comme nous l'apprend un contrat stipulé cinquante ans plus tard entre Giulio Pertica, de Savona, avec Michele Perotti et son garçon Elia Marini. D'une durée plus courte, un an, le contrat prévoit un salaire monétaire qui va du simple au double pour le maître et son aide (8 écus par mois pour le maître et 4 pour le garçon), mais pour les deux, il s'accompagne du vivre et du gîte («*vito e alloggio*»). <sup>24</sup> Vingt ans plus tard, Francesco et Cesare Peirano s'engagent à aller travailler pendant quatre ans à *Villafranca*, moyennant un salaire de treize écus chacun, avec toujours une part conséquente en nature qui comprend non seulement le logement, le couvert, mais cette fois aussi les habits. <sup>25</sup> C'est aussi le cas dans le contrat signé en 1592 par Agostino Bosio et Giovanni Bagnasco qui s'engagent à aller travailler en France pendant cinq ans auprès de Giovanni Ferri, pour le prix de 45 et 20 écus, en plus du logement, du couvert et des vêtements. <sup>26</sup> Si la nature de ces vêtements n'est pas spécifiée, il est néanmoins intéressant de trouver la mention d'un «vêtement digne» dans un contrat signé par une veuve qui concède son fils en apprentissage pour six ans dans la ville de Vercelli. Il est vrai que c'est l'un des seuls qui ne précise pas de montant en numéraire.

Bref, pour les maîtres, comme pour les aides ou les apprentis, le logement, le vivre et les vêtements semblent une part normale de la rémunération. Ils ne sont donc pas la caractéristique de la jeunesse en apprentissage, mais concernent au contraire tous les types de travailleurs, dont on peut imaginer qu'ils entendent être vêtus, logés et nourris selon leur rang. <sup>27</sup> Dans ce cas, on comprend que le salaire monétaire représente un «surplus» par rapport à la subsistance qui est de toute façon assurée par le patron. Ne tenir compte que de la partie monétaire des rémunérations reviendrait donc à en négliger une part essentielle. Les contrats de travail liégeois montrent que la situation est à peu près inchangée cinquante ans plus tard.

<sup>23</sup> Archivio di Stato di Savona (ASS), notaire O. Giordano, 12/10/1519 (cité par Malandra 1983, 168).

<sup>24</sup> ASS, notario G. A. Tinelli, 22/8/1579 (cité par Malandra 1983, 150).

<sup>25</sup> ASS, notario Pannelo, 23/1/1589.

<sup>26</sup> ASS, notario Pannelo, 17/7/1592 et 22/7/1592 (cité par Malandra 1983, 178).

<sup>27</sup> La série des contrats s'arrête ensuite pratiquement, à l'exception d'un contrat de 1636 en tous point similaire aux précédents (ASS, not. G. Rolando, 21/10/1636). Ceux que l'on retrouve dans les archives notariées du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle ne sont plus des contrats d'embauche, mais au contraire des contrats qui soldent le travail déjà accompli sur les lieux de migration. Il est donc logique qu'ils ne contiennent cette fois que la mention de ce que doivent encore des employeurs en argent. Cela prouve que la partie monétaire du travail n'était vraisemblablement soldée qu'une fois le contrat achevé. On peut émettre l'hypothèse, à vrai dire impossible à vérifier, que le travail à l'étranger étant devenu relativement fréquent, il n'était peut-être plus nécessaire de s'assurer par écrit et de façon si formelle des conditions avant le départ.

### 2.3. La part en nature dans les contrats de travail liégeois du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle.

Liège devient, dès le second XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, une place importante de verre à la façon italienne, largement dominée par les verriers en provenance d'Altare.<sup>28</sup> Au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, ils y travaillent notamment pour une famille d'entrepreneurs du lieu, les Bonhomme qui finit par s'imposer à ses autres concurrents dans les années 1640. La famille gère non seulement les différents fours de la ville, mais en implante également à Bruxelles, Maastricht, Namur, Verdun, Mézières, Bois-le-Duc, d'une durée variable... créant ainsi une sorte de conglomérat polycentrique, capable de ravitailler aussi bien la cour de la capitale que les aristocraties urbaines de cette région. Les verreries de Liège sont directement en concurrence avec la verrerie d'Anvers, installée dès la première moitié du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, où les Vénitiens sont plus nombreux à travailler.

Les archives notariées de Liège conservent un grand nombre de contrats de travail, déjà en partie recensés et étudiés Yernaux (Yernaux 1941). Plus d'une centaine concerne le secteur verrier. L'un des premiers contrats retrouvés avec les frères Bonhomme, celui par lequel Joseph Castilan (Giuseppe Castellano) s'engage avec Henri et Léonard Bonhomme le 3 mai 1643, prend modèle sur un précédent contrat d'Altaraï signé en 1638 avec Guillaume Varaldo et Joan Castilan (Giovanni Castellano), peut-être le premier signé entre ces patrons et les verriers italiens. S'engageant pour deux ans, Joseph reçoit 98 florins brabant de 20 patard pièces par mois; en plus des droits que les patrons doivent payer au consulat d'Altare, ils doivent également lui fournir «une servante pour faire la cuisine, blanchir tout son linge excepté les goliers (?) et rabats, lui livrer lict et linges nappes et serviettes cinquante la vingtaine»... Deux jours avant, le contrat stipulé par Genesio Varaldo contenait déjà exactement les mêmes termes, en ajoutant, pour la partie en nature, qu'il s'agissait de conditions «suivant la coutume». D'ailleurs, le logement est aussi compris dans ces prestations en nature fournies par le patron car, le 19 mars 1650, un autre contrat engageant un Altaraï, Antonio Mirengo, prenant explicitement modèle sur celui de Castelan, prévoit aussi qu'une chambre soit fournie, avec un lit bien entendu. Sans énumérer tous les contrats, on y trouve toujours des conditions semblables, la cuisine étant souvent qualifiée de «commune»: tous travaillant ensemble dans la verrerie, on peut imaginer qu'elle comprend une annexe avec des chambres et une cuisine commune que les Bonhomme laissent à disposition des verriers, tout en fournissant les lits, les draps, les aliments, voire, comme le précise le premier contrat, une servante qui s'occupe de la maison.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Un certain Joseph Centurini, de Gênes, adresse en 1572 une supplique au prince évêque de la ville pour obtenir le privilège d'installer une verrerie dans la ville, ce qui est un élément de son «ornement» (Archives d'État de Liège (AEL), Conseil privé, 1572; Maitte 2009, 159).

<sup>29</sup> Le contrat suivant conclu entre Joseph Castilan et les frères Bonhomme le 17 juin 1651 le laisse clairement entendre quand il dit que «ledit sieur Castilan se pourrat fournir en commun avec tous les autres messieurs en ceste maison, et non autres, de la table, nappes, serviettes, licts et linceux et luy seront reblanchies toutes ses chemises». Par contre, en 1661, Rimoldo Carnelle, conneur, jouit d'une chambre «hors du pourpris de la verrerie» (Yernaux, 1941, 277). Il faut noter que la situation des ouvriers papetiers est assez comparable (Rosenband 2005).

Les contrats des Vénitiens sont d'ailleurs semblables: celui de Jean Rigoz par exemple, stipulé lui aussi en 1650, prévoit chambre, lit, linge, cuisine, chauffage -un des seuls qui spécifie ce dernier point. Chambre et cuisine sont ici évalués à cinquante florins par an: la somme semble assez basse au regard d'autres contrats.<sup>30</sup> On peut donc estimer une fourchette large comprise entre 50 et 100 florins par an pour l'équivalent en monnaie de ce qui est fourni en nature. Si l'on rapporte cette somme au salaire payé en monnaie aux Altarais (entre 98 et 120 florins par mois<sup>31</sup>), la partie en nature correspond à une fourchette comprise entre 4% et 8% du salaire annuel. Ce n'est évidemment pas considérable, mais cela représente assurément une solution appréciée de ces verriers toujours potentiellement mobiles et qui entendent être traités selon leur rang ici reconnu de «gentilshommes».

Reste à évaluer si c'était chose commune à Liège ou si, au contraire, le gîte et le couvert était une condition spécifique des verriers migrants italiens. Les contrats réunis par Yernaux permettent de répondre en partie à cette question: d'une part, les contrats signés avec d'autres verriers (pas forcément de Liège) sont plus fluctuants en la matière et sont loin de comprendre systématiquement le gîte et le couvert (seuls cinq le spécifient sur les dix-neufs enregistrés, un peu plus d'un quart donc).<sup>32</sup> Par contre, pour les autres métiers, ils sont loin d'être une exception. Ainsi, Jehan Brahy, «bourgeois de Liège» s'engage à travailler pendant deux ans comme retondeur auprès de Art Croelen, lui aussi bourgeois de la ville: outre le salaire de sept patars par jour la première année et de neuf la seconde, il est précisé que «leudit Croelen luy debverat faire faire une chemisette de hancotte pour et en lieux de son denier Dieu [...] comme aussy le dit Crelen le debverat loger pendant ledit terme, luy donner du potaige quand il en aurat et deux pintes de bière chascque jour qu'il travaillerat» (Yernaux 1941, 102). Ainsi, logement, nourriture, vêtement, ne concernent pas seulement les étrangers que l'on veut attirer de loin, mais aussi un «bourgeois» du cru que rien ne qualifie d'apprenti. De fait, des travailleurs qui s'engagent à fabriquer des briques sont nourris aux frais de leur employeur (Yernaux 1941, 120); l'employeur d'un aide apothicaire «luy donnant et subministrant les despens victuels, chambre et

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<sup>30</sup> Dans le contrat de Francis Santin de Murano du 21/12/1649, logement et service sont estimés à 25 patacons par an (Yernaux 1941, 275). Si l'on compte que le patacon vaut entre 3 et 4 florins (<https://fr.numista.com/catalogue/liege-2.html>) cela correspond donc à une somme comprise entre 75 et 100 florins. L'estimation serait donc double, ou presque, par rapport au contrat de Rigoz stipulé l'année suivante. Dans le contrat de Francisco Santin avec Jean de Holstein, stipulé à Liège le 27/10/1655 pour la verrerie de Kiel, Santin reçoit le logement (une maison, une chambre, un petit grenier et une cave) valant tout au moins 60 florins par an, on lui livrera en outre «ung lict et linceulx blancs de 15 jours en 15 jours» et 30 florins de brabant par an pour le chauffage (Yernaux 1941, 281). Dans un autre contrat d'apprentissage, la nourriture de l'apprenti est estimée à 60 florins pour les trois ans (Yernaux 1941, 298): il faut aussi tenir compte du fait que la nourriture ne doit pas être égale pour tous mais liée à la place de chacun dans la hiérarchie artisanale et sociale. Pour les monnaies de Liège voir Dengis 2006.

<sup>31</sup> Les verriers vénitiens étant payés au rendement et non au mois, il est évidemment plus difficile de calculer leurs salaires, même si les rendements attendus sont en fait eux aussi évalués par les patrons cf. Maitte 2014.

<sup>32</sup> Mais Charles de Hennezel, verrier lorrain engagé pour gérer la verrerie de verres plats, avec «trois gentilshommes bien versés la mesme arte» disposera de deux petites maisons annexées à la verrerie (contrat du 31/10L1661; Yernaux 1941, 285).

lict et linceux (veoire que pour ses hardes ledit Herman serat obligé de les faire reblanchir à ses dépens) » (Yernaux 1941, 122-123). Un jeune passementier, lui, est logé « en l'hiver seulement » (Yernaux 1941, 95) et, de fait, tous les contrats d'apprentissage ne comprennent pas cette clause de logement et nourriture<sup>33</sup> qui semble par contre fréquente, sans surprise cette fois, pour les contrats de domestiques (Yernaux 1941, 121). Il est évident que pour tous ces travailleurs, la part en nature de leur rémunération est beaucoup plus importante que pour les verriers grassement payés en monnaie. Sans doute se trouve-t-on alors dans des proportions où la partie en nature peut être plus importante que la partie monétaire.

Ainsi, plus qu'un éventuel « progrès » de la monétarisation, la part importante du revenu versé en monnaie sonnante et trébuchante aux verriers verriers est lié à leur qualification et à leur considération. Inversement, les plus humbles ne reçoivent qu'une infime part monétaire. C'est ce que l'on constate aussi dans le textile de Prato.

### 3. Rémunérer en nature pour payer moins: le *truck system* dans le textile

Cette dernière partie sera la plus courte, car elle rappelle l'importance du paiement en nature des ouvriers dans l'industrie textile, soulignée par de nombreuses études au niveau européen. Les modes de rétributions dans la manufacture de Prato, qui s'est développée à l'ombre de sa grande et puissante voisine florentine (Fasano Guarini 1986; Mori 1989), sont donc assez conformes à ce que l'on connaît ailleurs: un système classique de *truck-system* dont toutes les places drapières européennes ont éprouvé les avantages et les inconvénients.

Si l'Art de la laine a ici une origine médiévale bien connue grâce à Francesco Datini, elle poursuit son chemin à l'époque moderne, en se spécialisant surtout dans les produits de qualité moyenne voire basse (Malanima 1986; Maitte 2001). La corporation conserve le privilège d'édicter ses statuts, sous le contrôle des officiers florentins. Les rétributions des différentes manufactures continuent normalement à l'époque moderne à être fixées par les statuts de la corporation en monnaie, mais les possibilités de tourner la réglementation sont multiples. La plus courante est de payer tout ou partie des façons en nature: ici comme ailleurs, les fabricants y trouvent le moyen d'éviter les sorties d'argent comptant trop importantes que nécessite le paiement des manufactures. Cette pratique, généralisée à tous les stades de la fabrication, a ici la particularité d'avoir été codifiée par le nouveau statut de la corporation en 1542:

aux manufacturiers, travailleurs, purgeurs, foleurs, teinturiers, tisseurs, ourdisseurs, tondeurs, et ceux qui donnent le savon et les autres manufacturiers [...] librement les maîtres de boutique peuvent en paiement habituel, comme c'est la coutume et il se fait aujourd'hui, leur donner toute sorte de draps en pièces ou en morceaux.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Certains ne sont logés qu'à partir d'un certain temps: ainsi un apprenti barbier et joueur de violon est engagé par sa mère pour cinq ans le 5 mai 1644, mais il est nourri et logé seulement à partir de la troisième année «moyennant que la mère lui donne et fait suivre ung lict orné» (Yernaux 1941, 99).

<sup>34</sup> *Statuto dell'Arte della lana*, 1542.



Plus de deux siècles plus tard, en 1767, cette pratique est encore en vigueur pour l'ensemble de la filature: partout où ils envoient leur laine à filer, les marchands de Prato payent tout ou moitié du travail en draps. Le montant théorique des rétributions a donc peu à voir avec le coût réel des opérations. La pratique est semblable pour la rétribution du tissage des *mezzelane*, ces tissus mélangés sur laquelle est assise une partie de la prospérité de la ville au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Comme le reconnaissent les fabricants en 1763: «on a l'habitude et la pratique de donner en comptant deux liras et le reste en nature chaque 120 bras». <sup>35</sup> Ce salaire est bien inférieur à celui des tisseuses de draps pure laine, qui sont pourtant, elles aussi, soumises à la rétribution en nature. L'économie de troc reste donc encore fondamentalement au centre des rapports de production, comme en témoignent aussi les nombreux procès impliquant des teinturiers, par exemple. <sup>36</sup> Sa signification dépasse le calcul ponctuel de l'intérêt du fabricant.

L'unique condition que posent les règlements à ce troc de travail et de draps est de respecter le juste prix des deux termes de l'échange. C'est évidemment ce à quoi contreviennent les fabricants de Prato, comme de Florence d'ailleurs, car le *truck-system* est le plus souvent vicié par une anticipation, à la hausse ou à la baisse, du cours des marchandises données en échange du travail. Les membres de la communauté de Pratovecchio, où les fabricants de Prato envoient leur étain <sup>37</sup> à filer, dénoncent aux enquêteurs de 1767 ces manipulations: «ils payent en draps qui sont évalués 6 sous et 8 deniers le bras en plus du prix commun des boutiques voisines» (Dal Pane 1944, 453). La communauté de Prato témoigne elle-même de la pratique

introduite de payer les ouvrières tisseuses, fileuses et autres artisans avec des marchandises, grains, et parfois avec des prix impropres, et parfois avec le but de faire des gains sur ce paiement en retournant prendre la même marchandise donnée, et bien que cela arrive bien souvent presque dans le même temps que le paiement, si bien que la marchandise donnée en paiement ne passe même pas dans les mains de l'ouvrier. <sup>38</sup>

Les tisseuses, victimes de ces salaires hautement flexibles versés en draps à cours forcé, le sont également par le tarif à la pièce tissée resté fixe malgré l'allongement des chaînes. Elles n'ont aucune échappatoire puisque les fabricants florentins agissent de même, provoquant les contestations aussi exaspérées qu'inutiles de la main-d'œuvre (Preti 1971, 806). À la malhonnêteté des fabricants, il ne reste plus qu'à répondre sur le même terrain.

Aussi les travailleurs et travailleuses tentent-ils de se faire justice eux-mêmes. Pour essayer de récupérer les pertes salariales subies, ils se livrent aux vols de laine que Renaud Seyfried analyse comme une pratique normale liée à la récupération des «déchets» dont nous avons parlé dans le premier exemple traité; mais aussi au travail bâclé, deux réponses du pauvre en forme d'assurance et de réparation, qui deviennent

<sup>35</sup> ASPr (Archivio di Stato di Prato), Arti, 71.

<sup>36</sup> ASPr, Arti, 68B, 1735.

<sup>37</sup> Laine à longs brins qui provient de la partie la plus fine de la laine cardée et qui sert à former la chaîne de certaines étoffes.

<sup>38</sup> ASF, Comunità autonoma e soggette, 664.

les deux «maux» dénoncés par les enquêteurs et les marchands-fabricants des manufactures de Prato. Ces pratiques s'expliquent par la tentative de conserver un niveau de rétribution à peu près équivalent à celui fixé par les statuts malgré les pratiques de baisse des rétributions employées par les fabricants. À suivre les lamentations d'un entrepreneur de bonnets levantins à la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, Lazzero Mazzoni, les *battilani*, payés à la tâche, tentent de travailler le plus de laine possible et la cardent ainsi au plus mal; les fileuses rendent un fil d'autant plus grossier que le prix des façons est fixé au poids sans contrôle précis de la finesse, et elles tentent également de s'approprier une partie de la matière première; les tisseuses battent de moins en moins les draps et réussissent ainsi à finir de plus en plus vite des pièces qui cependant s'allongent. Dès lors, il n'est pas surprenant que les défauts de fabrication soient devenus à Prato plus que des accidents malheureux et exceptionnels. Ils s'expliquent dans le cadre d'une économie du moindre coût, mise en œuvre d'abord et avant tout par les fabricants.

Ce mode de rétribution alimente des réseaux secondaires d'échanges à l'intérieur de la ville ou des campagnes, les fileuses, tisseuses, etc. revendant sur place le surplus de draps dont elles n'ont pas l'usage. Les statuts de la corporation ont d'ailleurs reconnu et accepté ces reventes d'étoffes effectuées par des personnes certes non immatriculées, mais qui peuvent prouver la légalité de la provenance des biens. On se doute aussi que cela ouvre la porte à toute sorte de jeux sur les matières: comment prouver qu'une partie est «volée» si une autre partie est ordinairement donnée comme rétribution?

## Conclusion

Pour répondre à certaines questions posées dans l'appel à communication, dans aucun des cas étudiés, la rémunération en nature n'est liée à une conjoncture économique particulière. Elle fait au contraire partie des pratiques et des usages de longue durée, enracinée dans la coutume, et parfois dans les textes, qu'il s'agisse des contrats de travail ou des statuts corporatifs. Il ne semble pas non plus d'ailleurs qu'elle soit liée à la durée du rapport de travail.

Si, dans le cas du textile de Prato, le système de troc de matières contre travail suscite des jeux de dévalorisation des rétributions de la part des fabricants auxquels répondent des pratiques d'appropriation des matières de la part des travailleurs et travailleuses, cela n'est pas systématiquement le cas, au contraire, comme le montrent les autres exemples analysés.

La comparaison de ces différents exemples montre aussi le large spectre des travailleurs potentiellement rémunérés de la sorte: des «artistes» de cour aux esclaves, en passant par les multiples statuts des travailleurs du verre, toute la gamme de la considération sociale est susceptible d'être concernée. Ce n'est donc pas seulement aux travailleurs les plus humbles et les plus subalternes que sont réservés les paiements en nature. Au contraire, elles incluent potentiellement tout le monde, même si, dans les comptes des Médicis, ce sont les ouvriers «ordinaires» qui semblent les moins susceptibles de recevoir quelque chose en nature en paiement de leur travail. Le cas de Liège montre pourtant que des métiers et des types de travailleurs

très différents sont concernés. D'ailleurs les revenus des seigneurs et des entrepreneurs sont aussi loin d'être uniquement monétaires. L'analyse de la correspondance de la famille Mazzoni, active dans le textile de Prato, montre suffisamment que les draps et les bonnets qu'ils vendent au Levant sont toujours échangés contre d'autres denrées, dans une économie du troc qui n'a pas dit son dernier mot à la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle dans les sphères d'un grand commerce international (Maitte 2001).

Évaluer la part respective des rémunérations en nature et en argent relève de la gageure. Mais il est important de souligner que cela peut correspondre à une partie non négligeable de la rémunération, qui va de 5-10% pour ceux pour lesquels cela représente le moins, jusque plus de 50% pour certains des plus aisés (les artistes enrôlés de la Cour), comme des plus dominés. L'exemple des contrats liégeois semble montrer que la part relative est plus importante chez les plus modestes.

Hormis dans le cas des travailleurs textiles, le contenu de ces rémunérations en nature montre des similarités importantes: le logis, garni ou non, la nourriture, le vêtement, le blanchissage du linge reviennent le plus fréquemment. Ainsi, ces formes de rémunérations que l'on associe souvent aux apprentis ou aux domestiques peuvent-elles se trouver bien plus largement dans le monde du travail et être revendiqué comme un droit et non pas subi comme une manifestation de dépendance. Elles assurent le quotidien des travailleurs et peuvent les mettre à l'abri des possibles dévalorisations monétaires (ou du jeu fréquent sur les monnaies).

Les contemporains des époques anciennes avaient-ils alors en tête la valeur monétaire des rémunérations en nature? Il est certain que cela était clairement établi par les comptables des Médicis qui prennent soin d'indiquer l'équivalence monétaire de toutes choses. On voit bien que ce qui oriente le don princier est donc aussi la valeur monétaire de celui-ci, même s'il ne s'y limite pas. Peu d'équivalences de ce genre sont précisées pour les services fournis aux verriers, mais les quelques mentions indiquent que les conversions monnaie-nature sont dans toutes les têtes.

Outre des éléments de la survie ou de la vie quotidienne, cette partie en nature peut aussi comprendre l'autorisation de réutiliser des «déchets» dont la définition est toujours problématique et potentiellement conflictuelle. Elle souligne ainsi l'importance des circuits «secondaires» qui irriguent ville et villages d'Ancien régime. Selon Renaud Seyfried, ces conflits récurrents autour des matières

aboutissent progressivement à la remise en cause systématique de l'usage lui-même, et à l'organisation de la monétarisation du salaire par les organisations patronales. Ainsi, avant la disciplinarisation de la main-d'oeuvre par l'usine, on observe la longue mise en place, par le conflit et la négociation, de la norme du salaire monétaire qui, dans le cadre des industries dispersées, assure la propriété patronale de la matière première et contribue à définir l'ouvrier comme travailleur salarié (Seyfried 2019).

L'évolution est-elle systématique et aboutie au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle? Tout laisse penser le contraire, même s'il faudrait continuer l'enquête: on en verrait sans doute la persistance dans bien des industries de l'époque contemporaine, comme cette filature de coton de Châlons, qui, au début du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, toute mécanisée et concentrée qu'elle

soit, rémunère en sabots et autres objets d'usage ses ouvriers.<sup>39</sup> Inversement, le caractère «salarie» de la main-d'œuvre ne semble pas forcément liée à la nature monétaire de la rémunération. D'ailleurs, dans son grand ouvrage sur le «juste salaire», Lanfranco Zacchia (1658) ne fait pas de différence et parle d'une façon générale de «salaire», quelle que soit sa forme. Assurément, il y a des «saliariés» avant l'établissement de formes uniquement monétaires de la rémunération. D'ailleurs, la nature composite des salaires n'est pas seulement une caractéristique «d'ancien régime» mais continue d'être une réalité contemporaine, ce que l'observation superficielle des pratiques actuelles, des tickets repas aux voitures et logements de fonction, suffit à montrer.

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<sup>39</sup> Archives Départementales de la Haute Marne, Fonds Diderot.

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*Des poêles, des chaudrons et des couvertures. Payer son impôt par des objets dans le bourg de Najac (1258-1273)*

Ce 2 février 1264, c'est jour de passation de pouvoir dans le gros bourg de Najac, en Rouergue. Les consuls en charge depuis un an des affaires municipales cèdent officiellement leur place à leurs successeurs, et rendent compte de leur mandat. C'est l'occasion de faire l'état des recettes perçues au cours de l'année écoulée et de détailler les différentes dépenses qu'elles ont permis de financer. Une fois ce bilan présenté, les magistrats municipaux n'oublient pas de remettre à ceux qui vont les remplacer un ensemble d'objets pour le moins hétéroclite. Il y a là une soixantaine d'outils, parmi lesquels figurent six maillets de fer, six pioches, neuf pelles, huit rabots et onze coins, mais aussi le surcot du sieur Rocafort, la casaque de Guilhem Raimond, la couverture de la femme d'un certain Mollieras, ainsi qu'une autre couverture dont on a oublié le nom du propriétaire («*que no sabiam de cui era*»).

La mémoire de ce curieux attirail nous est conservée dans la liste qui fut scrupuleusement enregistrée dans le livre des comptes de la ville, à la dernière page de la partie consacrée à l'année 1263.<sup>1</sup> Elle n'est pas la seule qui figure dans ce gros volume. Année après année, d'autres listes témoignent du grand nombre d'objets confiés à la garde des consuls pendant la durée de leur mandat, et de leur statut très divers. Si certains d'entre eux s'avèrent éminemment symboliques de l'autonomie locale, comme le sceau, les bannières et les trompes communales (Germain et Petrowiste 2016), d'autres ne revêtent qu'une simple fonction pratique, tels ces outils destinés à être employés à la grande affaire du moment, le chantier de construction de l'église paroissiale. Les vêtements et couvertures déposés dans les coffres du consulat en 1263 ont quant à eux un usage strictement économique: saisis ou remis par des particuliers aux dépositaires de l'autorité communale, ils sont destinés à garantir une dette – le plus souvent fiscale – contractée envers la municipalité.

Dans les années 2010, d'importants travaux ont mis en évidence la place considérable que ces biens laissés en gage occupaient dans les systèmes économiques et les relations sociales des derniers siècles du Moyen Âge (García Marsilla 2012 et 2013; Smail 2013; Claustre 2013; Sibon 2013; Smail 2016). À une époque marquée par l'omniprésence de la dette, dans toutes les strates de la société, ils constituaient en effet un instrument de sécurisation des créances, permettant de couvrir les sommes dues au titre d'une vente à crédit, d'un prêt d'argent ou de toute autre

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<sup>1</sup> Bibliothèque nationale de France (BNF), Nouvelles acquisitions françaises (NAF), 10372, f. 50r.



obligation financière. Dans les cas où la dette n'était pas soldée au terme prévu, la revente des gages par les créanciers contribuait en outre à l'animation du marché de l'occasion, par lequel transitait une partie non négligeable des échanges commerciaux. Si ces aspects sont bien connus pour certains gros centres économiques (Paris, Marseille, Lucques, Valence...), il est plus rare de disposer d'une documentation livrant un éclairage sur la circulation des objets gagés dans de simples bourgades.

C'est ce qu'offrent, à Najac, les listes dressées chaque année à partir de 1258 des biens arrivés entre les mains des consuls avec le statut de *peimboras*. L'analyse sérielle de l'ensemble de ces documents, conduite jusqu'en 1273, permet de suivre le sort d'une partie de ces objets, et d'appréhender leur rôle dans le paiement de l'impôt municipal au gré des stratégies des acteurs locaux. Car au-delà de ses usages pratiques, l'objet est aussi une réserve de valeur dans les économies anciennes. Dans un milieu où les disponibilités en numéraire sont parfois réduites, le recours au gage peut permettre de différer le règlement d'une dette fiscale, voire de solder celle-ci sans avoir recours à l'argent. Il n'est dès lors sans doute pas abusif de considérer l'objet comme une véritable monnaie alternative.

## 1. Mettre les objets en liste

Une révolte sert de point de départ à cette enquête. La mort de Raimond VII, comte de Toulouse et principal seigneur du *castrum* de Najac, suscite en octobre 1249 le soulèvement de la petite noblesse locale et de la communauté d'habitants contre son successeur, Alphonse de Poitiers. Les révoltés ne tardent pas à rentrer dans le rang, mais leurs sympathies pour l'hérésie cathare a attiré l'attention de l'Inquisition, qui lance des poursuites contre 36 habitants. Un compromis est finalement ratifié le 5 avril 1258. Il prescrit que la communauté d'habitants devra édifier à ses frais, dans un délai de sept ans, une nouvelle église paroissiale, suffisamment grande pour accueillir l'ensemble de la population. En contrepartie, les inquisiteurs commuent une partie des peines qui avaient été prononcées en amendes à verser à l'œuvre de l'église. Afin d'assurer un financement pérenne du chantier de construction, le consulat ordonne dès le 21 avril 1258 la levée d'un impôt municipal, qualifié de *comu*. Cette mise en place d'une fiscalité directe s'accompagne de l'ouverture du premier livre des comptes de la ville, destiné à enregistrer chaque année les sommes perçues des contribuables et les diverses dépenses payées par le consulat (Biget et Boucheron 1996, 21-23).

La réalisation de ce gros registre s'inscrit dans cette « révolution de l'écrit » municipal qui touche les villes de l'Europe occidentale dans la seconde moitié du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle (Chastang 2013; Bertrand 2015), dont une thèse a récemment souligné la vigueur jusque dans les petits consulats du Rouergue (Germain 2022a). Ce livre avait en effet vocation à faciliter la gestion de la *res publica* locale, tout en se trouvant nanti d'une fonction politique et mémorielle, dans la mesure où il rendait compte de la continuité de l'institution communale par-delà le changement annuel des dépositaires de l'autorité municipale. Les listes de *peimboras* qui y sont transcrites chaque année participent de cette double dimension. Leur caractère utilitaire est évident: il s'agit d'instruments facilitant la gestion des finances de la ville, qui permettent de dresser

l'inventaire des objets qui ont été remis par des contribuables se trouvant dans l'incapacité de s'acquitter de leur impôt, et de connaître leur devenir. Mais ces documents concrétisent aussi, par le truchement de l'écrit, le lien entre les collèges consulaires dont le registre constate la succession annuelle, dans la mesure où les listes se répondent les unes aux autres.

On trouve en effet deux types d'énumérations des *peinhoras* associées à une dette fiscale. Le premier type se rencontre à la fin des comptes annuels, après la partie détaillant les dépenses. Les consuls sortants achèvent systématiquement la reddition de leurs comptes en faisant la liste, pour chaque quartier de la ville, des particuliers qui doivent encore des sommes à la municipalité pour raison du *comu*. Une partie d'entre eux sont notés pour une dette en argent (*deude*) tandis que d'autres sont indiqués au motif du dépôt en gage d'un objet couvrant leur dette (*peinhora*), qui est remis par les consuls sortants à leurs successeurs. Si, certaines années, *deudes* et *peinhoras* figurent dans un même ensemble, elles peuvent aussi être présentées en deux séries séparées, qui se succèdent dans le registre.

Le second type de liste figure quant à lui au début des comptes annuels, dans la partie dévolue aux recettes. Il détaille les sommes perçues par le consulat au titre des arrérages de dette fiscale: certaines résultent d'un versement par des contribuables qui soldent ainsi leur *deude* ou récupèrent la *peinhora* qu'ils avaient laissée en gage; d'autres sont issues de la mise en vente par les autorités municipales d'une *peinhora*. Ces listes sont en règle générale moins précises et structurées que celles du précédent type, peut-être en raison de l'existence de pièces comptables complémentaires aujourd'hui perdues, auxquelles les consuls pouvaient alors se référer. Ainsi le quartier de résidence des particuliers qui remboursent leur dette n'est pas indiqué, et on ne spécifie pas systématiquement si le versement est lié à l'acquittement par ces derniers d'une *deude* ou au rachat de leur *peinhora*. Ce n'est que dans dix des seize années étudiées ici que le notaire a pris soin de préciser dans ces listes si une recette concernait un bien gagé, voire de réserver une rubrique aux *peinhoras*. Même dans ces cas-là, il n'est pas toujours facile de déterminer si la rentrée financière associée à un objet résulte de sa vente par le consulat, ou du remboursement de sa dette par son propriétaire désireux de récupérer son bien.

Un dialogue interannuel s'opère quoi qu'il en soit entre les deux types de listes d'objets gagés: ceux qui sont signalés dans les premières, à la fin de l'exercice comptable d'une année, se retrouvent normalement dans les secondes, lors de leur liquidation dans les années qui suivent. Le croisement de ces documents peut ainsi permettre de suivre le parcours d'un bien, depuis son dépôt dans les coffres du consulat jusqu'à sa revente par ce dernier ou sa restitution à son propriétaire. La mise en liste des objets constituait de ce point de vue un instrument de contrôle efficace, par lequel s'opérait le changement de statut de ces biens.<sup>2</sup> Les autorités municipales l'ont exploité à plein. En témoignent les biffures qui barrent la très grande majorité des items figurant dans les listes du premier type et signalent une opération de vérification, probablement menée au cours de l'exercice comptable suivant pour

<sup>2</sup> Sur cette question, on se référera aux volumes résultant du chantier collectif sur le «pouvoir des listes au Moyen Âge» (Angotti, Chastang, Debiais et Kendrick 2020; Anheim, Feller, Jeay et Milani 2021; Andrieu, Chastang, Délivré, Morsel et Theis 2023).

effectuer un récolement des objets. Des ajouts en marge des items de ces mêmes listes rendent également compte du suivi des dettes et des gages qui les garantissent: les mentions «*pa.*» ou «*pagat*» indiquent qu'un individu s'est finalement acquitté de son impôt et a sans doute récupéré son bien; un «*laisat*» signale l'annulation de la créance, notamment en raison de services rendus par le débiteur; on précise parfois le nom de la personne qui a racheté l'objet en question et ainsi soldé la dette de son ancien propriétaire.

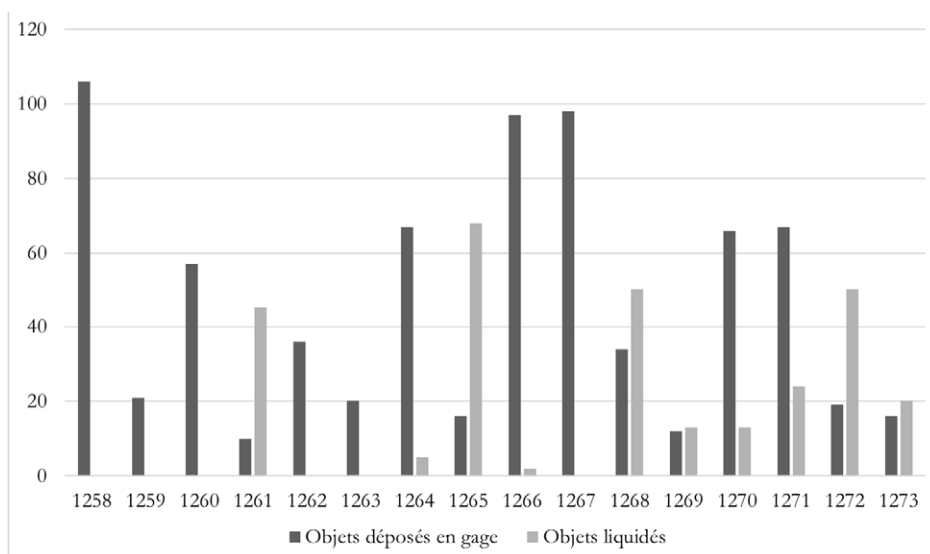
On aurait toutefois tort d'exagérer la fiabilité du dispositif mis en place. On l'a dit, les listes du second type manquent souvent de précision, ce qui compliquait le suivi des objets laissés en gage: ce n'est qu'à partir de 1264, six ans après l'ouverture du registre des comptes municipaux, que l'on se met à spécifier de façon régulière quelles sommes perçues au titre des arrérages de dette sont liées à la liquidation de *peinhoras*, et quels biens sont concernés. Même après cette date, il n'est pas rare de rencontrer des objets inscrits dans les listes du premier type que l'on ne retrouve pas dans celles du second type des années suivantes, ou inversement. Dans ces conditions, il faut se résoudre à constater le dépôt dans les coffres municipaux de biens dont on ne sait ce qu'ils deviennent ou la liquidation de gages dont on ignore à quel moment ils sont entrés entre les mains des consuls.

Cette situation s'explique aisément. Au cours de l'année 1258, qui voit l'introduction d'une taille annuelle à Najac, au moins 106 objets sont remis aux consuls par des contribuables dans l'incapacité de payer leur impôt. Au moins 17 gages supplémentaires leur sont confiés l'année suivante, et au moins 50 en 1260. Au total, ce sont au moins 742 biens qui sont passés entre leurs mains au fil des 16 années considérées ici, soit une cinquantaine par an en moyenne (graph. 1). On peut s'imaginer les problèmes que posait la gestion de ce bric-à-brac composé d'objets très divers, conservés parfois pendant plusieurs années dans l'attente du règlement d'une dette fiscale ou de leur mise en vente. D'autant qu'on ignore où ces objets étaient entreposés avant l'acquisition en 1276 de deux demeures pour y installer une maison commune (Germain 2022a, I, 198), et quel moyen d'identification permettait de garder la trace du nom de leur propriétaire. Il s'avérait quoi qu'il en soit notoirement insuffisant. Les consuls sont en effet régulièrement dans l'incapacité de retrouver à qui appartient un bien laissé en gage, qu'ils finissent par mettre en vente.<sup>3</sup> Sans doute confrontés aux mêmes difficultés, leurs homologues de la bourgade de Villeneuve, à une trentaine de kilomètres au nord de Najac, décidèrent en 1301 que les gages qui seraient désormais confiés aux consuls devraient être systématiquement mis à l'encan à la fin de leur mandat annuel, afin que seuls des «*deniers comptans*» soient remis à leurs successeurs au moment de la reddition des comptes (Germain 2022b, 113).

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<sup>3</sup> BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 17v (comptes de l'année 1259), 23r (comptes de l'année 1261), 39r (comptes de l'année 1263), 49v et 50r (comptes de l'année 1264), 51v (comptes de l'année 1265)...

Graph. 1. Nombre d'objets signalés dans les comptes annuels du consulat de Najac (1258-1273)<sup>4</sup>



## 2. Dette fiscale et circulation des objets

La gestion des objets remis aux consuls pour garantir ou solder une dette fiscale s'avérait donc assez lourde pour les autorités locales, alors même que cette pratique ne concernait qu'un nombre relativement faible de contribuables. Entre 1258 et 1273, un peu plus de 37 individus y recourent en moyenne chaque année, ce qui ne constitue qu'une fraction très réduite d'une population imposable composée de plusieurs centaines de chefs de famille.<sup>5</sup> On peut se convaincre de la place marginale jouée par les objets mis en gage dans le dispositif fiscal de Najac en examinant les chiffres fournis dans les comptes présentés en 1261.<sup>6</sup> Cette année-là, la perception du *comu* dans les huit quartiers de la ville produit une recette totale de 199 218 deniers sur les 205 929 attendus, puisqu'en fin d'exercice les consuls constatent qu'un total de 6 711 deniers reste dû par 139 particuliers. L'impôt rentrait donc relativement bien dans les caisses de la ville: les sommes non versées ne représentent que 3,3% environ des rentrées espérées. Sur les 139 contribuables débiteurs, 131 étaient enregistrés pour une dette en argent non garantie par le dépôt d'objets (*deude*). Seuls 8 avaient procédé à la remise d'une *peinhora* aux consuls dans le but de couvrir les sommes qu'ils devaient, d'un montant total de 666 deniers. Le recours aux gages ne concernait

<sup>4</sup> Les listes des recettes d'arrérages de dette des années 1259, 1260, 1262, 1263 et 1267 ne précisent pas lesquelles de ces rentrées résultent de la liquidation d'objets laissés en gage. Elles ne sont donc pas exploitables pour cette enquête.

<sup>5</sup> Cette estimation se fonde sur l'état des feux dressé pour la sénéchaussée de Rouergue en 1341, qui en attribue 800 à la ville de Najac (Molinier et Molinier 1883).

<sup>6</sup> BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 23r-32r.

donc que 5,75% des débiteurs, chargés de 9,9% des dettes fiscales de l'année, soit un encours qui ne représentait guère que 0,3% des recettes attendues du *comu* de 1261. L'examen des données disponibles pour 1273, à la fin de la période étudiée ici, va dans le même sens: les dettes représentent 3,4% des rentrées fiscales espérées (4 204 deniers sur 125 364 deniers); les 826 deniers gagés par des *peinboras* représentent certes 19,6% de la valeur de ces dettes, mais seulement 0,7% des recettes attendues du *comu* de cette année.<sup>7</sup>

En dépit des complications induites par la gestion des objets remis aux consuls, et de l'importance limitée de ces biens dans les mouvements financiers suscités par la perception et le recouvrement de la fiscalité municipale, eu égard à la valeur totale des dettes qu'ils garantissaient, le recours aux *peinboras* paraît s'être perpétué durablement dans l'ensemble du Midi toulousain. En 1285 encore, à Najac, une ordonnance consulaire précise que les tailles doivent être levées «*en denier o en peinboras*» (Germain 2022b, 74). C'est également le cas, on l'a vu, à Villeneuve en 1301 (Germain 2022b, 111 et 113). Le procédé est attesté y compris à Toulouse au début des années 1330 – une ville qui compte alors environ 35 000 habitants, à l'économie fortement monétarisée et étroitement intégrée aux circuits commerciaux du temps. On y trouve en effet mention d'un «*libre peluts*» dans lequel les trésoriers de la ville enregistraient chaque année, comme leurs homologues de Najac 70 ans plus tôt, les dettes des contribuables «*tant am peinboras quatꝛ ses peinboras*». Ce document est signalé dans les comptes de l'année consulaire 1330-1331, qui y font référence pour justifier près de 814 livres tournois de sommes restant dues, associées à des gages ou pas.<sup>8</sup> La diffusion et la persistance de cette pratique montrent que, pour une partie au moins de la population de la région, la remise d'un objet constituait une voie habituelle, sinon nécessaire, du paiement de l'impôt.

À cet égard, les 742 biens enregistrés à l'occasion des dénombrements des *peinboras* confiées aux consuls de Najac entre 1258 et 1273 traduisent l'impact que l'introduction d'une fiscalité municipale régulière a pu avoir sur la circulation des objets domestiques dans la localité. Il est possible d'en décrire les grands traits grâce au croisement des deux séries de listes évoquées précédemment, avec toutes les réserves induites par cette documentation: si celles du premier type rendent clairement compte de l'arrivée d'un objet entre les mains des consuls, celles du second type, on l'a dit, manquent souvent de précision quant aux conditions de sortie de cet objet des coffres municipaux. Au total, il n'est possible de reconstituer l'itinéraire d'un bien que dans 279 cas (37,6% du corpus étudié). Deux schémas sont alors à distinguer.

Le premier est très majoritaire (87% des cas). Selon celui-ci, un contribuable se trouvant dans l'incapacité de s'acquitter de son impôt remet aux consuls un objet, qui sert de garantie à sa dette. Mais il finit par s'acquitter des sommes exigées de lui, et récupère alors son bien. Les exemples sont très nombreux. Lors de la levée du *comu* de 1259, Domergue de Puigdozo a dû confier au consulat une houe (*becua*) pour garantir une dette fiscale de six deniers. Il apparaît dès l'année suivante parmi les individus qui se sont acquittés de leur dette, pour le même montant de six deniers.

<sup>7</sup> BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 87r-92r.

<sup>8</sup> Archives municipales de Toulouse (AMT), CC 1843, f. 2r.

Tout porte donc à croire que sa houe lui a été restituée.<sup>9</sup> De façon plus explicite, l'état des recettes de l'année 1261 enregistre à plusieurs reprises le versement d'un contribuable qui en contrepartie récupère un bien qui figurait dans la liste de ceux gagés l'année précédente. Il en va ainsi du cuir de Domergue de Pebeirac, suite au paiement de 7 sous et 5 deniers, ou du chaudron de Bernat Marsal, qui s'est quant à lui acquitté de 5 sous.<sup>10</sup> En 1264, les consuls indiquent cette fois que Domergue Guirabal «*avio una apcha*» suite à un versement de deux sous. Ils prennent ainsi acte de la restitution d'une hache qui avait été laissée en gage pour la même somme par ce contribuable en 1263.<sup>11</sup> Terminons avec la mention en 1273 d'un paiement par Guilhem Elias de 16 deniers «*per un cotels*» – couteau qu'il avait confié aux consuls en 1272.<sup>12</sup>

À chaque fois, le dépôt d'un objet a permis au contribuable de différer le remboursement de sa dette fiscale: en se privant temporairement de son bien, il gagnait du temps qu'il pouvait mettre à profit pour se procurer l'argent nécessaire. On comprend l'intérêt que cette solution représentait dans une société marquée par des disponibilités limitées en numéraire. Pour la population d'une simple bourgade comme Najac, dont les biens consistaient essentiellement en terres, vignes, jardins et maisons,<sup>13</sup> le recours à la dette pouvait permettre d'attendre l'arrivée de la nouvelle récolte, la perception d'une rente ou d'un loyer, voire le remboursement d'une créance par un tiers. C'est sans doute cette situation qui justifie le grand nombre d'objets laissés en gage en 1258, lors de la mise en place de l'impôt municipal, à laquelle les habitants ne s'étaient probablement pas préparés en se constituant une épargne en numéraire (graph. 1). Elle permet aussi d'expliquer que ces objets confiés aux consuls finissent dans leur très grande majorité par être récupérés par leurs propriétaires, une fois pourvus des espèces nécessaires, et dans des délais souvent courts: dans 89% des cas, la liquidation de la dette intervient dès l'année suivante, et il n'est pas rare que le remboursement se produise avant même la clôture des comptes de l'année.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup> BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 17r (comptes de l'année 1259) et 19r (comptes de l'année 1260).

<sup>10</sup> «*D'en D. de Pebeirac, VII s. e V d. Cobret lo cuer*»; «*Item d'en B. Marsal, V s. Cobret una pairola*» (BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 23r). Ces objets figuraient parmi les biens confiés aux consuls en 1260, en garantie des dettes fiscales d'un montant équivalent de ces deux individus (*Ibid.*, f. 21v). Voir aussi BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 51r: en 1265, Miquel de Solatge «*cobret una flessada*» contre le versement de deux sous, dette que cette couverture lui avait permis de garantir l'année précédente (*Ibid.*, f. 49r).

<sup>11</sup> BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 43r (recettes de l'année 1264) et 42r (liste des *peinboras* de l'année 1263).

<sup>12</sup> BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 87v (recettes de l'année 1273) et 85r (liste des *peinboras* de l'année 1272).

<sup>13</sup> Sur ce point, un éclairage précieux est apporté par le terrier de la baylie de Najac, dressé en 1260 pour le comte Alphonse de Poitiers (Archives nationales de France, JJ 11, f. 149r-156r).

<sup>14</sup> C'est ce que laisse entendre l'ajout de mentions de paiement dans les listes des *peinboras* reçues par les consuls au cours de leur mandat. Dans celle de 1260, l'item signalant la hache de Vidal, qui sert de garantie à sa dette de neuf deniers, est suivi de la mention «*pague los VIII d.*» (BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 21r); en 1267, c'est à propos de la houe de Peyre Martí, prise en gage d'une dette de dix deniers, que l'on indique «*paget a nos*» (*Ibid.*, f. 63r). Ces précisions sont forcément postérieures à la rédaction de la liste préparatoire à la reddition des comptes, mais antérieures à l'entrée en fonction des nouveaux consuls, sans quoi les versements en question auraient été intégrés aux comptes de l'année suivante, dans l'énumération des recettes liées au recouvrement des dettes, ce qui n'est pas le cas. Les ajouts résultent donc soit d'une vérification de la liste des *peinboras* lors du processus de reddition des comptes,

Il n'en allait cependant pas toujours ainsi. À côté de ce schéma dominant, on constate que dans 13% des cas, le bien remis par un contribuable au consulat n'est pas récupéré, et est liquidé par ce dernier. En vertu des coutumes octroyées aux habitants de Najac en 1255, tout créancier en possession d'un objet laissé en gage était en droit d'en disposer quinze jours après avoir ordonné à son débiteur de s'acquitter de sa dette (Germain 2022b, 65). Le registre des comptes de la ville montre que le gouvernement municipal recourt régulièrement à cette possibilité. Dans la première liste des *peinhoras* confiées aux consuls (1258), la mention du bassin (*conca*) d'un certain Barrau, garantissant une grosse dette de six sous, a été complétée dans un second temps par l'indication «*a B. Ramondís*», ce qui laisse supposer que l'objet a été racheté par ce dernier. On rencontre cette année-là cinq annotations équivalentes.<sup>15</sup> En 1264, ce sont les couvertures laissées par trois femmes de la ville qui semblent bien avoir été acquises par Jean d'Agen.<sup>16</sup> Les comptes sont parfois plus explicites: ceux de 1261 enregistrent une recette de trois sous six deniers résultant de la vente de deux poêles,<sup>17</sup> et ceux de 1268 constatent l'acquisition par Bernat Ramon de deux serpettes gagées pour seize deniers.<sup>18</sup> En 1272, ils prennent acte du versement par Guilhem de Combellas de deux sous pour «*l'escaig de vaire de D. Ribieiras*»,<sup>19</sup> que ce dernier avait effectivement confié aux consuls en garantie de la même somme deux ans plus tôt.<sup>20</sup> Cette indication, comme neuf autres du même type cette année-là et l'année suivante,<sup>21</sup> signale la remise en circulation de ce bien au sein de la communauté d'habitants.

Le consulat n'hésitait donc pas à s'approprier les gages de contribuables défaillants afin de les mettre en vente pour récupérer les sommes dues par ces derniers, ou afin de les employer à diverses nécessités. En 1265, les consuls sortants dressent une liste de onze objets livrés par neuf particuliers afin de garantir leurs dettes, pour un total de 30 sous. Ils préviennent aussitôt leurs successeurs que ce bric-à-brac (une couverture, un pourpoint, deux morceaux de cuir, deux poêles, un chaudron, une hache, une doloire et deux barres de fer) a été remis à Guilhem Bardet pour rémunérer son travail à la production et à la livraison de chaux sur le chantier de l'église.<sup>22</sup> Trois ans plus tard, c'est un ensemble de 28 objets fournis par vingt contribuables pour couvrir des dettes d'un montant total de 51 sous qui sert cette fois à dédommager Bernat Audeguier et Peyre Azarn des frais qu'ils avaient dû engager lorsqu'ils s'étaient rendus pour les affaires du consulat à la cour du comte

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qui a permis de constater que la dette avait bien été soldée avant le terme de l'année consulaire, soit d'un remboursement effectué *in extremis*.

<sup>15</sup> BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 5v-6r.

<sup>16</sup> BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 49: la mention «*a J. d'Agen*» a été ajoutée à la fin des trois items constatant le dépôt en *peinhora* des couvertures des dames Nauriola, Damada et Labella, gagées pour des dettes allant de 40 à 60 deniers.

<sup>17</sup> «*Item, III s. e VI d. de doas padenas que vendem*» (BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 23r).

<sup>18</sup> BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 65r.

<sup>19</sup> BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 83v.

<sup>20</sup> BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 77v (liste des *peinhoras* déposées en 1270).

<sup>21</sup> BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 83v (comptes de l'année 1272) et 87v-88r (comptes de l'année 1273).

<sup>22</sup> BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 55r.

Alphonse, en France.<sup>23</sup> Des objets même usagés pouvaient par conséquent servir de moyen de rémunération et se substituer à la monnaie.

On comprend d'autant plus aisément que pour les contribuables, le dépôt d'un bien ait pu aussi constituer une forme de paiement de l'impôt. Rappelons en effet qu'à Najac comme à Toulouse, deux formes de dette sont enregistrées par les autorités municipales: celles avec dépôt de gage (*peinboras*) et celles sans dépôt de gage (*deudes*), de loin les plus nombreuses. Le critère qui présidait au recours à la *peinbora* demeure obscur. Il ne semble pas lié à l'importance de la dette fiscale. La valeur moyenne de celles qui sont garanties par des objets est certes supérieure à celles qui ne le sont pas: en 1261, les premières représentent 9,9% du montant total des dettes de l'année pour seulement 5,75% des débiteurs; en 1273, elles représentent 19,6% de ce montant pour 9,7% des débiteurs. On n'en rencontre pas moins de menues dettes couvertes par des objets tandis que d'autres, beaucoup plus lourdes, se passent de cette garantie. Le critère déterminant n'est pas non plus le statut socio-économique du contribuable, la même personne pouvant, d'une année à l'autre, participer à tel ou tel des deux régimes de dette. Il n'est donc pas exclu que la remise d'un objet aux consuls relevait d'une stratégie du débiteur, s'inscrivant dans un contexte d'incertitude à l'égard des futures rentrées financières du foyer: si celles-ci s'avéraient suffisantes, elles pourraient permettre de racheter le bien laissé en gage; dans le cas contraire, celui-ci serait abandonné aux consuls.

### 3. Les objets mis en gage

Le choix des biens remis aux autorités municipales devait donc s'effectuer avec soin: il s'agissait pour le contribuable de laisser en gage une chose dont la valeur permettait de garantir sa dette fiscale, mais dont la perte temporaire ou définitive ne risquait pas de poser problème au foyer. Les listes des *peinboras* reçues par le consulat entre 1258 et 1273 offrent un éclairage assez précis sur ce qui était préférentiellement retenu pour servir de gage. On y recense un total de 686 objets identifiés, dont le détail livre de précieuses informations sur la culture matérielle des Najacois de cette époque.

Cet ensemble est constitué pour l'essentiel d'une trentaine de types d'objets récurrents (tab. 1), relevant de cinq grandes familles. La première, qui réunit le quart des biens gagés, regroupe les outils (différentes sortes de haches, doloires, serpettes, houes et marteaux, auxquels il faudrait ajouter quelques occurrences de besaiguës, de scies, de pelles et de pioches). Leur grande fréquence dans les listes de *peinboras* répond logiquement à leur forte présence dans les maisons médiévales, bien établie par les inventaires après décès (Piponnier 1987) comme par les découvertes archéologiques (Lassure 2003). À en juger par le montant moyen des dettes qu'ils permettent de couvrir, il s'agit dans l'ensemble d'objets de faible valeur, dans la majorité des cas inférieure à la moyenne de 25,1 deniers constatée pour l'ensemble du corpus examiné. C'est tout particulièrement le cas des serpettes, de loin les biens les moins valorisés parmi ceux laissés en gage. Ce sont donc surtout des outils plutôt

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<sup>23</sup> BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 70v.



rudimentaires, étroitement liés au quotidien du travail rural et sans doute peu coûteux, qui encombraient le consulat. Rien d'étonnant si l'on admet que «l'impression première que donne l'outillage médiéval est sans doute sa grande simplicité; l'importance du bois dans la fabrication des outils y contribue» (Mane 2003, 253). Dans cet ensemble, il n'est guère que les doloires qui soient généralement gagées pour des montants supérieurs à la moyenne du reste du corpus. Il est vrai qu'il s'agit d'un outil plus élaboré, destiné aux travaux de charpenterie et de tonnellerie.

La deuxième famille d'objets, qui réunit également le quart des gages remis aux consuls, rassemble des ustensiles d'usage domestique, et plus particulièrement culinaire (poêles, casseroles et poêlons, chaudrons, trépieds, chenets, couteaux et bassins, auxquels s'ajoute la mention d'un mortier). Les poêles et les trépieds sont de loin les plus nombreux: pas moins d'une centaine sont remis au consulat au cours de la période étudiée. Ils sont aussi ceux qui ont la valeur la plus faible au sein de ce groupe, au vu du montant moyen des dettes qu'ils garantissent (respectivement 19,2 et 11,7 deniers). Il s'agit de toute évidence d'objets assez communs, largement répandus dans les foyers najacois. Les chaudrons représentent à cet égard des biens de plus grande valeur (44,9 deniers en moyenne), tout en restant relativement fréquents, puisque 27 sont déposés en gage sur les 16 années considérées. Ces constats rejoignent les réalités observées ailleurs dans le Midi à partir des inventaires après décès (Stouff 1970, 257; Coulet 1991, 10 et 12-13; Marandet 1997, 273 et 276-277). Dans cette catégorie, les bassins se distinguent par leur valeur moyenne particulièrement élevée (plus de 111 deniers, ce qui en fait les objets les plus coûteux du corpus étudié ici).

Les biens liés à l'habillement (chaperons, capes, manteaux, gonnelles, surcots, pourpoints, souliers) s'inscrivent dans une troisième catégorie, dont relèvent plus de 15% des objets laissés en gage entre 1258 et 1273. Si ces biens sont donc moins fréquents dans les coffres du consulat, ils sont aussi ceux qui présentent la valeur la plus élevée. Capes et manteaux se situent légèrement au-dessus de la moyenne de 25,1 deniers signalée pour l'ensemble du corpus, mais les gonnelles sont habituellement gagées pour une valeur deux fois supérieure (50,5 deniers) et les surcots pour près de trois fois plus (73,5 deniers). Les pourpoints servent quant à eux à garantir des dettes supérieures à 87 deniers, ce qui en fait les vêtements les plus onéreux du corpus. Il s'agit en effet d'habits ajustés, constitués de plusieurs couches de tissus et d'un rembourrage, ce qui implique que leur fabrication mobilise une plus grande quantité de travail et de matière première (Mane et Pignonier 1995, 83). Seuls les chaperons et les souliers présentent une valeur inférieure à la moyenne du reste du corpus des objets gagés. Le vêtement constituait donc un investissement non négligeable pour le foyer, à Najac comme ailleurs dans le Midi (Gonon 1968, 86; Maurice 1998, 145), ce qui n'a rien pour étonner dans un monde médiéval où il était un moyen privilégié d'afficher son statut socio-économique (Bartholeyns 2008) et un instrument d'épargne (Smail 2018). Aisément négociable (García Marsilla 2013; Kucab 2021), on comprend qu'il ait été d'un recours précieux lorsqu'il fallait s'acquitter d'une importante dette fiscale.

Il en allait sans doute de même avec d'autres produits textiles, destinés cette fois à l'équipement de la maison, tels que les couvertures et les coussins. Ils composent la quatrième famille des biens les plus volontiers utilisés par les contribuables pour

répondre à leurs obligations fiscales (14% de l'ensemble). Là encore, la valeur moyenne de ces objets s'avère en règle générale nettement supérieure à celle observée pour l'ensemble du corpus étudié. Il est tout particulièrement frappant de constater le grand nombre de couvertures laissées en gage par les Najacois, ainsi que l'importance de la valeur des dettes qu'elles permettent de garantir (57,8 deniers en moyenne, ce qui les place au niveau de certains des vêtements les plus chers du corpus). Elles semblent donc aussi largement répandues que les poêles dans les foyers des contribuables, tout en constituant un bien autrement plus onéreux. En comparaison, les courtes-pointes (*vanoas*) sont probablement réservées aux ménages les plus aisés: on n'en rencontre que deux parmi les gages confiés aux consuls entre 1258 et 1273, mais en garantie de lourdes dettes de 240 et 576 deniers, ce qui les place parmi les objets les plus valorisés des listes de *peinhoras*. Les autres linges de maison, comme les draps de lit, les serviettes ou les nappes, habituellement bien représentés dans les intérieurs médiévaux (Piponnier 1986, 242-43; Kucab 2022, 113-20), ne sont étonnamment que peu déposés dans les coffres du consulat de Najac.

La cinquième catégorie de gages, qui représente 12% du corpus étudié, est plus disparate. Elle se compose de biens intermédiaires, destinés à être employés à la production de certains des objets déjà évoqués. Il s'agit le plus souvent de matières de qualité, que leurs possesseurs utilisent comme des réserves de valeur pour faire face à leurs obligations fiscales. C'est tout particulièrement le cas des peaux de vair, que l'on rencontre par 14 fois dans les coffres municipaux pour couvrir des dettes importantes, d'une valeur moyenne de 105,9 deniers, et qui constituent donc certains des objets les plus chers du corpus. Ce produit d'importation très apprécié, apanage des élites médiévales (Delort 1978), circulait à Najac en peau entière ou en coupon (*escaig*), afin d'être employé à des usages variés. Les pièces de drap brun (*bru*) représentent aussi des produits de haut prix, que les contribuables mobilisent pour couvrir des dettes moyennes de 99,3 deniers, près de trois fois supérieures à celles garanties par de simples draps blancs (36,5 deniers en moyenne). Les pièces de cuir, utilisées dans des domaines très divers (vêtement, sellerie et harnachement, mobilier...), semblent également très prisées. La variation du montant moyen des dettes qu'elles permettent de cautionner rend compte de l'existence d'une gamme de produits d'inégale qualité: 40,1 deniers pour le simple *cuer*, 65,8 deniers pour l'*esquinal* (cuir taillé sur l'échine d'un animal); 90 deniers pour le cordouan. En regard, les barres de fer, attestées 13 fois dans les listes de *peinhoras*, représentent des objets de bien plus faible valeur (14,1 deniers).

Tab. 1. Objets les plus fréquemment déposés en gage entre 1258 et 1273

Nature de l'objet déposé en gage	Nombre d'objets déposés sur la période (% du corpus)	Valeur moyenne de la dette garantie par l'objet (en deniers) <sup>24</sup>
Poêle ( <i>padenà</i> )	62 (9%)	19,2
Couverture ( <i>flessada</i> )	61 (8,9%)	57,8
Hache ( <i>destral</i> )	57 (8,3%)	15
Trépiéd ( <i>ender</i> )	44 (6,4%)	11,7
Houe ( <i>becua</i> )	36 (5,2%)	11,7
Cape ( <i>capa</i> )	32 (4,7%)	26,1
Chaudron ( <i>pairola</i> )	27 (3,9%)	44,9
Serpette ( <i>podadoira</i> )	27 (3,9%)	8,3
Cognée ( <i>apcha</i> )	24 (3,5%)	21
Cuir ( <i>cuer</i> )	22 (3,2%)	40,1
Doloire ( <i>doladoira</i> )	16 (2,3%)	29,3
Manteau ( <i>balandran</i> )	16 (2,3%)	29,3
Coussin ( <i>coissi</i> )	15 (2,2%)	33,1
Cuir d'échine ( <i>esquina</i> )	14 (2%)	65,8
Fourrure de vair ( <i>vair</i> )	14 (2%)	105,9
Barre de fer ( <i>barra de fer</i> )	13 (1,9%)	14,1
Bassin ( <i>conca</i> )	13 (1,9%)	111,4
Couteau ( <i>coutel</i> )	13 (1,9%)	22,3
Casserole ou poëlon ( <i>cassa</i> )	13 (1,9%)	28,5
Gonnelle ( <i>gonela</i> )	12 (1,7%)	50,5
Surcot ( <i>sobrecort; gariacor</i> )	12 (1,7%)	73,5
Chaperon ( <i>capairo</i> )	10 (1,5%)	15
Drap brun ( <i>bru</i> )	8 (1,2%)	99,3
Marteau ( <i>martel</i> )	8 (1,2%)	20,7
Paire de souliers ( <i>pareill de sabatas</i> )	8 (1,2%)	15,5
Pourpoint ( <i>perpoint</i> )	8 (1,2%)	87,4
Épée ( <i>aspaça</i> )	7 (1%)	48
Chenets ( <i>capfoguièr</i> )	7 (1%)	30,4

Les listes de *peinhoras* livrent donc un ensemble précieux d'éléments sur l'équipement des foyers des contribuables najacois dans les années 1260, qui rejoint dans une certaine mesure ceux que fournissent les inventaires mobiliers méridionaux des XIV<sup>e</sup> et XV<sup>e</sup> siècles. L'éclairage demeure toutefois partiel en raison de la nature même de cette source. On n'y trouve en effet que les objets qui présentent la meilleure capacité libératoire, ceux que les débiteurs sont susceptibles de posséder en plusieurs exemplaires et qui s'avèrent aisément substituables, ou ceux dont ils peuvent le plus facilement se passer. De fait, « le 'ménager' prudent devait procéder à des acquisitions de biens meubles susceptibles de servir de gages afin de protéger les biens qu'il ne souhaitait pas gager ou voir saisis » (Claustre 2013, 392). Il faut par exemple noter l'absence de dépôt en gage de meubles (lits, coffres, bancs, tables à

<sup>24</sup> Valeur moyenne des dettes garanties par des objets pour l'ensemble du corpus: 25,1 deniers.

tréteaux...) ou des biens les plus modestes (vaisselle de bois), dont on sait par ailleurs qu'ils constituaient des composantes importantes de l'équipement domestique dans le Midi de la fin du Moyen Âge (Gonon 1961 et 1968; Wolff 1966; Loubès 1969; Cursente 1996; Marandet 1997; Maurice 1998). Pour répondre à leurs obligations fiscales, les contribuables n'en pouvaient pas moins puiser dans un stock d'objets assez variés et répondant à une large gamme de qualité, au sein duquel ils sélectionnaient ceux dont la valeur permettait de garantir au mieux leur dette, dans une logique qui, *mutatis mutandis*, pourrait se comparer à cette « économie du mouchoir » récemment décrite pour la Venise du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle (Pompermaier 2022, 101-32).

Se posait dès lors le problème de l'estimation de cette valeur, qui devait probablement être convenue entre le débiteur et le consulat, et en cas de désaccord impliquer des tiers assurant le rôle d'experts (Ferrand 2016; García Marsilla 2016). Il convient à cet égard de noter les écarts considérables qui peuvent s'observer dans le montant des dettes garanties par des objets de même nature. Les poêles constituent on l'a vu les biens les plus utilisés par les débiteurs qui recourent aux *peinhoras*, pour couvrir des obligations fiscales qui s'élèvent en moyenne à 19,2 deniers. Cette moyenne masque cependant d'importantes disparités, certaines poêles étant mobilisées pour des dettes d'une valeur de 4 deniers, quand d'autres le sont pour des dettes douze fois supérieures (48 deniers). Le même phénomène s'observe pour la plupart des objets, quelle que soit leur nature: houes (estimées de 5 à 40 deniers); chaudrons (de 10 à 134 deniers); capes (de 4 à 78 deniers); couvertures (de 4 à 210 deniers); cuirs (de 4 à 146 deniers)... Comme dans le cas des produits textiles écoulés sur le marché de l'occasion à Valence (García Marsilla 2013, 125-126), ces écarts s'expliquent probablement par l'état très variable des biens remis aux consuls, qui constatent régulièrement leur vétusté.<sup>25</sup> Il en résultait une moindre valeur de ces objets, qui n'avaient donc pas la même capacité de garantie que ceux, de même nature, qui se trouvaient en meilleur état. En 1262, par exemple, une mauvaise cape («*capa avoll*») est vendue par les consuls pour 18 deniers, ce qui représente une valeur inférieure d'un tiers au montant moyen des dettes gagées sur ce type d'objet (26,1 deniers).<sup>26</sup> L'année suivante, c'est une couverture «*avol*» qui est liquidée pour 12 deniers, une valeur près de cinq fois moindre que la moyenne constatée lorsque ces biens servent de garantie (57,8 deniers).<sup>27</sup> D'autres cas vont dans le même sens.<sup>28</sup>

Ces objets mis en vente par le consulat irriguaient le marché de l'occasion, par lequel s'opérait la conversion en monnaie réelle de cette monnaie alternative que constituait le gage. Les modalités de cette liquidation demeurent cependant obscures. On sait qu'à Villeneuve en 1301, comme à Toulouse en 1330, les biens saisis ou gagés

<sup>25</sup> BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 39r (mise en vente d'un trépied «*trencaz*» et d'une poêle «*avols*», 1263); *ibid.*, f. 70v (Peyre Laurens laisse en gage des «*pareills de sabatas vieillas*», 1268).

<sup>26</sup> BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 33r.

<sup>27</sup> BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 39r.

<sup>28</sup> Deux serpettes «*vieillas*» garantissent une dette de 11 deniers en 1269, soit 5,5 deniers par serpette. C'est là encore un tiers de moins que la valeur moyenne des dettes gagées sur ces outils (8,3 deniers). L'année suivante, une «*destrall avoll*» et une houe sont liquidées par les consuls pour 12 deniers, alors que la valeur moyenne des dettes couvertes uniquement par une *destrall* est de 15 deniers (BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 72r et 78r).

étaient vendus à l'encan. Dans cette dernière ville, lorsque les enchères avaient permis d'adjuger un objet à un montant supérieur à celui de la dette qu'il garantissait, dégageant un bénéfice, celui-ci était remis à l'ancien propriétaire du gage.<sup>29</sup> On ne conserve pas la trace de tels transferts financiers dans le registre des comptes de Najac entre 1258 et 1273: lorsque ce document signale la vente d'un objet, la seule recette indiquée est celle qui correspond au montant de la dette que celui-ci garantissait. L'excédent éventuel était-il remis au contribuable débiteur sans que cela donne lieu à une écriture comptable ? La remise en circulation des gages pouvait en tout cas permettre à la communauté d'habitants d'acquérir ces biens usagés à des prix sans doute assez modiques. On s'en convaincra en comparant quelques chiffres. En 1261, il en coûte 128 deniers au consulat pour acquérir quatre barres de fer sur le marché de Najac en vue de les employer à la construction de l'église, soit 32 deniers par barre. En 1265, deux objets identiques sont mis en gage pour couvrir une dette fiscale de 20 deniers, soit 10 deniers par barre.<sup>30</sup> Entre la valeur assignée à l'objet gagé, à laquelle il était susceptible d'être vendu si son propriétaire faisait défaut, et le prix du neuf, le rapport est du simple au triple. Le même ordre de grandeur s'observe lorsqu'une houe est acquise par la ville en 1261 pour un prix de 31 deniers, alors que la valeur moyenne des dettes que sert à garantir ce type d'outil, lorsqu'il est mis en gage, est de 11,7 deniers sur la période considérée.

La vente des *peinhoras* par les consuls permettait par conséquent à une couche non négligeable de la population d'accéder à des objets certes en plus ou moins bon état, mais qui conservaient une utilité pratique (outils, ustensiles) et parfois une valeur symbolique (vair, épée). Il est possible de le vérifier en constatant que les rémunérations accordées par le consulat aux travailleurs qui officiaient sur le chantier de l'église en 1258 allaient de 12 deniers par jour pour les manœuvres chargés de transporter le sable à 30 deniers par jour pour les chauxfourneaux.<sup>31</sup> Au vu de la valeur moyenne des objets gagés (tab. 1), même les salariés les plus modestes pouvaient théoriquement acquérir sur le marché de l'occasion une peau de vair en une dizaine de jours de travail, un surcot usagé en un peu plus de six jours, ou un vieux chaudron en un peu moins de quatre jours... Autant de biens qui constitueraient de nouvelles réserves de valeur, susceptibles d'être mobilisées au gré des besoins du ménage. Ces estimations sont évidemment virtuelles, dans la mesure où on ignore quelle part du revenu quotidien de ces salariés pouvait être consacrée à l'alimentation ou au logement, réduisant d'autant leur capacité d'achat de biens d'occasion superflus. La faiblesse relative de la valeur des objets gagés en regard des salaires pratiqués à Najac peut toutefois expliquer que la plupart des débiteurs qui les avaient confiés au consulat parviennent rapidement à rembourser leur dette et à les récupérer.

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<sup>29</sup> AMT, CC 1843, f. 24r.

<sup>30</sup> BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 29v et 55r.

<sup>31</sup> BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 3v-5r.

#### 4. Le profil varié des contribuables débiteurs

Il reste à examiner le profil de ces individus qui se trouvaient dans la situation de mobiliser les objets du foyer pour faire face à leurs obligations fiscales. On a vu qu'ils ne représentent chaque année qu'une petite fraction des contribuables najacois, qui dans leur grande majorité s'acquittent sans délai de leur part du *comu*. Ils sont même très minoritaires au sein du groupe des débiteurs, qui préfèrent généralement être redevables d'une dette en argent (*deude*) plutôt que de recourir au système de la *peinhora* en déposant un gage entre les mains des consuls. Au cours de la période qui s'étend de 1258 à 1273, cette dernière solution a tout de même été retenue 460 fois. Il s'agit le plus souvent d'une initiative ponctuelle, qui paraît s'inscrire dans un moment d'incertitude quant aux revenus du foyer à venir. Dans plus de 80% des cas, les individus concernés (369 personnes) n'apparaissent en effet qu'une seule année dans les listes des *peinhoras*; dans 13,7% des cas, ils ne sont mentionnés que durant deux années, rarement consécutives. L'exemple d'Arnal Ausaroc, signalé en 1259 (dépôt d'une *clocha* pour couvrir une dette fiscale de 12 deniers), 1264 (dépôt d'un couteau et d'une épée, pour 122 deniers), 1266 (dépôt d'une doloire et d'une hache, pour 15 deniers), 1267 (dépôt de chenets, pour 20 deniers) et 1269 (dépôt d'une couverture, pour 12 deniers) apparaît donc exceptionnel.<sup>32</sup>

Lorsqu'il se fait récurrent, le recours au système de la *peinhora* laisse parfois transparaître les ressorts de la stratégie de mobilisation des objets déployée par certains individus en vue de répondre à leurs obligations financières. Le va-et-vient de certains biens entre le coffre d'un particulier et celui du consulat souligne par exemple le rôle d'amortisseur qu'ils sont susceptibles de jouer dans le budget domestique en offrant la possibilité de différer le paiement d'une dette. En 1261, Gachet remet aux consuls une poêle en garantie d'une somme de 48 deniers qu'il doit pour son impôt. Il la récupère dans le courant de l'année 1262... avant de la déposer à nouveau en gage, cette fois pour un montant de 20 deniers.<sup>33</sup> D'autres objets connaissent des destins similaires, comme la *sigueinha* de fer de Bernat Garriga<sup>34</sup> ou le coussin d'Amiel de Sorbinh.<sup>35</sup> La circulation des biens gagés s'inscrit également dans les chaînes complexes de relations de crédit propres à la société médiévale (Claustre 2013, 390). En 1264, Guilhem de Combellas avait remis aux consuls un coupon de vair (*escaig de vair*) pour garantir sa dette fiscale de 36 deniers. À la suite de l'item qui consigne ce dépôt dans la liste des *peinhoras* de cette année, une main a ajouté «*per Uc Ribieira*», signalant le rachat de la fourrure par cet habitant. Guilhem de Combellas est pourtant bien en possession de cette pièce de vair l'année suivante, puisqu'il la réutilise pour cautionner un nouvel arriéré fiscal de 36 deniers.<sup>36</sup> Tout porte donc à

<sup>32</sup> BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 17r, 49v, 58r, 62v, 75r.

<sup>33</sup> BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 30v, 33r et 34r.

<sup>34</sup> Cet objet est confié en 1269 au consulat pour cautionner une dette fiscale de 30 deniers. Il est récupéré en 1271 par son propriétaire, qui le réutilise la même année pour gager un arriéré de *comu* de 23 deniers (BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 75r, 79v et 81v).

<sup>35</sup> Ce coussin, laissé en gage par Amiel de Sorbinh aux consuls en 1270, est racheté l'année suivante puis réutilisé par celui-ci pour garantir son retard de paiement du *comu* de 1271 (BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 78v, 81r et 87v).

<sup>36</sup> BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 49r et 55v.

croire que le rachat du gage de Guilhem de Combellas par Uc Ribieira était une façon de rembourser une dette que le second avait contractée auprès du premier. Grâce à cet arrangement, Guilhem de Combellas récupérait sans bourse délier son bien, qu'il pouvait à nouveau mobiliser au gré de ses arbitrages économiques.

De fait, on ne laisse pas d'être surpris par le stock d'objets dont certains contribuables débiteurs semblent pouvoir disposer, et par leur capacité à le renouveler. En 1268, Bernard Cornaire dut céder au consulat un surcot et une cape afin de s'acquitter des 20 deniers qu'il lui restait à payer du *comu*. Trois ans plus tard, il tirait de ses coffres une nouvelle cape pour gager une dette fiscale qui s'élevait cette fois à 12 deniers.<sup>37</sup> W. Echer, quant à lui, fut en mesure d'abandonner à la ville le pourpoint qui garantissait les 60 deniers dont il était redevable en 1265, et de laisser en *peinbora* un deuxième pourpoint, gagé cette fois à 85 deniers, en 1271.<sup>38</sup> Il s'agissait pourtant de vêtements qui présentaient une valeur très importante. Ces éléments invitent à considérer de près le profil des débiteurs enregistrés dans les listes du consulat. Car en dépit de leur relative sécheresse, ces documents laissent percevoir une forte diversité au sein de ce groupe.

Il convient d'abord de signaler le nombre non négligeable de femmes parmi les invididus qui laissent des objets en gage pour couvrir leur dette. 55 sont mentionnées dans les listes de *peinboras*, soit 12% de l'effectif considéré. Il s'agit très probablement de veuves, placées à la tête de leur foyer fiscal par la disparition de leur époux. On sait la condition économique souvent précaire de ces veuves. Dans la mesure où le *comu* était proportionnel au patrimoine des contribuables (Biget et Boucheron 1996, 24-25), les montants exigés de ces dernières étaient probablement très inférieurs à ceux demandés aux chefs de foyer masculins. Cette situation expliquerait le fort différentiel dans le niveau des dettes fiscales qui donnent lieu au dépôt d'un gage chez les femmes et chez les hommes: alors que la moyenne de ces dettes s'établit à 75,5 deniers chez les seconds, il n'est que de 19,1 deniers chez les premières. À cet égard, Nauga Prada, qui laisse entre les mains des consuls en 1264 un coussin et une crémaillère pour garantir un arriéré de 88 deniers, fait figure d'exception.<sup>39</sup> Des différences de genre s'observent également dans le choix des objets mis en gage. Il est significatif que les outils soient moins représentés parmi les biens déposés par des femmes par rapport aux vêtements, au linge de maison et à l'équipement culinaire – sans doute s'en trouve-t-il peu au sein des foyers de veuves.

Le groupe des contribuables débiteurs masculins présente quant à lui une importante stratification. Il n'est pas sûr en effet que l'association souvent faite entre endettement, transfert d'un gage à un créancier et pauvreté ou déclassement socio-économique soit toujours opératoire dans les cas observés ici. Une partie des débiteurs figurant sur les listes du consulat doit certes relever de ce petit peuple qui se plaint dès 1262 d'être «*mout agreviatz*» par l'impôt municipal. Celui-ci pèse effectivement sur tous: en vertu d'un arbitrage rendu cette année-là, même les pauvres dépourvus d'avoir doivent s'acquitter de 3 ou 4 deniers pour chaque taille de 50 livres (Biget et Boucheron 1996, 25). Mais nombre des contribuables qui se

<sup>37</sup> BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 70v et 82r.

<sup>38</sup> BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 55r et 81v.

<sup>39</sup> BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 49r.

trouvent dans l'incapacité de payer leur part du *comu* et confient certains de leurs biens au consulat appartiennent aux catégories médianes de la population du bourg, composées d'artisans, de marchands et de salariés. On retrouve plusieurs de ces débiteurs parmi les personnes employées par le consulat sur le chantier de l'église, où ils officient comme manœuvres, chaudourniers, ou assurent avec leurs bêtes de somme le charroi des matériaux nécessaires. Ces individus bénéficient donc à plein de la redistribution de l'impôt municipal, à l'image de Huc Corno, qui en 1258 laisse un couteau en gage aux consuls pour couvrir sa dette fiscale de 40 deniers mais reçoit 112 deniers de la ville en rémunération de huit journées à œuvrer au four à chaux.<sup>40</sup> La même année, Guilhem Guarigua remet au consulat un *pal* en raison des 67 deniers qu'il doit pour sa part du *comu*, mais perçoit 220 deniers pour son travail sur le chantier.<sup>41</sup> Pour ces deux particuliers, l'endettement et la mise en gage d'un objet, que l'on aurait pu interpréter comme des signes de déclassement, sont amplement compensés par les retombées mêmes de l'impôt à l'origine de leur dette.

Il est encore plus intéressant de constater la présence, parmi les débiteurs qui ont remis un bien au consulat, de membres de catégories sociales que l'on n'attendrait pas forcément dans cette situation. Voici par exemple Brenguier Jornet, que le notaire qui rédige les comptes prend soin de qualifier de *maestre*, pratique suffisamment exceptionnelle pour qu'on puisse y voir un marqueur d'honorabilité. Il figure dans la liste des débiteurs à *peinboras* de l'année 1271 en raison du dépôt d'un chaudron d'une valeur de 24 deniers.<sup>42</sup> Il ne reste pas longtemps endetté : une main a ajouté la mention «*pa.*» (pour «*pagat*») à la fin de l'item, et les 24 deniers sont enregistrés dans les recettes de l'année suivante.<sup>43</sup> Comme à Paris à la fin du Moyen Âge, le recours au crédit sur gage n'était donc pas l'apanage des milieux les plus modestes (Claustre 2013, 389).

L'examen des fastes consulaires du bourg de Najac, récemment reconstitués (Germain 2022a, II, 83-87), en apporte une autre confirmation : 28 des contribuables recensés dans les listes de *peinboras* suite au dépôt d'un objet en gage sont connus pour avoir exercé la responsabilité de consuls de la ville entre 1243 et 1273. Beaucoup l'ont même assurée trois (Uc de Combellas, Uc Daradas, Bernat Marsal) voire quatre fois (Peire Azemar, Bernat de Combellas, Daide de Pebeirac et Bernat Ramondi) au cours de la période considérée ici. C'est donc la fine fleur de l'oligarchie municipale qui est représentée, à commencer par la puissante famille des Combellas, appelée à dominer la vie politique locale jusqu'aux années 1330 (Germain 2022a, I, 332-34). Ce groupe consulaire se distingue très nettement du reste des contribuables ayant recours aux *peinboras* par l'importance de ses dettes fiscales, qui sont à la mesure de son patrimoine. Leur valeur moyenne atteint 251 deniers, quand celle du reste des individus masculins s'élève à 56,8 deniers, soit près de 4,5 fois moins ! L'écart est encore plus important avec les femmes, dont les dettes fiscales sont en moyenne treize fois moins élevées. Pour garantir leurs impayés, ces patriciens puisent dans un stock d'objets dont la qualité et la valeur sont en règle générale très supérieures à ce

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<sup>40</sup> BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 4r et 6r.

<sup>41</sup> BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 4v et 6r.

<sup>42</sup> BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 81v.

<sup>43</sup> BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 83v.



qui s'observe chez les autres contribuables: courtes-pointes, fourrures de vair, draps bruns, pourpoints et surcots, épées...

C'est ainsi que procède par exemple Peire Bernat. Cet ancien consul, qui avait exercé en 1262, remet aux autorités municipales en 1264 une courte-pointe permettant de garantir une dette de 576 deniers. Il la récupère dès l'année suivante, après s'être acquitté des sommes dues.<sup>44</sup> En 1270, W. Aini laisse pour sa part en gage deux objets coûteux, destinés à couvrir un arriéré de paiement de 150 deniers: une fourrure de vair estimée 90 deniers et une cape d'excellente facture, à en juger par sa valeur de 60 deniers, près de deux fois supérieure à celle habituellement constatée lorsque ce type de bien sert de gage (tab. 1). Il récidive l'année suivante en déposant dans les coffres municipaux une cape, une couverture et un bassin qui à eux seuls suffisent à garantir une dette fiscale de 522 deniers.<sup>45</sup> Ces retards de paiement répétés ne l'empêchent pas d'accéder en 1273 pour la seconde fois à un mandat consulaire. Terminons avec le cas de Bertrand de Puigdozo, consul en 1257 et 1262, qui remet des *peinboras* pour couvrir des restes à payer de 60 deniers en 1258, 12 deniers en 1260, 140 deniers en 1261, 67 deniers en 1266 et 135 deniers en 1267.<sup>46</sup> Dans la société najacoise du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, c'est bien la notabilité et la garantie de solvabilité qui constituaient les sources premières du crédit, dans tous les sens attachés à ce terme.

La mise en place en 1258 d'une fiscalité régulière à Najac constitua un vecteur majeur de l'intensification de la circulation des biens en ville. D'une part car elle conduisit un nombre non négligeable de foyers à transférer certains objets domestiques au consulat afin de servir de gage à leur dette fiscale; d'autre part car une partie de ces objets durent être liquidés par la municipalité et se retrouvèrent sur le marché de l'occasion. À cet égard, les données conservées dans les listes de *peinboras* transcrites dans le registre des comptes de la ville montrent que pour une bonne partie de la population de Najac, les objets constituaient une composante à part entière du capital mobilier du foyer, dont le flux et le reflux s'inscrivait dans des logiques d'économie domestique.

Compte tenu de la diffusion de la pratique du dépôt en gage dans un très large spectre social, il paraît risqué d'en faire forcément le signe d'une précarité matérielle des ménages. Dans un certain nombre de cas, le recours à la dette résulte moins d'une situation de pauvreté que d'un manque temporaire de liquidités. Il peut justifier la mise en gage d'un objet qui sert d'assurance au remboursement de l'impôt, notamment dans des contextes d'incertitude sur les rentrées financières à venir. Au gré des arbitrages du foyer, il sera soit racheté grâce au paiement de la dette qu'il garantissait, soit converti en monnaie alternative et abandonné au créancier.

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<sup>44</sup> BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 49r (liste des *peinboras* de l'année 1264) et 51v (recettes des arrérages de taille de l'année 1265).

<sup>45</sup> BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 78r-v et 81v.

<sup>46</sup> BNF, NAF, 10372, f. 5v, 21v, 31v, 58r, 63r-v.

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*Usi dei mezzi di scambio non monetari*

*Uses of alternative currencies*



## 1.

Wax was an indispensable element of Christian religious devotion in the later Middle Ages. From the end of the twelfth century wax candles were required at the elevation of the Host, and over the thirteenth century the number of wax candles deemed necessary for Christian observance grew exponentially. By the fourteenth century numerous wax candles burned on and above the altars, before the cross, the baptismal font, in front of images and relics, in shrines and around tombs in every church in Europe. Additionally, vast numbers of wax candles were used during ordinary and extraordinary processions inside churches and on the streets, for such impressive festive displays such as the spectacular vigils of the Holy Ghost during Easter (Sapoznik 2019).

Wax was so crucial and ubiquitous in the liturgy that it fuelled the internal economy of religious institutions. This paper will analyse the use, reuse and barter of wax in circular economies within cathedrals, monasteries and professional guilds. It begins by examining the well-elucidated organization within English institutions, which will provide the background and context for a detailed case study of the confraternity of Orsanmichele in Florence, one of the best-attested examples of the circulation of wax within a religious institution, shedding light on what must have been widespread practice, especially in larger organizations, throughout Latin Europe.

The ledgers of the institutions under study demonstrate that both ecclesiastical and lay entities in the Christian West used large amounts of wax on a yearly basis for liturgical celebrations. Chandlers and apothecaries provided the candles, often in a monopolistic arrangement. Although there was some variability depending on the region or the period, it was common for burned wax stubs to be returned to the chandlers so their price could be directly discounted from the subsequent shipment of new candles. Larger candles (for example the Paschal candle, which could weigh up to 200 kg) could be partially rented to the institutions, who paid the full price for the completely burned wax, but only a lease for the remaining section of the candle that had been exhibited. Wax was a costly material, imported in large

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quantities from peripheral zones such as the Black Sea, Baltic hinterland, and the Maghreb, all regions which specialized in supplying wax of different qualities for this purpose (Sales i Favà, Sapoznik, Whelan 2021). This system and its variations allowed the necessary wax for the institutions to remain affordable.

The use of wax as a means of payment was not necessarily responding to a shortage of liquidity within an institution, but was the most straightforward mechanism to reutilize burned wax – still valuable – and cut the costs of buying new candles. As a consequence, both new and old wax could be used a means of payment between institutions and as a stipend for public officers. The paper will also deal with the latter, as it became a common currency for internal economies in which cash was partially substituted.

## 2.

Within larger religious institutions, the sacrist, who was in charge of maintaining the church, was responsible for supplying the majority of the wax and candles throughout the year. After payments for the fabric of the church, wax was the single most important expenditure of this office, which also included supplying oil, wine, incense, the Host, palms and ashes during Holy Week, and so on (Sapoznik 2019, 1159). Institutions associated with important saints' cults also had obedientiaries known as *feretrars*, or shrine keepers, who were responsible for the supply and maintenance of candles specifically for the shrine. In some institutions, such as Christ Church Canterbury, which housed the shrine to St Thomas Becket – probably the most famous and well-provisioned shrine in medieval England – the wax needed was so extensive that the sacrists acquired the wax for their office through the larger purchases of the *feretrar* (Nickson 2020). Between them, these two offices dealt with almost all of the wax required throughout the year within larger ecclesiastical institutions.<sup>2</sup> At the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds (Suffolk) for example, the sacrist provided the treasurer with 10 lbs (4.5 kg) of small candles and two candles of four lbs (1.8 kg) every week in summer, an amount which increased to 15 lbs (6.8 kg) of small candles in winter, and an additional four candles weighing 10 lbs for feast days. The treasurer dispensed these candles to the relevant brothers, including two torches for the prior when he ate in his chamber, or the subprior if he was taking the place of the prior, between the Nativity of the Virgin Mary and the Purification (8 September to 2 February), and each pair of brethren a torch between them (Gransden 2007, 265).

The provisioning of wax candles can therefore also demonstrate the particular institutional arrangements within these foundations. Since in large institutions obedientiaries were allocated manors or lands from which to receive the funds for their offices, the question arose over whether they should also keep the money received from the rents and profits of these manors and make the necessary payments themselves, contributing some portion of their incomes to the treasurer to be disbursed centrally, or, as at Christ Church Canterbury and Bury St

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<sup>2</sup> Parish churches, too, required extensive provisioning of wax, and this was handled by the churchwarden (Sapoznik 2019, 1155).

Edmund's, that the income received from the properties given over to the various offices should be administered through stewards or treasurers who then gave all the income to the treasurer who disbursed the funds back to the obedientiaris as needed (Snape 1968, 85).<sup>3</sup>

## 2.1

The custom of the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds (Suffolk) gives an indication of how candles were supplied to the community via a highly centralized administrative system. Scrupulous attention to the provision of wax demonstrates the importance of the commodity within the institution and its accounting framework. Thus even the candles for the servant who brought the prior's ale while he was eating in his chamber were accounted for, and it was specified that the candle to be given by the sacrist to the prior at Candlemas should be offered only if the latter was present at the Abbey, otherwise it could be offered in absentia if noted that it was a grace to ensure it was not enshrined as custom (Gransden 2007, 208; 265-66). Later additions to the customary stipulate the size of the candles to be supplied to the prior (14 inches, 35.5 cm, and not too thin), suggesting either that the prior was being short-changed or in danger of being too generously supplied, but in either case indicating the status associated with proper wax provision (Gransden 2007, 266).<sup>4</sup> This candle was but one part of the generous stipend allowed for the prior, from which he was not parted even in death: at Christ Church Canterbury, the 56 lbs of wax recovered from the room of Thomas Goldston when he died in 1468 were used for his burial and month's mind (Woodruff 1936, 62).<sup>5</sup>

This careful accountancy of wax continued throughout the offices and among the communities of religious institutions. At Canterbury, the feretrars supplied two torches for the high altar, two of which were to burn from *Sanctus Sanctus* until after the elevation of the Host, each 8 ft tall (244 cm) and weighing 12 lbs (4.5 kg), to be renewed three times a year to maintain their size. Carrying such torches was likely to be unwieldy, and anyone who broke one had to pay for its repair out of his food allowance in the refectory (Woodruff 1936, 79). The presence of a such a wealthy and important shrine offered a means for spreading the burden and cost of provisioning the wax. For example, the shrine keeper also supplied wax for the brethren at the Purification (Candlemas, 2 February) regardless of whether they were present or not, according to the status of the recipient, including 3 lbs wax for

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<sup>3</sup> This also explains the development of various obedientiary records, which can include a variety of information from straightforward manor accounts to shorter lists of rents, or more detailed accounts listing the minutiae of expenditure for the offices: compare for example Westminster Abbey Muniments Sacrist Rolls (WAM) 19621-19807 with Cambridge University Library Ely Dean and Chapter (CUL EDC) Sacrist Rolls 4a, 9a-b, 7, 18.

<sup>4</sup> Wax candles could also form part of payments to officials within secular households, as in Henry I's household where the chancellor was given «1 large wax candle and 40 pieces of candle» while other officers were paid in wax according to their status (fitzNigel 2007 198).

<sup>5</sup> See also Canterbury Cathedral Archives (CCA) DCc-Sacrist/46.

the prior, 2 lbs to other obedientiaris such as the refectorian, and 1 lb to the other monks (Jenkins 2022, 77). The monastery also maintained a separate room called the *deportum* (in other houses this was known as the misericord) in which small groups of monks could stay and eat without the usual restrictions of a Benedictine diet. The wax for the masses conducted there was supplied by the feretrar unless the sacrist was present, in which case it was he who supplied the wax (Jenkins 2022, 43). In institutions with less lavishly funded shrines than that of Canterbury, the sacrist remained the more important office for provisioning wax, facilitating its circulation throughout the institution, as at Ely where the sacrist bought 8 lbs wax from the cellarer and passed the same amount on to the infirmer.<sup>6</sup> The cellarer's role also included the provision of candles in the refectory – as at St Swithun's in Winchester where the cellarer was responsible for the lights which burned 'night and day' in front of the cross in the refectory, although it was the refectorian who provided the 15 tapers for the chandelier hanging in front of the cross on Absolution Thursday (Kitchin 1886, 32).<sup>7</sup> At Exeter in 1444 six more candles were burned than was customary for obits in the cathedral, for which the treasurer charged the sacrist an extra 20d (Meyers 1996, 773).

## 2.2

The attention paid to the division of responsibilities regarding wax provision and the regulations around its supply extended also to the receipt of used wax and candle ends. In 1413 two valets of the Earl of Arundell were paid £1 6s. 8d. for melting the wax left over from the hearse of Richard II at Westminster Abbey and delivering it safely for the use of household of Henry V (Devon 1837, 328). Arguments over who should properly receive leftover wax could also arise. One such instance is that at St Paul's in London over the oblations left at a popular image of Mary. The burning candles and wax ends had long been taken by the chamberlains and bell ringers to a special chamber underneath the chapterhouse to be melted into candles for the dean and canons resident, but in the early fifteenth century, the bishop of London decided he wanted to take the income from the image for himself – something the dean and canons refused. In 1411 the Archbishop of Canterbury intervened to arbitrate, deciding in favour of the dean and canons, in a case which demonstrates the significant income generated through the recycling of candlewax (Dugdale 1658, 19).

Candle provision for funerals was one of the most popular bequests of late medieval wills, and it is unsurprising, given the religious and demographic trends of the later fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that candles for funerals and obits were a source of considerable potential income (Sapoznik 2019, 1156-57). Thus at Abingdon (Oxfordshire) in 1396 the monks petitioned the pope regarding the ancient custom by which they obtained the wax for the funerals of parishioners of the local church who were buried in the monastery's cemetery, including one candle

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<sup>6</sup> CUL EDC Sacrist 18 (45 Edward III).

<sup>7</sup> The cellarer was allowed to re-use the candles from the tables for a corona near the chandelier (Kitchin 1886 32).

per person and a quarter penny, and all of the oblations offered for the obits (Snape 1968, 85). In a similar manner in the mid-fifteenth century the friar John Bredon spoke against the attempts of the monks at the cathedral church of Coventry to take for themselves the wax used in parishioners' funerals, noting instead that the unused wax from the candles which had lit the way to the burial should be reserved for the use of the parish church where the person was buried, or at for least those who had been involved in administering the sacraments to the deceased – a group which did not, apparently, include the brethren (Meyers 1996, 687).

The re-use of old wax was common across all types of religious foundation.<sup>8</sup> The feretrars of the shrine to St Etheldreda at Ely Cathedral made separate entries for incomes from wax and money. In 1421/2 the shrine keepers sold 64 lbs (29 kg) of wax to pilgrims for 21s. 4d. at a rate of 4d. per pound. The following year they sold 174 lbs (79 kg) again for 4d. per pound.<sup>9</sup> Given that the cathedral bought wax at a rate of 3.45d. per pound including transport and manufacture of candles that year, the cathedral was making just over a half penny per pound of wax, which would have accounted for about 8s. for the total amount of wax sold that year – in the grand scheme of cathedral expenses, hardly an enormous moneymaking activity. Yet as has been seen, wax candles were rarely burnt all the way down to the end. That the cathedral was reforming old wax into new candles is indicated from further entries in the feretrars' accounts, in which only the cost of manufacture is listed, usually at between 1.5-2d. per pound. If the cathedral was in fact selling a proportion of the wax more than once, the profit margins may have been substantial indeed. Moreover, shrines also attracted large numbers of wax votives and candles brought from outside the cathedral precincts which could then be put back into circulation within the wax economy (Acta Sanctorum 48 1765, 594-95; Nilson 1998, 108).

Although the wax used by institutions of varying sizes was most often obtained through cash purchases, it could also be acquired through rents in kind. Here, the churchwarden's accounts of St Dunstan's Canterbury (Kent) are instructive. In 1490 rents of 0.25 lbs (0.11 kg) were owed for three tenements and a half pound of wax (0.23 kg) for two tenements, all of which were valued at 8d/lb. Such nominal amounts must have represented only a small portion of the rents owed overall, and were likely more symbolic gestures in support of the church and its mission, than providing a significant proportion of the wax used in a year – that same year the church purchased 31 lbs (14 kg) of new torch wax for 10s. 4d., to be added to 10

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<sup>8</sup> Examples of re-using wax are ubiquitous. As examples, in 1394 New College Oxford bought 76 lbs of old wax for 5.5d/lb (new wax cost the college 6.75d/lb that year); in 1445/6 Westminster Abbey paid the London wax chandler William Broke £41 3s 6d for new wax and for making candles from old wax and subsequent years note the labour for re-making wax was paid at a rate of 0.5d/lb - the same rate paid by Magdalene College Oxford in the late fifteenth century. It is clear that huge amounts of old wax were available for re-forming, such as the 451 lbs of old wax made into candles in 1453/5 at a cost of 21s 3.5d (New College Box 24 7342 (18-19 Richard II); Westminster Abbey Muniments 19695, 19702, 19703, 19074; Magdalene College libri compoti 1481/2 f.9v). This also occurred in smaller institutions, such as at St Edmund's, Salisbury, where 70 lbs of old wax were put toward the rood light in 1543/4 (Cox 1913, 54).

<sup>9</sup> CUL EDC 1/F/11/1-2 (Freretrars rolls); the price increased over time and reached 6d/lb by the later fifteenth century: CUL EDC 1/F/20 (1492).

lbs of old wax for 10d (Cowper 1885, 297-99).<sup>10</sup> Yet just because these rents were relatively small did not mean they were unimportant, as the church's pursuit of six years of back payments for wax rents from its tenant Jeffrey Peke shows. The itemised list of court costs amounted to 23d. (almost six days' work for an agricultural labourer) to receive the 3 lbs owed for rents of a half pound per year. It was apparently not uncommon for these rents to be paid reluctantly or not at all: in 1490, rent arrears were noted for two further tenements, one of whom, Richard Larkyn, was recorded as owing ten years of wax rents valued at 20d by 1500. Large institutions, too, could charge payments in wax, such as 4 lbs (1.8 kg) received in 1429 as forfeiture «from the tenants within the gate» at Christ Church Canterbury, valued at 2s or 6d/lb (Cowper 1885, 312; Woodruff 1936, 55).

### 2.3

However wax entered the institutions, it became part of a circular economy to be made, burned, re-formed, and burned again, circulating constantly through different hands and offices, bought, sold, and bought again, at each stage every re-weighed pound scrupulously accounted for. The care and attention given to the maintenance of wax, the provision of precisely weighed candles, the collection of melted wax and burnt ends all demonstrate the ways in which wax was a meaningful medium of exchange within religious institutions and, via rents in kind and pious bequests, entwined the laity into these internal networks of exchange.

The accounts from England are rich sources for understanding the institutional contexts for this circular economy of wax and offering detailed serial information for annual wax purchases. Nonetheless they rarely provide the serial information necessary to fully understand the circuits of consumption and use in their entirety. In contrast to this, the accounts of the confraternity of the *Laudesi* of Orsanmichele in Florence are among the most detailed extant documents to record the use of wax and its movement through an institution and offer unparalleled insight into this practice.

### 3.

In mid-March of 1365 two men, Francesco di Boccio and Franceschino Pepi, audited the accounts of the wax used by the lay confraternity known as the *Compagnia dei Laudesi* of Orsanmichele in Florence.<sup>11</sup> The result of their work, in

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<sup>10</sup> Wax rents were also found in more rural settings, where again they were often small, such as the candle rents at Flintham (Nottinghamshire) in the fourteenth century: The National Archives (TNA) WARD 2/60/234. Although it should be noted that while small in terms of the amount needed annually, a half-pound of wax was substantial in terms of household production and the environmental constraints on bee productivity in England: Sapoznik 2019, 1170; Sapoznik forthcoming.

<sup>11</sup> Archivio di Stato di Firenze (ASF), Congregazioni Religiosi Sopprese (CRS), Capitani di Orsanmichele (OSM) 227, f. 3v (14-3-1365). Reference works about the confraternity (funded in 1291)

only half a folio, provides a clear picture of the amount of wax that had been funneled into the institution, and of the complexity of its management. The auditors stated that during the preceding accounting year, which started on 20 April 1364, all the wax gathered from the oratory which the confraternity ran in the grain market, the Loggia del Grano, accounted for 4,366 libbre (lbs). Furthermore, the guilds of Florence had made offerings amounting to 775 lb of wax. The institution had also bought another 1,610 lb for unspecified uses. These 6,751 lb correlate with the amount of wax Orsanmichele had sold during that same period in the form of candles (6,166 lb), and for the masses and the liturgical services that featured the vernacular sacred singing before the image of the Virgin, or *laude* (428 lb) (Wilson 1989). All of the wax sold or used totaled 6,594 lb. The difference between the income and the outcome of wax – 157 lb – was kept by the treasurer. This snapshot of a given year indicates that the confraternity sought to balance the amounts of wax entering and leaving the institution, and that their aim was to compensate the everyday expense of this product with the oblations made in the oratory, in addition to raising extra revenues. With the aid of several extant ledgers, the following paragraphs analyze this accounting system, in which cash was mostly substituted by the flow of wax. The focus is the 1350s and 1360s, from which a set of these books are under custody of the Archivio di Stato di Firenze.

### 3.1

By the early fourteenth century, the confraternity of Orsanmichele had become the main distributor of alms to the poor in Florence, and the popular cult which had developed around its sculpture of the Madonna received offerings of votive wax in massive quantities. Most of this wax was supplied directly on-site by the confraternity itself.<sup>12</sup> Accounts corresponding to the candles sold in the oratory of Orsanmichele have been preserved for the period from September 1352 to December 1365 (although with a two-year gap between July 1362 and 1364). These provide 1,461 different entries, which indicate the reception of bundles (*mazzetti*) by Orsanmichele, which probably contained 80 slim candles of about 4 gr each.<sup>13</sup>

The candles were acquired from the chandlers in the city by the main officers of the confraternity, the treasurer (*camarlengò*) or the syndic, and were afterwards handed to the individual in charge of selling them. This officer (the *messò*) was

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and its oratory in the market of Orsanmichele are: La Sorsa (1902), Finiello Zervas (1996a, 1996b and 2015), Henderson (1997 196-237) and D'Aguanno Ito (2024).

<sup>12</sup> As was common at other institutions such as the cathedral of the city (Fabbri 2002, 15). The candles and votive images sold in the sanctuary of the Santa Casa in Loreto near Ancona also yielded large revenues in the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries (Moroni 2016).

<sup>13</sup> We do not have direct evidence of the composition of each of these bundles. Nonetheless, if we take into account that thin candles produced in the city (*candele de due denari*) could typically weigh 4 gr, and that on average each bundle purchased from the apothecaries weighed 318 gr, it can be suggested that the bundles contained 80 pieces each (ASF, CRS, OSM 222 and 227). In 1353, the guild in which the chandlers were organized (*medici e speziali*) banned the production of candles weighing less than 2 gr each. Labelled as *candele derratale*, the consuls of the guild could decide the minimum weight every year (Ciasca 1922, 244). See also Shaw and Welch (2011, 168) which supports these estimates.

Francesco di Lora between 1352 and 1355 (Finiello Zervas 1996a, 39-40, doc. 33), and from that date on Chiaro Benvenuto (a man of the same name would become treasurer in the 1380s). They stored the candles in a *fondachetto* or shop inside the loggia.<sup>14</sup> The candles were put in baskets on a sales counter (*descho*) in front of the oratory for the public to buy.<sup>15</sup> Worshippers left their coins in an alms box (*cassette*), grabbed a few candles, and lit them before the sacred images.<sup>16</sup>

### 3.1.1

During the fourteen years between 1352 and 1365 at least 32 different apothecaries (*speziale*) were involved in the candle supply to the confraternity. Most of these provided less than the equivalent of 200 kg of wax in small candles and appear only in a single year.

However, nine individuals were more proactive in their relation with the institution and were each responsible for providing 400 kg of wax or more.<sup>17</sup> Two of these, Giorgio da Michele and Bernardo Salvini, are documented over the entire period, with the exception of 1364 and 1365, for which the ledgers do not list the names of apothecaries who had provided the candles. These two men brought 6,677 and 5,770 kg of candles to the institution respectively. In 1358 alone, Da Michele manufactured a total of 1,752 kg which were sent to the Capitani.

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<sup>14</sup> ASF, OSM 222, f. 8r (28-10-1353). Nevertheless, a statute of the confraternity issued in 1333 mentions that a bottega or shop was *under* the loggia (La Sorsa 1902, 195). Indicatively, many of the wax manufacturers and sellers of the city had their shops around Orsanmichele by the mid-fourteenth century (Ciasca 1927, 45). Orsanmichele's *fondachetto* was described as the *fondachetto delle masseritie* (commodities) by the 1390s, probably a reference to the goods left as bequests to the confraternity and that were subsequently sold at auction: ASF, CRS, OSM 231.

<sup>15</sup> ASF, CRS, OSM 222, f. 8r (28-10-1353); OSM, CRS, 230, f. 1r (1377).

<sup>16</sup> ASF, CRS, OSM 224, s.f. (25-6-1360).

<sup>17</sup> Among these, we find the shop of Ugolino di Vieri near the Basilica of Santo Spirito (this was likely not the famous Sienese goldsmith that worked in Florence, but a contemporary of his) and an apothecary nicknamed *il Papa*. The former was *consoli* of the guild of doctors and spice sellers by 1350 (Ciasca 1927, 718). About the latter apothecary, see Zazzeri (2003, 209). Of all the suppliers of wax, the sources give the workplace of several of them: Ponte Vecchio (2), Santo Spirito (2), Corte Nuova (1), San Pietro (1), the Ferrivechchi (1) and San Niccolò (1).

Tab. 1. The candle supply to the oratory of Orsanmichele, 1352-1365<sup>a</sup>

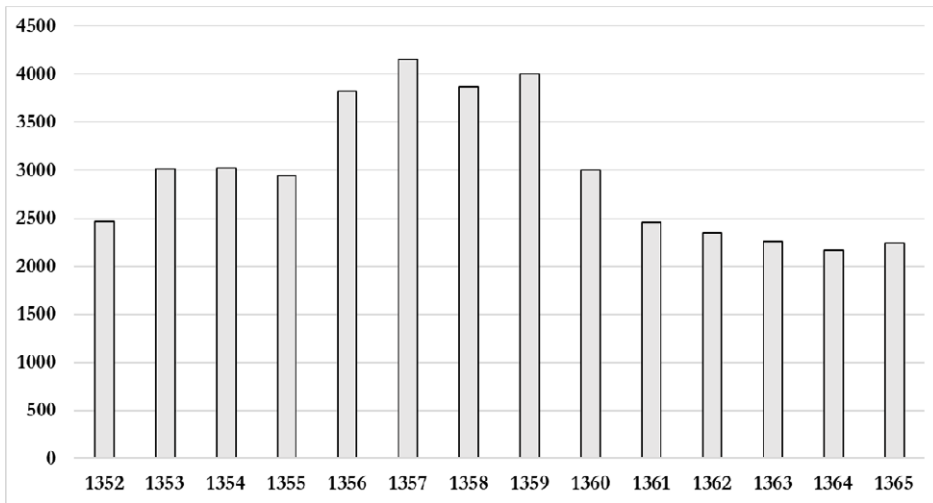
Year	Giorgio da Michele	Bernardo Salvin	Salvestro di Nanni <sup>b</sup>	Tanuccio Barone	Andrea di Francescho	Lucha delle Chiavi	Benogo di Segarido	Piero Sinibaldi	Il Papa	Others	no information	Totals
1352 <sup>c</sup>	87.1 (149.8)	187.8 (287)	375 (568.5)							25.6 (19.3)	146.5 (220)	822 (1,244.5)
1353	381.7 (598.5)	351.1 (520.5)	588.9 (909)							508.5 (788.6)	1,207 (1,839.3)	3,017.2 (4,705.9)
1354	338.9 (513.5)	50 (79)	455.4 (689)							76.4 (113)	2,106 (3,302.5)	3,024.7 (4,697)
1355	451.2 (729.5)	543.4 (963.5)	909.1 (1,564.5)					223.7 (409.5)		218.9 (374.5)	603.6 (1,048.3)	2,947.9 (5,119.8)
1356	277 (439.4)	381.5 (597)	432.6 (669.5)					202 (312)		240.1 (375.5)	2,292.8 (3,573)	3,826 (5,966.4)
1357	895.2 (1,384)	493 (759.8)	515.7 (817)	1,187 (1,915.5)						52.6 (82.4)	1,007 (1,679.5)	4,150.5 (6,638.1)
1358	1,752 (2,837.7)	676.1 (1,065.5)	1,633.9 (323.7)	693.4 (1,093.9)						376.7 (603.9)	208.9 (320.5)	3,871 (6,245.2)
1359	1,260 (2,032)	747.6 (1,184.7)	67.8 (105.5)	6.5 (11.5)	955.4 (1,547)	473.1 (759.6)	255.1 (407)			226.9 (371)	4.6 (8.5)	3,997 (6,426.8)
1360	698.2 (1,056.5)	662.6 (1,078.5)		403 (569)	633.7 (1,008.5)	173.5 (312)	207.7 (386)			297.6 (576)	6.8 (10.5)	3,003.1 (5,012.5)
1361	363.9 (587)	803.9 (1,369.5)		618.8 (1,008)	632.8 (1,070)			36.1 (60)				2,455.5 (4,094.5)
1362	264 (474.5)	893.1 (1,623.75)			907.3 (1,612)					175.5 (326)	115 (211.5)	2,354.9 (4,247.8)
1364 <sup>d</sup>											1,624.1 (2,912.5)	1,624.1 (2,912.5)
1365											2,245.5 (3,960.5)	2,245.5 (3,960.5)
Totals	6,677.2 (10,832.3)	5,770.1 (9,328.7)	3,508.4 (5,646.7)	2,908.7 (4,597.9)	2,173.8 (3,690.5)	955.4 (1,547)	646.4 (1,071.6)	498.9 (853)	435.9 (737)	2,196.8 (3,613.1)	11,567.8 (19,136.5)	37,339.4 (61,271.3)

a Kg of wax (currency: lire). Showing those 9 *pranzole* that sold over 400 lb during the ten years. <sup>b</sup> In Chorte Nuova (Borgo Aguesanti). <sup>c</sup> from September to December. <sup>d</sup> from March to December.



In total, the impressive quantity of 42 tons of candles could have been sold in their stand during those 14 years, which would equal a volume of c. 43.7 m<sup>3</sup>. In the years that are documented, sales of wax yielded a gross revenue of 61,271 lire for the confraternity.<sup>18</sup> For comparative purposes, this would have paid all the daily wages of 24 skilled laborers during those 14 years (Goldthwaite 1982, 436).

**Graph 1. Amount of wax sold as candles at the oratory of Orsanmichele, 1352-1365 (in Kg)\***



\* Note to the graph: The figures for 1352 have been interpolated from the accounts corresponding to only 4 months.

On average 3,040 kg of wax was sold each year, peaking in the late 1350s with 4150.5 kg in 1357, with perhaps a declining tendency observed from 1360

<sup>18</sup> The selling of candles, along with the donations in kind and the participation of the company in the municipal public debt, raised profits that allowed the confraternity to accomplish its religious and charitable duties, along with financing notable pieces of art for the Loggia, such as Bernardo Daddi's panel of the Virgin (1347) and Andrea Orcagna's tabernacle that enshrined the image (1352-1359) (Cassidy 1988; 1992; Finiello Zervas 1996, v. 2, 94-95; Henderson 1997, 208-18). However, not all confraternities were as popular or successful in the strategy of selling candles. The confraternity of Gesù Pellegrino also sold small candles in its own oratory so the parishioners could light them during the masses and leave them before the crucifix. See, respectively ASF, CRS, Gesù Pellegrino, 918.34, f. 81r (3-7-1351); f. 42r (19-6-1351). Between November 1343 and February 1352, the confraternity sold only an estimated 74 kg of wax (raising 88 l). In 1343 (with data from 2 months) the company of Gesù Pellegrino sold 1.19 kg in candles (worth 1 l); 1344: 9.01 kg, 8 l; 1345: 11.4 kg, 10 l; 1346: 10.04 kg, 11 l; 1347: 9.06 kg, 8 l; 1348 (9 months, data from summer is lacking likely due to consequences of the pestilence): 5.6 kg, 7 l; 1349 (10 months): 5.6 kg, 8 l; 1350 (6 months): 5.8 kg, 11 l; 1351: 14.8 kg, 21 l; 1352 (2 months): 1.4 kg, 2 l. See ASF, CRS, Gesù Pellegrino, 918.34.

onwards.<sup>19</sup> These very large quantities indicate the success of the oratory in the city and its region (Migliore, 1684, 535). The confraternity's wax strategy was thus fueling the local economy, not only for the dealers in wax, but also the painters who decorated some of the candles (Ciasca 1927, 68; Finiello Zervas 1996a, 92, doc. 193), string makers and cotton dealers who sold the wicks, and the porters who transported the wax through the city. Unfortunately, because the chandlers tended to provide a unified price to their larger clients, often even discounting the cost of wicks from the overall price, these other sectors are rarely mentioned in the sources.<sup>20</sup>

### 3.2

Most of this wax was sold in the form of small candles of c. 4 gr each. Given that some 42 tons of wax were sold here, this implies that more than 10 million candles were lit in front of the image of the Virgin in these 14 years. The pace of candle selling varied greatly throughout the year. This can be calculated since the sales ledgers include both the dates when the candles arrived at the stand, and when they had been monetized (sold) and paid back to the treasurer. For example, during the first trimester of 1357 – which included Candlemas (2 February) and the Annunciation (25 March), the major feasts of the Virgin – an average of 1,200 candles were sold and presumably lit, per day. This was the most active and candle-intensive period of the year. In the second trimester an average of 870 candles were used per day, in the third 780, and in the fourth 760.<sup>21</sup> This required an efficient system put in place by the confraternity, in charge not only of collecting the stubs and the remnants once the worshippers had left, but also of persistently cleaning the site given the great amounts of dripped wax that covered the facilities.<sup>22</sup>

The candle seller was supposed to transfer the money obtained from the sales of the candles as soon as possible, but this was sometimes not so swiftly accomplished (La Sorsa 1902, 85). On 9 November 1352, the sale of 440 bundles of candles yielded 220 l., of which 155 l. were given to the institution in less than two weeks.<sup>23</sup> But the remaining 65 l. – or perhaps the candles themselves – were

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<sup>19</sup> Similarly, Finiello Zervas (1996b, v.2, 81-82) has calculated that in 1349 on average c.77,000 candles were sold monthly ( $\approx$  300 kg per month, or 3,700 kg annually.).

<sup>20</sup> Chandlers thus prevented their clientele from resorting to the self-production of wax candles (Sales i Favà and Vela 2022, 191).

<sup>21</sup> ASF, CRS, OSM 222, f. 22r-f. 25v. The *due feste di nostra Donna*, referring to the feasts of the Purification and the Annunciation are also noted (ASF, CRS, OSM, 253, f. 44r (2-1-1356)).

<sup>22</sup> The many candles hanging from the ceiling and walls has traditionally been held responsible for, as the responsible for the fire that destroyed the Loggia and an adjacent building in 1304 (Franceschini, 1892, 13; Ciasca 1927, 47-48). It was common to hire personnel to scratch off the wax to collect it for re-use. In the late sixteenth century, the city guilds brought boys to the processions to pick up the dripping wax from the torches (Bernardi 2000, 234). Drip pans in the Oratory of Orsanmichele were also used for this purpose (Finiello Zervas 1996a, 166, doc. 407).

<sup>23</sup> In two different instalments by the 24th and the 25th of that month: ASF, CRS, OSM, 222, f. 2r (9-11-1352).

kept by the salesman as his salary.<sup>24</sup> Other premodern institutions in the western Mediterranean are also known to have paid part of their salaries in wax to the officers.<sup>25</sup>

Once in their hands, the parishioners would light these thin candles in front of the image of the Madonna. The parishioners also carried other wax objects such as votive images, and larger and fancier candles with them, purchased from chandlers, and apothecaries, or from external stands. The amounts and types of products placed in the oratory, as discussed below, is a clear evidence of this practice. But by 1375 the guild of the doctors and spice sellers, under which the wax dealers were organized, would finally ban all men or women from selling any type of wax in the square or under the Loggia of Orsanmichele (Ciasca 1922, 289).<sup>26</sup>

### 3.3

Two different extant ledgers include the accounts for the oblations left in wax, and perhaps also the wax that had only partially burned in front of the tabernacle. This was all known as the *tratta di cera*.<sup>27</sup> The accounts correspond to the period April 1360 to February 1366, providing 496 entries with a total volume of wax of c. 11,693 kg distributed as follows: in 1360, 1,859 kg (9 months); 1361, 2,291 kg; 1362, 2,081 kg; 1363, 1,854 kg; 1364, 1,603 kg (10 months); 1365, 1,893 kg; 1366, 112 kg (2 months). All of this valuable wax was explicitly collected by command of the treasurer and under close surveillance of the *proposto* of the oratory or the capitani of the confraternity.<sup>28</sup>

Most of it was left by individuals carrying small *moccoli* (tapers) and votive images (none of which can yet be described).<sup>29</sup> But some 21% of this wax (2,413

<sup>24</sup> ASF, CRS, OSM 222, f. 3v (28-12-1352). Something similar would occur with a payment made to Tadeo di Mone in February 1353: ASF, CRS, OSM 222, f. 5r (11-2-1353).

<sup>25</sup> One distant but clear example is the *ración* or stipend of 353 kg of wax (rendered in torches) given to the butler of Prince Phillip of Spain between 1539 and 1547. See Archivo General de Simancas (AGS), Sitios Reales, Legajo 74, *Libro de la cera que se gasta en servicio del Príncipe nuestro señor*, f. 108v. Other officers were paid in wax in that same setting (see e.g. payments in wax made by the house of Queen Juana of Castile in 1511 to her officials. AGS, Sitios Reales, Legajo 13, *Cuenta de gastos de la casa de la Reina Doña Juana*, f. 5v-6r).

<sup>26</sup> Other sites in Italy, such as the sanctuary of the Santa Casa in Loreto also forbade unauthorized chandlers from selling candles in their facilities in the late fifteenth century. There, the local authorities were also active in taxing the trade of votive images and in regulating the manufacturing standards (Moroni 2016).

<sup>27</sup> ASF, CRS, OSM 224 and 227.

<sup>28</sup> ASF, CRS, OSM 224, s. f. (13-4-1363 and 27-5-1363). The high value of wax did not go unnoticed. In 1367 Sandro del Rosso, official of the confraternity in charge of lighting the candles, was accused of having stolen 1 lb of entire – ie. not burned- *candele minute* which were subsequently found inside his bag. One way to prevent the thefts was to place two officials who controlled each other onsite. This burglary took place in less than an hour, the time during when his colleague was away having dinner. According to the captains, who fined him with 100 l. or the seizure of his house, this was not the first time he had been caught stealing candles (Finiello Zervas 1996a, 63, doc. 93).

<sup>29</sup> A single image left in August 1360 weighed 4.1 kg. ASF, CRS, OSM 224, s. f. (2-8-1360). About the full-body wax images that stood in the oratory, see Migliore (1684, 535).

kg) were institutional oblations, provided by the different guilds of the city to the Madonna of Orsanmichele, exclusively in the form of larger *torchietti*. They brought these on the patron saint day of each guild (e.g. the blacksmiths made their oblation on Saint Eligius, 25 June). All seven major guilds and the minor twelve were active in this practice, as part of their corporate patronage towards Orsanmichele. Each one of these candles contained on average 160 gr (Shaw and Welch 2011, 182, note 56).<sup>30</sup> This is valid for all guilds except for three of the major ones (the merchants of Calimala, the money changers, and the notaries and judges), who repeatedly offered slightly larger *torchietti*, weighting c. 240 gr each. Over the period under study on each guild gave average some 19 kg of wax to the confraternity (Fahye Stanley 2011, 144).<sup>31</sup>

Taking advantage of the wax left behind was a common practice in the city. In the Baptistry of San Giovanni, the Opera or fabric was controlled by the merchant's guild of Calimala. Here, all candles and votive images (along with silk cloths) left by the worshippers were gathered by the institution's officials and reintroduced into the market. The revenues were thus used as a means of financing the enhancement of the building. Although the data preserved for San Giovanni is meager, we know that at the feast of Saint John in 1336 alone, the wax left as oblations weighed some 1,200 kg (Fabbri 2017, 78-80). In that same decade, the Opera of the cathedral of Siena was able to collect c. 3,750 kg of wax per year from the candles found there (Giorgi and Moscadelli 2005, 171; 180; 341).

### 3.4

This system takes us back at Orsanmichele with the reuse and the recycling of wax that had previously been collected in the oratorio.<sup>32</sup> In the first case, the accounts indicate that the treasurer issued a relatively small amount of candles and wax for different liturgical acts that took place both inside and outside the oratory: in 1360 131.5 kg<sup>33</sup> were issued; in 1361 83 kg; in 1362 113.5 kg; in 1363 84.3 kg; in 1364 159.2 kg; in 1365 147.3 kg; and in 1366 19.4 kg.<sup>34</sup> The main example of the reuse of wax are the sets of candles (weighing on average 8 kg in total) that were taken to many different churches of the city (Santo Spirito, San Romolo, Santa Croce, Santa Maria Novella, San Piero Scheraggio, San Lorenzo, San Giulio, San Marco, Sant'Apollinare, Ognissanti, Santa Maria del Carmine, San Simone, San Michele Visdomini, Santa Felicità, Santa Maria degli Ughi, Santa Margherita, San

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<sup>30</sup> Every year the consuls of the wool guild decided the weight of the candle that was to be donated (Finiello Zervas 1996a, 20-21, doc. 4; 113, doc. 257).

<sup>31</sup> According to La Sorsa (1902, 81-85, 219-220), the guilds also offered large amounts of wax to the oratory feast of Saint Anne. See note 48.

<sup>32</sup> As stated in ASF, CRS, OSM 224, s. f. (1360): «Uscita di cera fatta per Bartolomeo di Ruchbo Savini [the treasurer], salvo che quella che si da agli speciali per fare candele per la compagnia.»

<sup>33</sup> Includes only April-December.

<sup>34</sup> Includes only January and February.

Niccolò) to celebrate the masses of the Captains of Orsanmichele.<sup>35</sup> The *nesso* was the officer in charge of transferring the wax. With the shipment of medium-sized candles<sup>36</sup> and *torchiotti*, the confraternity was actively contributing to the spreading of wax throughout the city. Once burned, the leftover wax was collected by these institutions.<sup>37</sup>

Similar candles were also used onsite, lit during the *laude* that were sung in the vigils of different patron saints' days at the oratory,<sup>38</sup> whilst larger *cerotti* (c. 340 gr each) or *giunte* (850 gr) were placed on chandeliers or torches by a body of officers, who are generally named in the accounts.<sup>39</sup> On these occasions the smallest candles were given *a mano* to the worshippers.<sup>40</sup> Taking into account the high cost of wax in the Florentine market, the splendid illumination in candles of these routine acts appears extravagant, and this contributed greatly to the reputation of Orsanmichele.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> ASF, CRS, OSM 224, s. f. (18-5-1360); (18-1-1361); (29-7-1360); (16-9-1360); (19-11-1360); (21-9-1361); (3-12-1361); (24-7-1362); (17-9-1362); (15-3-1363); OSM 227, f. 49v (17-9-1364); 50r (18-11-1364); 50r (20-1-1365); f.51r (21-3-1365); f. 51v (17-7-1365), f. 52r (19-11-1365). Brendan Cassidy (1992, 191) has explained that since Orsanmichele was not a church «the compagnia established a network of connections to the priests and churches of the city to serve its sacramental needs».

<sup>36</sup> Labeled as *candele grosse* and weighing 25 gr or 33 gr.

<sup>37</sup> The chapels and altars controlled by the Capitani in other sites also received wax, such as their altar in the Hospital of Montelupo in the contado of Florence. See ASF, CRS, OSM 224, s. f. (2-9-1360). The abbot of the convent of Montescalari, also in the contado, received also some candles from Orsanmichele as an annual gift (*abette*), both from the confraternity itself and the guilds: ASF, CRS, OSM 224, s. f. (20-4-1360). Wax was used in these cases as a means of gaining territorial control and prestige for the confraternity.

<sup>38</sup> As one example, the 1.4 kg in candles used in the *laude* during the vigil of Saint Luke in 1360: ASF, CRS, OSM 224, s. f. (17-10-1360). Although it seems that ordinary *laudes* were sung every evening, we do not know if there was any candle lighting in these occasions (La Sorsa 1902, 196).

<sup>39</sup> ASF, CRS, OSM 224, s. f. (23-6-1360). The 1333 statute of the confraternity states that the Madonna had to be kept under a veil, and that every time she was uncovered (on Sundays, other feasts, or at specific request by someone), two candles had to be lit (La Sorsa 1902, 202).

<sup>40</sup> ASF, CRS, OSM 224, s. f. (23-5-1360 and 29-7-1360).

<sup>41</sup> Not all the confraternities of the city were able to use or to exchange the wax left as oblations for their own purposes. During the 1340s and 1350s, the confraternity of Gesù Pellegrino was driven to the market in pursuit of *torche*, *candele minute* and *grosse*. In November 1345 c. 200 gr of wax were bought in order to fix a torch that was lit in the precise moment when the Host was raised during the Eucharist (*per raconciatura d'un torchio che s'accende quando si lieva i signiore*). The amounts of wax bought here are dwarfed by the ones presented above for Orsanmichele. In 1343 (with data from 2 months) the treasurer of Gesù Pellegrino purchased 1.02 kg (worth 18 s. 11 d.); 1344: 11.6 kg, 153 s. 4 d.; 1345: 11.2 kg, 193 s. 1 d.; 1346: 5.5 kg, 110 s. 2 d.; 1347 (10 months): 3.4 kg, 67 s. 8 d.; 1348: 8.04 kg, 192 s. 8 d.; 1349 (7 months): 3.7 kg, 112 s. 6 d.; 1350 (6 months): 5,9 kg, 215 s. 10 d.; 1351: 19.5 kg, 563 s. 10 d.; 1352 (1 month): 0.7 kg, 60 s. 9 d. The recourse to the *free* market left the institution subject to the oscillations of the prices of wax, which escalated in the period under study. By 1344, wax was purchased in Florence at an average price of 13 s. 2 d./kg, and in 1350 it almost tripled to 36 s. 10 d. kg. Given the high prices, the treasurer of the institution must have been eager to barter the leftover wax and the oblations for new candles, as in January 1348, when candles were purchased and also bartered for tapers: *uno resto di chandele che baratamo a mocholi*. Alternatively, as occurred in most ecclesiastical institutions, tallow candles and oil were used, not only for illuminating the facilities, but in some liturgical contexts such as alongside crucifixes and images. Tallow was substantially cheaper than wax and was hence used to alleviate the institutions' expenses. In 1344 Florence, tallow candles

### 3.4.1

Most of the wax that was recovered in the oratory or offered as oblations was sent to apothecaries who would render it into the initial *candele minute*, charging only the manufacturing costs and not for the material itself, since it was the confraternity who had provided it. Only one ledger for the chronology under study gives an account of this stage of the process. The data available in this case runs from March 1364 to February 1366, during which c. 5,350 kg of wax were sent to the apothecaries, who returned 5,236.6 kg of candles.<sup>42</sup> Amongst the latter we still find Bernardo Salvini, and Francesco da Michele, likely a descendent of Giorgio da Michele.<sup>43</sup>

Between 1364 and 1366 six different apothecaries of Florence received wax regularly.<sup>44</sup> They mostly took *moccoli* and torches that had entered the circuit through bequests, but also white wax and images of other origins. The melting and the manufacturing of each type needed different skills. *Cera nuova* was the easiest to melt and remodel, and consequently its manufacturing was the cheapest, at 15 d./lb. Processing the predominant smeared *moccoli* was much more expensive at 22 d./lb. In the end, the production of candles made with 5,236.6 kg of wax between 1364 and 1366 cost 1,055 l. The chandlers produced the candles and, to come full circle, these were sent back again to the confraternity, who would sell them.

Given the patchy nature of the extant data, we can only calculate the gross profit of the wax circuit for 1365. The amount earned from the sales of candles that year had reached 3,960.5 l. and the cost of recycling wax was 579 l. It can be seen that the system put in motion by Orsanmichele was yielding profit margins of 85%.<sup>45</sup> With the decline of popular devotion at the oratory in the last quarter of the fourteenth century (in a period of intrusiveness of the local government into the financial policies of the confraternity, and of accusations of corruption towards the Capitani) (Henderson 1997, 218-227), these extraordinary figures diminished. Between March and December of 1391 only one workshop was selling to the Capitani a total of 37 *doppiari*, 244 *cerotti*, 14 *giunte* and 234 bundles of *candele grosse* weighing 445 kg.<sup>46</sup> Both *doppiari* (double-branched candles) and *cerotti* were placed

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cost 60% less (5 s. 1 d./kg) than those made of wax, while in 1350 their price was 80% cheaper (6 s. 7 d.). Still, for 1345, it has been calculated that the expenses of both wax and oil accounted for 25% of the budget of the company of Gesù Pellegrino. See Henderson (1997, 148) and ASF, CRS, Gesù Pellegrino 918.34.

<sup>42</sup> The difference was likely the result of spilling wax during the manufacturing process. Of the volume of candles returned, 4,425.7 kg were in the form of *candele minute*, 323.5 kg in larger candles, and 487.4 kg in unspecified pieces.

<sup>43</sup> Francesco da Michele also provided the confraternity with wax by 1377. See ASF, CRS, OSM 230.

<sup>44</sup> Giorgino de Giorgio produced candles weighing 3,307.5 kg in total (cost: 714 l); Francesco da Michele, 983.5 kg (192 l); Bernardo Salvini: 589.6 kg (138 l); Mateo di Ser Niello: 289 kg (47.5 l); Niccolò di Giovanni: 49 kg (6 l); Zanobi di Dofino: 17.7 kg (n.a.); ASF, CRS, OSM, 228 (1364-1366).

<sup>45</sup> Although this appears as a lucrative business, it is still far from Henderson's estimates for 1355-1357, likely an even more dynamic period for which the author asserted that candle selling in Orsanmichele produced 300% to 400% of profit (Henderson 1997, 215).

<sup>46</sup> Giorgino di Giorgio's workshop had likely been granted a monopoly to supply the oratory: ASF, CRS, OSM 231, f. 2v-3r (1391) and 49v (1391).

by the new altar of Saint Anne in the oratory, a cult of political significance.<sup>47</sup> The *giunte*, likely even thicker candles, were lit in front of the tabernacle. It appears evident that business had decayed.

### 3.5

At the height of its fame, the managers of the oratory of Orsanmichele ran a complex system combining wax recycling and candle production, to raise significant revenues. This sophisticated scheme employed, indirectly, several professionals who produced standardized types of candles and charged similar prices. Such an important amount of wax coming in meant that almost the only cash the oratory was required to pay was for manufacturing the candles, while the rest (salaries, the material itself, probably even the new candles needed for the liturgy) was bartered for wax.

In the fourteenth century, Orsanmichele became a symbol of communal charity at the centre of the guild strategy of the city as it sought to control civic and religious institutions. As the main economic means through which guilds and the wider population demonstrated their relationship with the company, wax and candles played an important role in this scheme. In this, the religious significance of wax translated into a means of payment which reinforced social and political relations in the city. The high price of wax and the value it retained with re-use combined with its necessity and symbolism to make it an optimal currency substitute.

## 4.

Given the value of wax in the later Middle Ages, the officers in charge of supplying it both to ecclesiastical and lay institutions were very careful in its accounting, noting its income and expenditure often in minute detail. This study has shown how tradition and written customaries were precise in determining the amount of this material to be provided, by whom and to whom. This latter aspect also indicates that candles were rarely burnt down to the ends – at least in their first use – and that the leftover wax and unused candle ends, easily re-melted and re-formed, were a valuable commodity. We have seen how multiple circuits of use and re-use existed, from the internal economies of larger institutions through which wax cycled through the hands of various officers, to closed circuits which also included external buyers. Thus, we have seen how institutions in both England and Italy profited not only from the sale of candles, but also from the collection of the remaining stubs which had themselves already been sold at least once to the parishioners. These and other practices, such as entries of wax in rents or as oblations, gifts between organizations, lowered the prices of the wax offered by the

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<sup>47</sup> The Duke Gualtieri di Brienne had been expelled from the local government on the day of Saint Anne 1343 after being accused of tyrannical rule (Henderson 1997, 205; Finiello Zervas 1996b, v. 2, 59).

institutions, allowed its use for all strata of society. The article has presented these two study cases, although the mechanisms put in motion are traceable throughout the Christendom in the period under scrutiny (e.g. Sales i Favà and Vela 2022; Sales i Favà, forthcoming for Iberia, Vincent 2004, 170-73 for France and Motsianos 2019 for Byzantium).

This *moral economy of wax* was fully possible in the case of larger institutions, which were capable of cutting expenses in varied ways. They became such important clients that they were able to reach agreements with chandlers through which, for example, wicks were discounted or only the manufacturing of candles was charged, but not the reused material. The desire to display wealth through wax candles had a further important consequence, because it meant that there were always used candle ends of various sizes for sale. This made wax affordable and accessible for both urban and rural poor – and for those who could not afford even this, it was well-known act of charity to provide wax candles for the impoverished.<sup>48</sup> The circular economy of wax allowed for the institutions to place candles at more affordable prices than the ‘free’ market, so that even the poorest could participate in these celebrations of civic and religious significance. Everyone could have access to some amount of wax for prominent religious festivals and in the celebrations of their own lifecycle: baptisms, weddings, and funerals. But the system varied over time. For instance, the decline in Orsanmichele’s popularity by the late fourteenth century has been noted, which must have reduced the capacity of the institution to place affordable candles amongst the urban lower classes. Still, institutions of all sizes reached a certain degree of circular economy. Smaller parishes, chapels or shrines were all vigilant of their burning candles. They reintroduced the smeared and smoked wax into the round-trip system with their own chandlers.<sup>49</sup>

Since the use of wax candles was predicated on religious practice, the extraordinary demand for wax likely reached its peak in the later Middle Ages, when demand across Europe was high due to a confluence of religious, economic and demographic factors. These facilitated the desire – which became necessity – for extravagant displays of light within religious contexts. The moral economy of wax, in which re-circulation and exchange allowed for popular engagement in acts of piety through wax candles, benefitted all levels of society. The extent of this benefit, in terms of economic practicality and religious sensibility, changed over time as markets, practice and belief also shifted.

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<sup>48</sup> For example, the enormous customary candle offered by the city of Dover to Canterbury Cathedral -the length of the city’s walls and kept wound around a large wheel -was made into candles for the funerals of the poor (Nilson 2001, 107); on funding the wax for paupers’ funerals at the collegiate church of Howden (Durham) 1497-1513 see Durham Cathedral Muniments 4.1 Ebor 56-60. Individual parishioners could also participate in similar mechanisms of wax dispersal as institutions: for example, Margaret Brafeld of Northampton left money in her will of 1487 for 13 torches to be burned on the anniversary of her death, with the leftover wax sent to various institutions for their use (Edwards 2005, 142).

<sup>49</sup> The recycling of wax persisted until the advent of paraffin candles in the twentieth century (Marquès 1959, 46; Closas i Mestre 2009, 17).



The constant re-cycling of wax may also have had broader market implications in medieval communities. On the one hand, the article has described how large institutions preferred to buy their wax from a handful of select chandlers – those with enough capacity to handle the enormous quantities with which these institutions dealt annually – and this likely concentrated wealth into the hands of a narrow group of large-scale chandlers. At the same time, however, the broader mechanisms through which wax was continually recycled and re-formed may also have acted as a brake on this concentration. We have seen that both old and new wax were used simultaneously. Much of this new wax was imported, meaning that the chandlers dealing in it needed to work through a supply chain which included merchants of long-distance trade and their factors. The constant flow of old wax alleviated some of the pressure on the supply of new wax, which would otherwise not have been sufficient to meet demand.<sup>50</sup> This in turn may have allowed a space for a wider array of wax-sellers, who were not necessarily keyed into privileged networks of exchange, but rather focused on smaller amounts of wax for sale to the general populace. In all of these ways we see again how wax candles, so vital to Christian religious devotion, were made affordable in late medieval economies.

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<sup>50</sup> The scale of this trade is currently under study as part of the project Bees in the Medieval World (forthcoming) but see also Sapoznik 2019 (Baltic trade) and Sapoznik 2021 (Maghrebi trade).

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Tim Soens, Cécile Bruyet

*Alternative food supplies, alternative currencies?  
Food deliveries by tenant farmers in the Late Medieval Low Countries*

### Alternative food supplies in late medieval cities<sup>1</sup>

In 1493 Meester Jan de Herdde leased his farm in Aartselaar to Peter de Schoesitter and his wife Katlinen vanden Loeke for a duration of twelve years. The farm, located about 10km from Antwerp, and named *de Hoeve te Hyselaer*, was comprised of 6.9 hectares (ha.) of land, field, pasture, and orchard. The annual rent was 9 pounds (lb.), one half to pay at the fair of St John in June, the other half at Christmas. But the tenant also had to pay 6 *sister* of rye (roughly 1743 litres), a fat lamb for Easter, and half of a fat castrated ram for the feast of the Assumption, a central holiday in the town of Antwerp. Last but not least, Jan also asked «on top of the rent, 2 *corven* of the best apples grown on the farm, irrespective whether some have grown on the farm or not.» The same year, Marie sMaechs, the widow of Reyners van Ursele (member of the political elite of Antwerp), with Meester Peter vander Voort, lawyer and member of the Council of Brabant, as warden, leased her farm named *tGoet der Houstraten* and her pasture named *den Rijbelaerts beemdt*, both in Herselt (about 40km from Antwerp) to Peteren Gheerts. For 6 years, Marie asked in exchange for the tenure of the farm 3 lb., 13 *sister* and 2 *muddeken* of rye (c. 4645 litres) to be delivered in mid-March. Additionally, the tenant had to bring 300 faggots of fire wood. Finally, again in 1493, Willem son of Aert, a fish seller, leased a farm named *de Hoeve ter Borchstraten* to Baven van Vorspoel and his wife Alijten Jan. This farm possessed 2.6 ha. and was located in Mortsel, 5km outside the city walls, and was leased for a duration of 9 years. The rent included 6 lb. and 20 *sister* of rye, that is 5810 litres of grain, to be delivered at Christmas. In the contract was specified that the owner kept the house with the orchard on the grounds for his own use.<sup>2</sup>

The arrangements of these fifteenth-century Antwerp leasehold contracts are striking for their combination of rents in cash and in kind. But how should we

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<sup>1</sup> The research leading to this article has received funding by the University of Antwerp Research Council TOPBOF Food from Somewhere project. We thank the anonymous reviewers for their suggestions, and dr. Kathleen Pribyl for suggesting several improvements. See also Soens 2019.

<sup>2</sup> City Archives Antwerp (CAA), SR 103, fol°154r; CAA, SR 103°198r; CAA, SR 103, fol°227r.

understand these deliveries of rye, wood or even apples? Are they some form of alternative currency, and if so all of them? Or should we rather interpret some deliveries as part of a symbolic exchange between landlord or tenant, which complemented the economic exchange of rent? Alternatively, we could hypothesize that the deliveries of food were part of more complex household provisioning systems, where food became in a way isolated from its purely monetary value. Finally, each contract displayed its own specificity. While Marie asked for a wood delivery, Jan seemed rather to look forward to eating apples from his lands beside receiving parts of his rent in kind throughout the year, and Willem was focused on receiving a large quantity of rye. Can we detect a form of agency on behalf of either the urban landlord or the rural tenant in stipulating the arrangements of the lease?

This contribution questions the importance of food deliveries by tenant farmers to urban landlords in the fifteenth-century Low Countries. We aim to understand when, where and for whom food was preferred as alternative currency, and whether this preference for food declined as cities grew and became more integrated in inter-regional food trades. The transition from demesne farming to leasehold is often seen as a powerful driver of monetarization and commercialisation of the rural economy (and hence food production). If the lease was expressed in cash, tenants were forced to market their surplus in order to pay the lease, except if stipulated otherwise. Moreover, the competitive character of short-term leasehold farming, also induced farmers to enhance their productivity, which could be achieved by scale-enlargement and specialisation. In the neo-marxist tradition of Robert Brenner, the emphasis is laid on the forced character of this process: in order to survive in the 'rat race' for leases, farmers were forced to innovate and specialize. In contrast, one could also stress that tenant farmers enjoyed a large degree of freedom in the exploitation of their farms, and hence could respond to market incentives. But the result was the same: leasehold farming is often associated with increased monetarization and commercialization (Soens, Thoen 2008).

At the same time however, the transition from demesne farming to leasehold did not stop direct supplies to the households of landlords in the later Middle Ages. Tenant farmers supplied their landlords with a variable range of foodstuffs and other products and services, ranging from an occasional fattened pig in autumn to substantial deliveries of cereals throughout the year. Sometimes this was stipulated in the leasehold contracts, but sometimes monetary leases were also (partly) paid for through in-kind deliveries. Such exchanges are best known for large farmers, and large landlords, and often framed in the elaboration of reciprocal ties between 'dynasties' of farmers in the countryside and increasingly urban-based landlords (Vervaeke 2012). Rather than stimulating a permanent competition for leases, ecclesiastical institutions and elite families had an evident interest in promoting a sustainable, long-term, relationship with their large tenants, which also acted as their 'agents' in the countryside. Large tenant farmers were often 'middlemen' between absentee landlords and the village community, collecting rents and tithes, mediating in the marketing of the rural surplus or credit transactions (Lambrecht 2003). Alternatively, a select number of tenant farms might be retained as 'food farms'. While most farmers paid their rent in cash, these food farms - often substantial holdings relatively close to the

seat of the household or institution - continued to ensure the provisioning of the household (with food, but also with firewood and transport services).

While the persistence of such in-kind deliveries is well documented, at least for ecclesiastical institutions, their importance as total food supplies is more difficult to assess, and so is their relationship to the market in food. Were such in-kind supplies a residual phenomenon, restricted to the world of elite and institutional households? Were they used as a true alternative currency, or did their value always refer to an intrinsic monetary value? As Matthieu Arnoux recently argued for late medieval Normandy, the persistence of rents and annuities in kind, was not an archaic relic of a cash-poor 'natural' economy, but could foster the commercialization and even the monetarization of the countryside, as the value of the rents was established at the grain market, the grain itself was traded on the market (or replaced market purchases), the counterpart of the rent was a cash loan and/or the rents-in-kind were traded as 'grain market derivatives' (Arnoux 2021).

Additionally, it is possible that not only extremely wealthy individuals sought out direct food supplies. As cities expanded, a variable, but often substantial share of the land in the immediate surroundings of the city was owned by urban-based landlords, both institutions – from churches and abbeys to hospitals and charitable foundations – and private households. The origins and importance of urban landownership on the countryside was highly different from region to region, but it tended to grow over time, in parallel to capital accumulation in towns. Seen primarily as capital investment – coined *La trahison de la Bourgeoisie* by Fernand Braudel (1949) – it has been mostly studied in terms of its monetary return on investment, and its impact on both wealth inequality and agrarian development. Both the extent and function of rural landownership by urban landlords might be very different from region to region, and from social group to social group. Part of the urban landownership might indeed originate as capital investment, but another part might originate from inheritances. Cities saw a constant influx of migrants from the countryside. Part of them might be landless and moving to the city to escape rural poverty, but others might have inherited at least some land from their parents and relatives, especially in regions of partible inheritance, which in the Low Countries remained the standard in the late medieval and early modern period (Van Bavel 2009). In each of these configurations, urban landownership always entailed the 'possibility' of direct food deliveries to urban households.

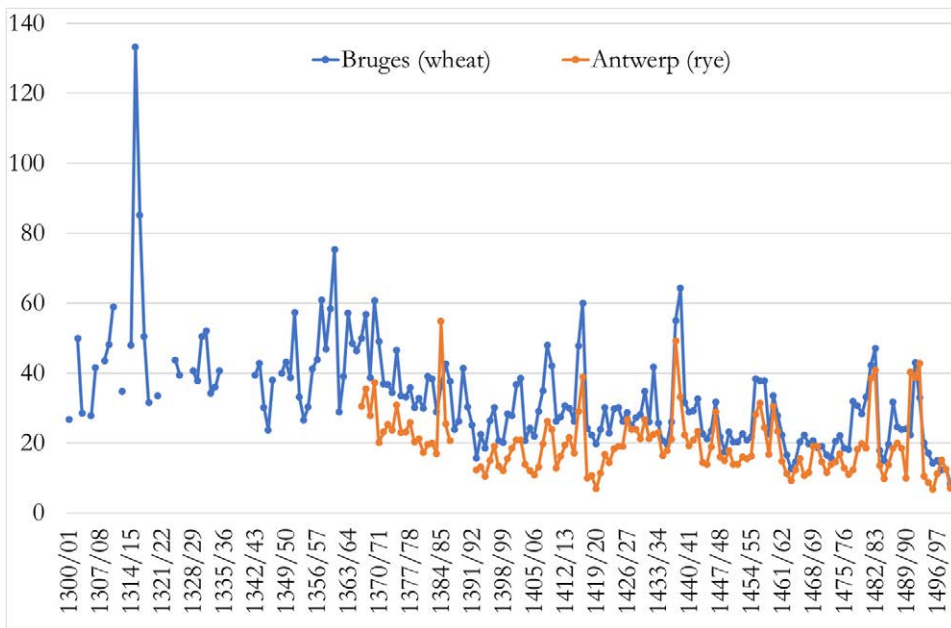
While reconstructing urban landownership is already challenging for the later Middle Ages, it is even more difficult to understand what urban households – like those of Marie, Jan and Willem who have opened this article – did with their land: did they keep this land as part of capital investment, or familial patrimonial strategies? Or was this land actually part of their food provisioning strategies, either on a structural base or in times of food shortage? And if so, did their importance decline with the commercialization of the rural economy and the expansion of (regional and interregional food markets)? Or did these direct food supplies continue to act as a buffer in times of food crises, and if so, for whom? These questions will be central in this article, which focuses on the post-Black Death period, a period which is both associated with a return of more localized, 'alternative' food supplies (Thirsk 2000), but also with a decisive push towards commercialization in the rural economy, and

the expansion of long-distance food trades. But how did food consumption and provisioning actually look like in the post-Black Death period?

### Urban food provisioning after the Black Death

As European population declined in the wake of the Black Death and its recurrent 'echo-epidemics', the theoretical balance between population and food supplies was structurally altered, and on average, the price for basic foodstuffs did decline. However, this was not a universal nor a straightforward process. To begin with, cereals became cheaper, but not immediately after 1349, but rather in the 1370s. Only by the last quarter of the fourteenth centuries, cereals were indeed cheaper than before the Black Death.

Fig. 1. The price for cereals in Bruges and Antwerp, 1300-1499 (grammes of silver per hectolitres)<sup>3</sup>



Secondly, the spectre of famine did not disappear: the fifteenth century saw violent price shocks on the food market. As figure 1 shows, the Low Countries saw

<sup>3</sup> Source: fourteenth-century data for Bruges based on S. ESPEEL, *Prices and crises: the grain economy in fourteenth-century Flanders*, Antwerp 2021 (PhD thesis University of Antwerp). fifteenth-century data based on A. VERHULST, *Prijzen van granen, boter en kaas te Brugge volgens de 'slag' van het Sint-Donatianskapittel (1348-1801)*, in *Dokumenten voor de geschiedenis van prijzen en lonen in Vlaanderen en Brabant*, ed. C. VERLINDEN AND

repeated grain crises in 1415-17, 1437-39, 1481-83 and 1490-93. None of these crises matched the violence of the Great Famine of 1315-17, but the price for grain on the market doubled or even tripled, during a longer period of time, which was undoubtedly challenging for all households depending on the market for their grain (or bread or beer) provisioning. In part these fifteenth century grain crises were the result of climate-induced harvest failures, but they also interfered with warfare, plague and disruptions in interregional trade (Van den Broeck, Soens 2017).

Thirdly, food consumption did not remain unaltered. While the improvement of material living conditions associated with the 'post-Black Death' 'Golden Age of Labour' was far from universal, meat (and dairy and fish) did increase in importance, at the expense of cereals, which however remained the basic foodstuff for most of the population, with declining consumption of boiled cereals and bread compensated to a certain extent by increased beer consumption (Soens, Thoen 2010).

Fourthly, the post-Black Death decline in urban population densities, might have resulted in a drop in the aggregate demand for food, and hence hampered the commercialization of agriculture (as argued by Bruce Campbell (2016, 364-70) for England). This did not mean that food was no longer allocated via the market. In the many small towns and market boroughs of fifteenth century England food provisioning remained market based, with a surprising variety of bakers, butchers, fishmongers and brewers all competing for customers, in what James Davis (2011, 456-457) has called a 'pragmatic moral economy'. Buyers and sellers knew and trusted one another, and profit making was expected to remain within certain limits, with a common understanding of the 'public good'.

Fifthly, long-distance food trades did not simply collapse in the fifteenth century, in response to a decline in demand. Certainly, as Blanchard (1986) has argued for the cattle trade, well into the 1470s the rising urban demand for meat « was satisfied through the intermediary of regional market centres » with minimal and declining importance of 'international' networks, with the exception of the cattle trade linking the Hungarian plains to Frankfurt and Venice. By the end of the fifteenth century this was changing again, and a continental European cattle trade started to expand, linking Denmark and Eastern Europe with the cities of West and Central Europe. The same pattern is true for grain exports from the Baltic. Before 1500, the Baltic grain exports to both Amsterdam (and Holland) and the southern Low Countries, remained overall limited, but at the end of the fifteenth century the onset of the spectacular sixteenth-century expansion was already visible (Unger 1999; Tielhof 2001). Nevertheless, other long-distance food trades already witnessed expansion in the fifteenth century: in continental Northwestern Europe this was certainly the case for the herring trade (and North Sea fisheries in general), the wine trade along the Rhine and the trade in (hopped) beers.

Considering this changing foodscape of the fifteenth century, what place could there be for direct deliveries from tenant farmers to urban households? In what follows, the preliminary results of a broader enquiry into 'alternative' food supplies in late medieval cities, will be presented, concentrating on two cities at the top of the

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E. SCHOLLIERS, Brugge 1965, pp. 3-70; Antwerp data based on H. VAN DER WEE, *Prices and Wages in Antwerp & Belgium, 1366-1913*, online via <<http://www.iisg.nl/hpw/allen.rar>>.



urban hierarchy in the Southern Low Countries, but with opposite demographic trends in the fifteenth century: Ghent in Flanders, and Antwerp in Brabant.

### Two cities, three agro-systems

The urban network in the fifteenth century Low Countries was polynuclear, with a few larger cities exceeding 20,000 inhabitants and many small towns (populations below 2000 inhabitants) and medium-sized ones (between 2000 and 10,000) (Stabel 1997; Blondé, Boone and Van Bruaene 2018). With a population slightly declining from above 60,000 inhabitants in the fourteenth century to c. 40,000 or 50,000 inhabitants in the fifteenth century, Ghent remained the largest city of the Low Countries and, with Paris and London, one of the largest cities north of the Alps. For its grain supplies, fifteenth-century Ghent could rely on the Scheldt (and Leie) trade bringing in cereals from grain exporting regions in Southern Flanders, Cambrésis, Hainaut and Artois. In the single city of Douai around 723,000 hl of bread grain were traded every year around 1400, enough to feed around 200,000 adults on a year-round base (Van Bavel 2010, 337). Ghent was the single most important consumer of this grain (though certainly not the only one), and via the Scarpe and the Scheldt, the grain ships could reach the city.

At the start of the fifteenth century, Antwerp was still much smaller than Ghent. Between 1330 and 1350 the city had witnessed demographic and economic expansion, and its population for the first time reached about 10,000 inhabitants. The second half of the fourteenth century was more difficult. Apart from the general upheaval caused by the plague, the Brabantine city was annexed by the count of Flanders in 1357, and would remain politically separated from its Brabantine hinterland until 1405. Nevertheless, in 1400, the city already counted 2805 houses (including 155 *hofsteden* or farms), which indicated a population of around 12-13,000 people, and hence a growth compared to the pre-Black Death situation (Van Gerven 1998; Van Damme et al. 2022). Throughout the fifteenth century Antwerp would be one of the very few Northwestern Europe that witnessed sustained growth. This was reflected in a new, eastward expansion of the urban territory in the early fifteenth century. While the countryside, and the small cities of Brabant went into a severe industrial and agricultural crisis from c. 1430 to c. 1490, Antwerp saw an influx of migrants, and an expansion of commercial and shipping activities. By 1437 the city's population had reached about 20,000 inhabitants, and by 1480 33,000 (Van der Wee 1963; Limberger 2008, 62).

However, no city is an island: while both Flanders and Brabant were densely urbanized, the majority of the population was still living on the countryside. Three major agricultural regions can be distinguished in the hinterland of Ghent and Antwerp. They differed in their physical environment, but most of all also in the social organization of economic production and both elements are adequately captured in the idea of 'social agro-systems' as developed by Erik Thoen and first tested on this part of the Low Countries (Thoen 2004). The region known as Inland Flanders, is the largest and best known of the three. Here, is the birthplace of the so-called Flemish or Dutch Husbandry, a region dominated by peasant smallholdings, interlaced by

some larger (tenant) farms. The region covers the southern and eastern part of the former county of Flanders, including the region of Lille (today in Northern France), but also the western part of the former Duchy of Brabant, south of Antwerp. The peasant smallholders of Inland Flanders enjoyed secure property rights to their land, but their holdings were prone to fragmentation, and only proto-industrial activities, and services for the few larger farms made them viable. Population densities were high, and they remained relatively high after the Black Death. Each village knew a few larger farms, which had a pivotal role in the economic (and often also political) life of the peasant community. Some of these larger tenant farms were the remnants of former demesne farms, owned by noble or ecclesiastical landlords, but many were also constituted by urban landlords in the course of the later Middle Ages, taking over demesnes from impoverished rural nobility, merging individual plots into larger holdings. In this regard, Thoen speaks of a « first offensive of the bourgeoisie as landlords » in the later Middle Ages, followed by a second one in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Thoen 2001, 130-32). As rural population density in Inland Flanders increased, and proto-industry became more important, the region exported less and less food. When the harvest failed, villages in inland Flanders became net-importers of grain, as demonstrated by Van Onacker (2019, 105) for the hunger year 1556. In the latter year, the Ghent aldermen restricted the grain which could be sold to villagers to 1 *meuken* (2.2 litres) per day, indicating an inverted grain flow from town to countryside.

Compared to Inland Flanders, the coastal marshes of the North Sea evolved in a completely different direction and remained net exporters of both cereals and cattle. Of course, the physical environment was different, with elaborate water management infrastructures needed to allow (intensive) exploitation of the area. Around 1300, the coastal marshes had been densely populated as well, but from the fourteenth century onwards, the political (and military) power of the coastal communities was broken, and property rights to land shifted to absentee landlords, with a major role for urban capital. Leasehold became very prominent in the coastal marshes, and in the second half of the fifteenth century, the concentration of landed property was followed by scale enlargement of holdings as well. The coastal marshes of Flanders and the North of Brabant turned into a cradle of ‘polder capitalism’ (Thoen, Soens 2015). The tenant farms of the coastal marshes increasingly specialized in a few products, sometimes more oriented in cattle or dairy farming, sometimes more towards cereal products.

East of Antwerp a third ‘social agro-system’ can be found: the Campine area was characterized by its extensive heathlands, which in the later Middle Ages were owned and managed collectively by peasant communities. Campine villagers were smallholders with secure property rights to land, like in Inland Flanders, but in contrast to the latter region, they enjoyed access to the heathland commons as an additional source of income alongside private holdings. On these sandy grounds, the fertility of a small infield could be guaranteed by using nutrients from the large heathland-outfield. This was a communally organized, and ‘inclusive’ peasant society, with limited space for capital accumulation. Campine villages were, however, far from autarkic: with their (many) horses they provided labour services on the roads from the Rhine to Antwerp. Moreover, as land was limited in the area, there was a constant migration –

partly seasonal, partly permanent- from the Campine Area to the city (Van Onacker 2017; De Keyser 2018).

### Urban landownership on the countryside

For both Ghent and Antwerp urban landownership is well studied, although the data are incomplete, especially for the fifteenth century. Francine De Nave (1978) studied the landed properties of Antwerp citizens around 1400. Antwerp citizens owned land and farms on the one hand, and annuities on the other, most of them situated to the north (in the polder area) and the south (in the inland area) of the city. More than 83% of the properties were situated within 13km from the town. As more than 60% of the dues were payable in kind, and money rents almost solely limited to the immediate periphery, Limberger (2008, 42-45) concluded from these data that «this underlines the importance of landed property in the countryside as a means of immediate supply - mainly food, but also raw materials - which was not subject to price shifts». Fast-forwarding to the mid-sixteenth century, the relative share of Antwerp citizens in the landed property in the surroundings of the city, becomes clearer due to the registration of landed property for fiscal purposes. Limberger analysed the data for four villages in the ‘inland’ hinterland of Antwerp:

Tab. 1. **Distribution of land in four villages south and east of Antwerp in 1570**

<i>% of land by social group</i>	Schoten	Edegem	Boechout	Duffel-ter-Elst
Peasants	14	16	9	23
Nobility	0	14	10	11
Townsmen	22	29	33	0
Clergy	52	26	31	44
Unknown	12	15	17	22
<i>Distance from Antwerp</i>	c. 10 km	c. 10 km.	c. 10 km.	c. 20 km.

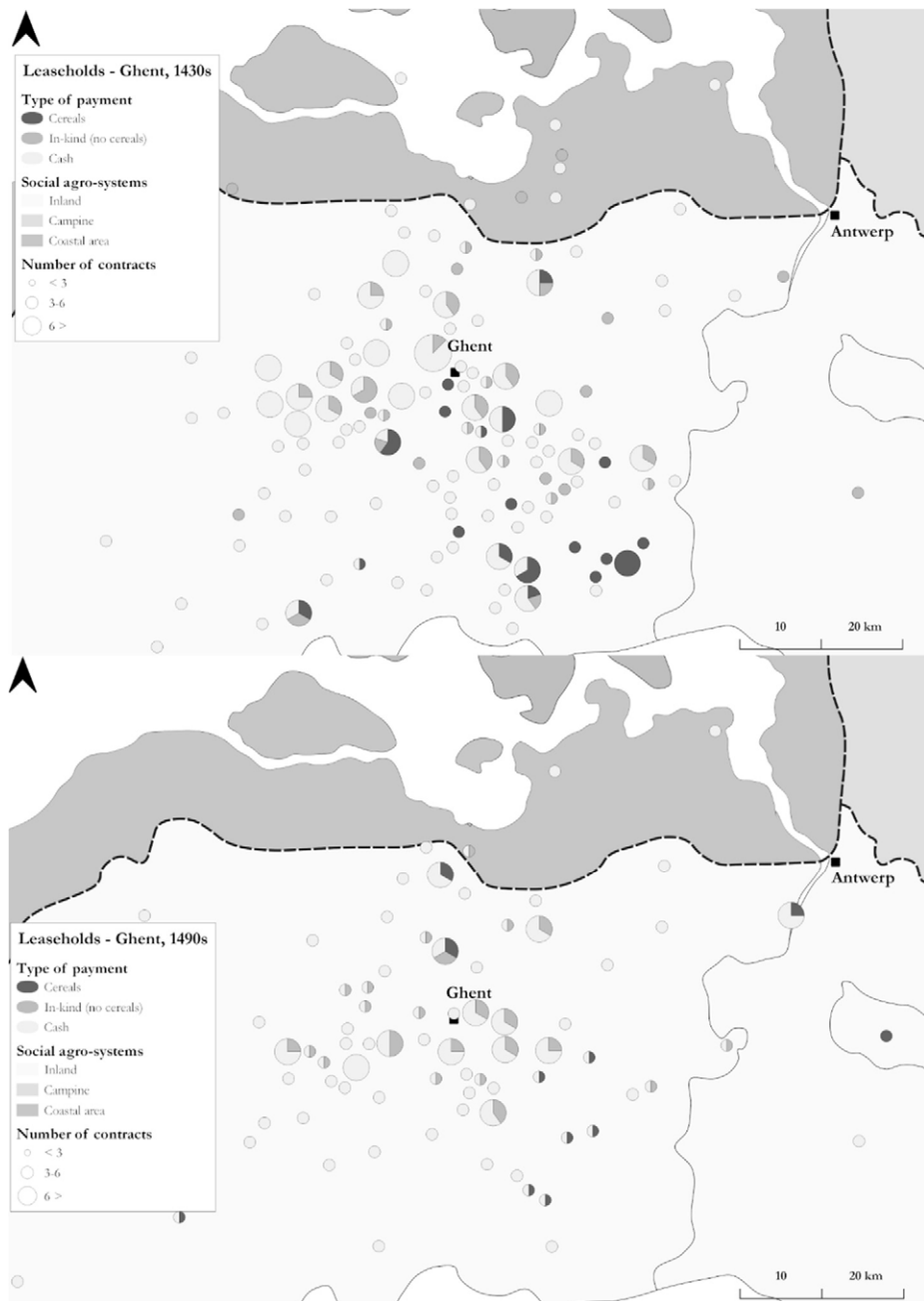
With the exception of Duffel – which was both further away from the city, and had turned into a proto-industrial centre in the sixteenth century (still remembered in the name ‘duffle coat’), townsmen were very visible as landowners in each of these villages. They owned about 22 to 33 % of the land. This is more than for instance in mid-sixteenth-century Holland, where Van Bavel (2009) observed between 13% (in North-Holland) and 25% (in Central Holland) of rural land being in the hands of urban landlords. At the same time, we have to take into account that the remainder of the land was owned primarily by ecclesiastical institutions and noble families, most of them Antwerp-based: the Collegiate Church of our Lady; the abbeys of St. Michael and St. Bernards (in Hemiksem near Antwerp) owned huge estates in the Antwerp periphery, and so did the multitude of charitable institutions, convents and churches

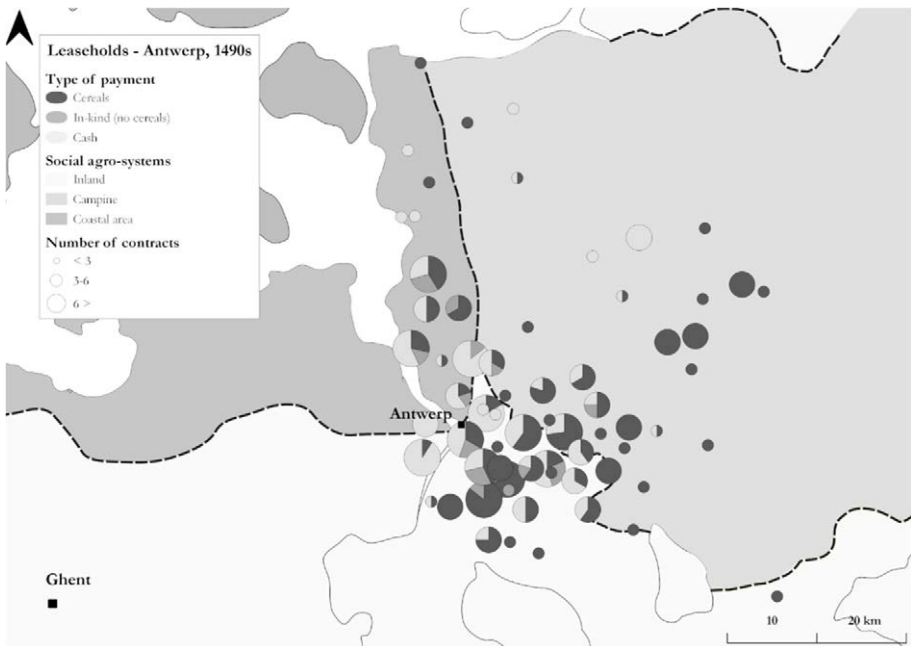
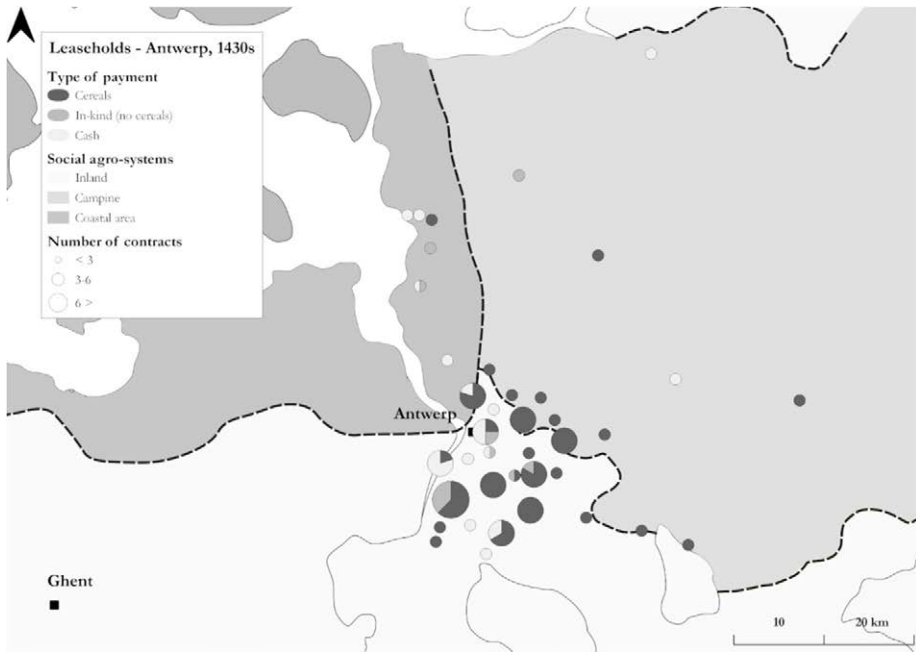
in Antwerp which massively expanded their landed properties in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

For Ghent, probate inventories offer a solid base to reconstruct the expansion of urban landownership from 1349 onwards. These probate inventories concern the inheritance of orphans, after the death of one or both of the parents. Probably around 10% of all adult deaths in the city resulted in a probate inventory, with a clear social bias towards the middle class and the urban elite, but nevertheless also including many examples of ordinary members of the craft guilds, and even poor citizens with few or no possessions. In their contribution to the 2019 Datini study week, Stef Espeel and Sam Geens reanalysed the fourteenth-century probate inventories, showing how Ghent citizens expanded their landed property in the countryside, although in a rather unequal way: in the poorest quintile of probate inventories, land possession declined from 36.4 % of the probate inventories in 1349-55 to 23.9 % in 1395-1400. In the third, fourth and fifth quintile it expanded significantly (to 70.4%; 77.6% and 88.9% of all inventories in 1395-1400 respectively). The geographic area of the landed possessions also expanded, primarily to the south of Ghent in the Inland Flanders area, but also in the 'polder' areas north and northeast of the city. The geographic radius of urban land acquisition exceeded 25km, which is higher than for many other late medieval cities. So, by the late fourteenth century, many members of the Ghent middle classes owned some land in the countryside (Espeel, Geens 2020, 419, 428). With median values of 3.3 hectares for the third and 7.69 for the fourth quintile, these were not huge estates, but nevertheless might have entitled them to a steady source of cash ... or food.

In what follows, we will use leasehold contracts to analyse the importance of rents-in-kind as a form of alternative currency. The serial registration of the leasehold contracts in both cities, provides a representative overview of urban landownership. In the fifteenth century, the contrast between both cities is still striking: the Antwerp leases remain confined to the immediate hinterland of the city, whereas Ghent-based owners also own land and farms 20 or 30km away from the city (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2. Lease contracts for rural properties registered by the Ghent (this page) and Antwerp (next page) aldermen: 1430s (above) and 1490s (below), indicating whether the lease involves payments in-kind, in cereals or in cash only





### Leases in-kind: food from the farm to the city?

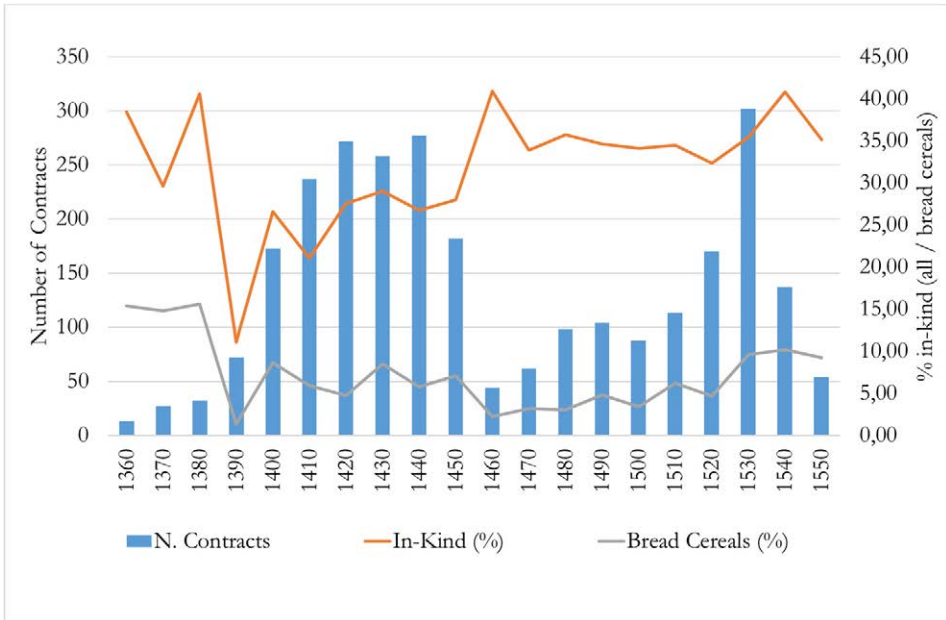
In both Ghent and Antwerp transactions involving real estate were often registered by the cities' aldermen. The so-called '*wettelijke passeringen*' or 'voluntary condemnations' developed into a separate branch of the municipal law (next to the civil and criminal law), resulting in a voluminous series of deeds/registers dating back to 1339 in Ghent and 1394 in Antwerp.<sup>4</sup> These registers contain sales and gifts of real estates, credit operations involving real estate (including annuities), testaments or bequests, and a wide variety of contracts which often – but not always – involved real estate. Lease contracts were registered as well, typically for owners living in the city, although a minority of leases involves owners and tenants without an obvious link to the city. There was, however, no obligation to register leases outside the municipal jurisdictions, so the contracts registered always represented but a fraction of the total number of lease contracts involving urban landlords. After all, there were several competing administrations – and notaries – who also were willing to register a lease. As most lease contracts involved land and farms outside the direct territorial jurisdiction of the aldermen, part of them might have been registered by other – rural – courts. Leaseholds did not even require registration to be binding. Especially for small plots of land, we assume that many leases were still based on an informal agreement, which might – or might not be – supported by a written document. As leases expired after a short period of time, their preservation for eternity was not imperative.

Nonetheless, in both Ghent and Antwerp, it became quite common to ask the aldermen to sanction a lease. The number of leases registered by the Ghent aldermen suggests that the willingness to do so depended on the political influence of the City of Ghent: the number of leaseholds registered perfectly mirrors the turbulent political history of the city, which suffered military defeats after its open revolt against its Burgundian-Habsburg rulers in 1453 and 1540. After these events, the urban privileges were partly revoked, and this was followed by an implosion of the number of lease contracts registered by the aldermen (Fig. 3).

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<sup>4</sup> City Archives Ghent, Series 301, Jaarregisters Schepenen van de Keure; CAA, SR 1 and following.

Fig 3. Leaseholds registered by the Ghent Aldermen (*Schepenbank van de Keure*) before 1559 with share of leases involving payment in kind and share of leases involving payment in cereals<sup>5</sup>



This overview for Ghent is based on a systematic survey by Achiel De Vos (1958-1960, 8-9), which includes a brief synopsis of the conditions stipulated in the contract. De Vos did not include houses and holdings below 3 *bunder* (c. 4 hectare) in this survey, as he did not consider these smallholdings ‘independent agricultural exploitations’. For Antwerp, a similar overview of lease contracts is not available, but *all* acts registered by the aldermen are currently being indexed.<sup>6</sup> The number of contracts increases from c. 500 per year in the late fourteenth century, to c. 2000 in the 1420s and c. 4000 in the 1520s. Only a fraction of these were leases of land or farms: about 20 per year in the late fourteenth century, and about 70 to 100 in the 1420s as well as in the 1520s (although with considerable annual variations). These numbers were significantly higher than in Ghent, even in the early fifteenth century. This is remarkable as fifteenth-century Antwerp had only a third of Ghent’s population, and the rural landownership of its citizens and ecclesiastical institutions was certainly less impressive. For now, we ignore the reasons for this difference, and only observe that registration of leases was more frequent in Antwerp than in Ghent. For this chapter, we sampled lease contracts for both Antwerp and Ghent in the 1430s and 1490s.

<sup>5</sup> Based on survey by A. DE VOS, *Inventaris der landbouwpachten in de Gentse jaarregisters van de keure*, Gent 1958-60.

<sup>6</sup> Indexes made by Ad van Oeffelen, Rob Roctus, Linda De Keuster, Willem Verhaeghe and Koen Verweken and available via <[www.felixarchief.be](http://www.felixarchief.be)>.



Only leases for land (arable land, gardens, orchards, and/or pastures) and farms were retained. Other leases concerned both houses and parts of houses in the city, tithes, mills and taxes (fishing rights for instance), but these were excluded from the analysis.

Tab. 2. **Sample of lease contracts, indicating relative share of contracts mentioning in-kind deliveries (% in-kind) and cereals (% cereals)**

Sample	Years	Leases (N)	Leases per year	% In Kind	% Cereals?
Antwerp 1430	1437-38	111	55	53.2	43.2
Antwerp 1490	1490-94	237	47	58.5	49.6
Ghent 1430	1430-39	253	28	28.9	10.7
Ghent 1490	1490-99	104	12	34.6	10.6

In Antwerp, more than half of the lease contracts stipulated at least some deliveries in kind. In Ghent, this was only about a third (Tab. 2). Of course, lease contracts remain normative sources, and the actual settlement of the lease might diverge from the stipulations in the contract. In practice, leases in cash might be partly settled in kind (through deliveries or labour services), and vice versa. Nevertheless, the choice for cash or kind in the contracts is not random, and many of the additional conditions inserted, suggest that landlord and tenant had indeed the intention to settle the lease in the ways recorded in the contract. One final example might illustrate this. Negotiating the lease of the Wommelgem hoeve in Wommelgem in 1490, owners Sir Peter van Bremen and Willemyne van der Molen and tenant Wouter Delyen Gheysseles stipulated that the fruit on the trees in the orchard would be equally divided among owner and tenant. The tenant was entitled to the fruit which fell from the trees (the *afvalle*). But if the fruit would fell from the trees prematurely due to stormy weather, the owner was entitled to half of the fruit on the ground as well.<sup>7</sup>

The conditions in the lease contracts were not fully standardized, but tend to be customized, hence probably reflecting the intended practices. On the one hand we have contracts with an extensive range of products to be delivered by the tenant farmer to the landlord. In 1437 for instance, Wouter Pot leased out his *Nachtegalen* farm in Kontich to Jan Brau *Den Bastaert* for 6 lb. *groten* Vlaams, 18 *sister* rye, 12 *sister* oats (*evene*), 2 *steen* flax, 1 *steen* butter, 1 (fattened) lamb and 100 eggs.<sup>8</sup> The farm had been allocated to him in 1431 by his father as a wedding gift.<sup>9</sup> The rent had to be delivered by the tenant to Antwerp, and the goods ought to be measured using Antwerp measures. Moreover, the tenant farmer owed 6 one-day transport services with horse and cart, which could not be demanded when the farmer had to sow the grain on his land. The owner, Wouter Pot, retained the dovecote and the possibility to

<sup>7</sup> CAA, SR 97, f°233v : «ten waere dat bij storme oft bij onvedre tfroyt afgeslagen werde in welken gevalle de voorseide Jonckbeer Peter et uxer hebben souden deen helft van dien afvalle».

<sup>8</sup> CAA, SR 24, f°311r.

<sup>9</sup> CAA, SR 18, f°303v.

plant an orchard on the estate (of 50 trees); owner and tenant also made arrangements on the maintenance of the trees on the estate, with the tenant liable to plant additional willows (32) each year, and the owner allowed to plant further quantities of poplars, oaks and *abelen* (a species of poplars). Duration of the contract was 12 years. The volume of both rye (c. 5229 litres) and oats (c. 4320 litres) were considerable, and probably exceeded the necessities of even a large urban household like the one of Wouter Pot, a rich merchant from Dordrecht who had migrated to Antwerp and had established his own chapel and almshouse in 1436.<sup>10</sup>

Religious institutions leased out farms on broadly similar conditions. In 1431 for instance, St. John's hospital in Ghent leased out its major farm in Appelterre (107 ha.) to Hendrik de Jaeghere and his wife Geertrui Wasiels *alias* Soys for a substantial amount of money (10 lb. *groten*), 12,960 litres wheat, 12,960 litres rye, 1080 litres peas, 2 sacks of rapeseed, and 2 *steen* flax. Some contracts included elements of sharecropping: in 1437 the *Kerckhove* farm in Boechout was leased out by Willem Mengiaert to Benedictus de Keersmaker. The arable land – 19 *bunder* or c. 16 ha. – was held in sharecropping, with the cereal sheaves being divided on the field. The farmer was to store the sheaves in the barn, but for the threshing the tenant farmer and the owner would both hire a thresher, with the farmer providing food for both of them. Afterwards the owner's share should be transported to his Antwerp residence - «*tot zijnen huysen*». The farm also included wet pastures (*beemd*) which were paid for in cash, as was often the case. The tenant farmer was allowed to cultivate a certain quantity of beans for his horses, and flax (with a set quantity of 4 *steen* of flax to be delivered to the owner each year). The orchard was kept by the owner.<sup>11</sup>

Not all contracts concerned large farms: sometimes individual plots of land were leased out. In Antwerp in 1437-38, there were 36 contracts for lands or farms smaller than 5 hectares. (of a total of 66 for which the size was specified); even in Ghent, where only contracts above 3 *bunder*/4 hectares have been retained, some lease records for smaller holdings survive (in the 1430s 12 out of 172). However, the extent of the land was not always specified, and if it was recorded, the details were sometimes limited to the arable acreage. As we will see below, leases for plots of land were more often expressed in cash, whereas complete farms – including arable, pasture, an orchard and/or woodland – had more chance of being at least partly settled in kind.

Sometimes the largest part of the lease had to be paid in cash, but some products were nevertheless to be delivered in-kind. When Cornelis Alaerts leased out his farm in Merkssem in 1438, the tenant Jan Van Cruyningen had to pay 6 lb. 15s. *groten* per year, and supply the owner with 3.5 *viertel* (or c. 254 litres) of rye. Both the tenant and the owner would also be allowed to dig a certain amount of peat on the land to cater for their respective fuel needs («*elc sijn voringen daer op te moegen delven*»). The owner kept control of the trees.<sup>12</sup> In Ghent, in 1431, we see Sanders van der Beken and

<sup>10</sup> Later converted into a Cistercian abbey, the S. Salvator Abbey, see <<https://inventaris.onroerendergoed.be/erfgoedobjecten/4068>>.

<sup>11</sup> CAA, SR 24, f°380v.

<sup>12</sup> CAA, SR 25, f°148v.

Katlijne van den Hulle rent out their 34.7 hectares farm in Borsbeke to Jan de Coc Pieters for an in-cash annual rent of 11 lb. 6 s. *grooten*. Each year the tenant farmer had to deliver 2 *steen* flax and one third of the fruit which grew on the estate. In this case, the in-kind dues were clearly very modest compared to the cash-payment. Such 'minor' in-kind duties complementing a monetized lease can be found quite frequently. In Ghent, they often involved minor quantities of butter, flax, poultry (capons) or eggs. Did these small in-kind supplements retain a function in the provisioning of the urban household, or was their function merely symbolic, stressing the social bond between tenant and landlord? Perhaps a more systematic analysis of the lease contracts might indicate the conditions in which (urban) landlords opted for in-kind deliveries.

### Cash or kind: explaining preferences

In the corpus of lease contracts analysed in this paper, several variables can be identified which might explain the preference for in-kind or in-cash leases: the location of the landlord (Antwerp or Ghent); the timeframe (1430s or 1490s); the social profile of the landlord (starting with the difference between ecclesiastical institutions and private households); the type of property involved (land, farms or pastures) and the region in which the property was situated (differentiating between the three social agro-systems mentioned above). A binary logistic regression (see Appendix) confirms that Antwerp contracts were significantly more likely than Ghent contracts to include in-kind payments, and that the 1490 sample was not significantly different from the 1430 sample in the preference for cash or kind. No general trend towards less or more in-kind deliveries could be observed (Tab. 3)

The statistical analysis yielded another significant difference: leases of entire farms involved in-kind payments more frequently than leases of simple plots of land. In Antwerp in the 1430s, 29 out of 37 leases for farms involved some payment in kind, of which 24 included cereals. In the 1490s, this was the case in 99 out of 112 leases of entire farms. The Antwerp leases also contain separate leases for '*beemden*': wet pasturelands along rivers or in the polder area. Both in the 1430s and the 1490s, these were largely settled in cash.

Tab. 3. Preferences for Cash, Kind and/or Cereals, according to type of property, social profile of the owner and the regional agro-system

	Antwerp 1430			Antwerp 1490			Ghent 1430			Ghent 1490		
	<i>N Total</i>	<i>N Kind (%)</i>	<i>N Cereals (%)</i>	<i>N Total</i>	<i>N Kind (%)</i>	<i>N Cereals (%)</i>	<i>N Total (%)</i>	<i>N Kind (%)</i>	<i>N Cereals (%)</i>	<i>N Total</i>	<i>N Kind (%)</i>	<i>N Cereals (%)</i>
<b>Type of Property</b>												
<b>Farm</b>	<b>37</b>	29 (78.4)	23 (62.2)	<b>112</b>	99 (88.4)	89 (79.5)	<b>187</b>	66 (35.3)	26 (13.9)	<b>85</b>	31 (36.5)	10 (11.8)
<b>Land</b>	<b>63</b>	29 (46.0)	24 (38.1)	<b>91</b>	35 (38.5)	26 (28.6)	<b>66</b>	7 (10.6)	1 (1.5)	<b>19</b>	5 (26.3)	1 (5.3)
<b>pasture</b>	<b>10</b>	1 (10.0)	1 (10.0)	<b>34</b>	4 (11.8)	3 (8.8)						
<b>Owner: Ecclesiastical Institution or Natural Person?</b>												
<b>Institutions</b>	<b>46</b>	23 (50.0)	17 (37.0)	<b>120</b>	66 (55.0)	54 (4.0)	<b>66</b>	29 (43.9)	19 (28.8)	<b>17</b>	4 (23.5)	3 (17.6)
<b>Natural Persons</b>	<b>65</b>	36 (55.4)	31 (47.7)	<b>117</b>	72 (61.5)	64 (54.7)	<b>187</b>	44 (23.5)	8 (4.3)	<b>87</b>	32 (36.8)	8 (9.2)
<b>Agro-System</b>												
<b>Antwerp</b>	<b>9</b>	2 (22.2)	1 (11.1)	<b>7</b>	0	0						
<b>Antwerp Periphery</b>	<b>17</b>	7 (41.2)	6 (35.3)	<b>54</b>	23 (42.6)	19 (35.2)						
<b>Campine</b>	<b>13</b>	7 (53.9)	6 (46.2)	<b>44</b>	34 (77.3)	34 (77.3)						
<b>Inland</b>	<b>43</b>	35 (81.4)	30 (69.8)	<b>70</b>	52 (74.3)	45 (64.3)	<b>240</b>	71 (29.6)	27 (11.3)	<b>98</b>	35 (35.7)	11 (11.2)
<b>Polder</b>	<b>26</b>	7 (26.9)	5 (19.2)	<b>59</b>	27 (45.8)	18 (30.5)	<b>13</b>	2 (15.4)	0	<b>6</b>	1 (16.7)	0
<b>Unknown</b>	<b>3</b>	1 (33.3)	0	<b>3</b>	2 (66.7)	2 (66.7)						

In Ghent as in Antwerp, in-kind deliveries seem less frequent in the coastal 'Polder' area, compared to the inland regions. In Antwerp in the 1430s the difference is very pronounced: only 7 out of 26 lease contracts for the polders involved some payment in kind, against 35 out of 43 for the inland region. This was unrelated to distance: one of the Antwerp city gates – the *Slijckpoort* – gave access to the polder district immediately north of the city. In Ghent, the polders were situated 20 to 30km north of the city, and transport over water existed via a dense network of canals developed for the transport of peat in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The preference for rents in cash or in kind seems to have been influenced rather by the type of agriculture, the soil and the social organisation of farming. This becomes clear, when a single lease covers land in both the polder districts and the inland region, and the contract stipulates that the lease for *thoogbe land* (i.e. the higher, inland, plots) is to be paid in rye, whereas the lease for *dlege lant* (i.e. the polder) in cash.<sup>13</sup> The preference for cash-leases in the polders might have been related partly to the predominance of animal husbandry, but it might also be linked to the higher degree of commodification of land and agriculture in the polders. Exceptions of course existed. In 1490, Jan Pels leased his farm in the polders near Steenberg (N-Brabant) to Anthonis Voordeel Corneliss for an annual rent of c. 20,000 litres of cereals (half of which was wheat, the rest oats and barley). The names of the plots – *int Nyeuwelant*, *Gheenengors* and *tHoochbeerengoet* – indicate that the land had been recently drained and embanked. The landlord might have hoped to profit from the alleged fertility of the newly drained polders by actively engaging in the grain trade.<sup>14</sup> This was, however, exceptional in most cases polder leases were negotiated for a fixed amount of money per surface unit of land.

Overall, institutions seem somewhat more likely than private households to demand in-kind deliveries from their tenants, but while significant, the statistical difference is not very pronounced. By the 1490s, (ecclesiastical) institutions in Ghent seemed to have converted most of their leases to cash, even though the 1490s sample includes more hospitals and alms-houses and fewer abbeys (in the 1490s, the Benedictine abbeys of St. Peter and St. Bavo, probably the largest landlords in the whole county of Flanders, no longer resorted to the Ghent aldermen to register their leases). The Ghent hospitals might have limited their direct food supplies to a single farm – a 'food farm' which kept a pivotal role in the provisioning of the hospital. The case of St. John's hospital in Ghent illustrates this. In the 1490s, three leases were registered involving this hospital (two concerning Zaamslag in the coastal polders, one concerning Destelbergen, 10km from Ghent. In these three cases, only cash was demanded. However, its largest estate – in Appelterre, Inland Flanders, was missing from the sample. Both in previous and later decades, leases for the Appelterre estate (100 *bunder* or c. 133 hectares) were always stipulated in kind, involving large

<sup>13</sup> This is the case in an already mentioned lease from 1438 for Merksem, situated close to Antwerp, at the border of the polder area and a higher sand ridge with an 'inland' farming system, see note 12.

<sup>14</sup> CAA, SR 97, f°18v. Near Steenberg, old peat marshes had been flooded in the early fifteenth century and were progressively reclaimed in the later part of that century.

quantities of wheat, peas, beans, butter and rapeseed.<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, distance was not the major factor in the decision to maintain Appelterre as a ‘food farm’: the estate was situated at about 40km from Ghent. Transport over water was, however, possible via the Dender and Scheldt rivers, although this prolonged the journey to at least 70km.

Both the ecclesiastical institutions and the private households were socially heterogeneous, in Antwerp probably more so than in Ghent. Unravelling the social profile is difficult for the private landowners, as professions or indications of social status are not systematically listed. Nevertheless, as can be seen from Table 4 (for Antwerp), a preference for in-kind payments was not restricted to a single social group: both monastic, charitable institutions, and members of the nobility, the political elite and even some members of the craft guilds made use of in-kind deliveries, in most cases involving cereals:

Tab. 4. Social profile of Antwerp landlords in the 1430s and 1490s

Institutions (N)	Actors	Leases	with in-kind	with cereals
Parishes	7	8	4	4
Regular Clergy	7	156	81	64
Charity	8	18	14	12
Beguinage	1	1	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>80</b>
Private households (N)	Actors	Leases	with in-kind	with cereals
Nobility	22	32	21	21
Political Elite	41	48	32	29
Merchant Elite	2	2	2	2
Craft Guilds	28	30	14	11
Non-Antwerpen	14	15	5	4
Unknown	51	58	34	29
Ecclesiastics (private property)	2	2	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>98</b>

Among the Antwerp institutional landlords, the Collegiate Chapter of Our Lady and the Premonstratensian abbey of St. Michael were dominant, with respectively 42 and 74 leases in the sample.<sup>16</sup> The abbey was more likely to include in-kind deliveries

<sup>15</sup> De Vos, *Landbouwpachten*, op.cit., nr. 2752 (in 1561). In 1573, the requirement for deliveries of cereals as part of a food rent was dropped, and the estate was split in several parts (Ibidem, nr. 2779, 2780).

<sup>16</sup> The chapter of Our Lady was a secular chapter. It is not always clear in the contracts, whether the canons acted as administrator of their stipend (prebend), or as private landlords. Both configurations

(42 out of 74 leases, against 14 out of 42 for Our Lady). Most of the contracts related to St. Michael's Abbey date from the 1490s, when the abbey had many of its leases registered in a 'bulk' contract (although still including the details for each individual lease). Overall, parishes seem less inclined than monasteries and charitable institutions to ask for in-kind deliveries, which might reflect differences in the actual needs of the institution. As for the private individuals, members of the political elite (the aldermen of the city) and the nobility (part of which resided in the city) were easier to identify than commoners. Many commoners were ranked in the 'unknown' category, potentially mixing up with villagers from the Antwerp hinterland. Although the sample is limited, the members of craft guilds which could be identified seem more likely to prefer cash, compared to elite households. Nevertheless, when craftsmen owned larger estates, or entire farms, they did prefer payments in kind. In 1492 wood merchant Gheerd van Borssele and grocer Jan van Eertborne and his wife Lijsbette van Borssele leased out a farm in Ekeren-Muisbroek of about 16 *bunder* (9.3 hectares) for 1440 d. *grotten Brabants*, 8.5 *sister* of rye (2469 litres), 1 *viertel* of buckwheat (72.6 litres), and modest quantities of eggs and butter each year.<sup>17</sup> For his farm in Essen, north of Antwerp, mercer Jan Claus Heyns only demanded labour services (one day with horse and cart per year) apart from cash. And Jan Pels, the son of a *shipmaster* leased out newly reclaimed polder land near Steenbergen, and included in-kind deliveries of cereals in the contract.<sup>18</sup> Many other craftsmen, including a butcher, a carpenter, a *smoutslager* and a *shoemaker*, asked cash leases. Even Jan van Lare, who was a gardener (*hovenier*), leased out his farm on the Sint-Willibrordusveld in the urban periphery to a fellow gardener for a cash rent. The owner intended to plant 50 extra sour cherry trees (*kriek boommen*) on the land, for which the rent would then be raised. However, no in-kind deliveries were stipulated, indicating that the lessee would be responsible for the (commercial) exploitation of the orchard.<sup>19</sup>

By now it is clear that in-kind deliveries remained important in lease contracts throughout the fifteenth century, but more so in Antwerp than in Ghent. Moreover, a social bias in the preference for in-kind deliveries, rather than cash, could be observed. Only households owning entire farms in the countryside – hence, richer households – negotiated in-kind supplies with their tenants, whereas those leasing out a small plot of land seemed mostly interested in cash with only a few exceptions. But one question remains: can we really consider these in-kind deliveries as an alternative for cash?

### Cereals as alternative currency

Leases are legal contracts, and in legal contracts every sentence matters. Sometimes even the exact order of the sentence matters. Above, we already mentioned the lease of the *Nachtegalen* farm in Kontich from 1437 – one of those Antwerp contracts

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are possible. All contracts involving the Chapter, also those involving a specific chapel or foundation, have been grouped together.

<sup>17</sup> CAA, SR 100, f°199v.

<sup>18</sup> CAA, SR 97, f°018v.

<sup>19</sup> CAA, SR 97, f°073r.

which included a wide range of products and services to be delivered by the tenant to the owner Wouter Pot and his wife. However, in the text of the contract not all of these products and services are treated in the same way. Flax, butter and eggs are only introduced at the very end of the contract, as part of a number of additional clauses related to the obligations of the tenant regarding maintenance of the buildings, planting of trees etc. In contrast, one product is introduced at the very beginning of the contract, where the actual rent is mentioned. Every year the tenant has to pay «6 lb. *groten grabants prout cour. 18 sister rocx ende 12 sister evenem*».<sup>20</sup> In this contract, rye and oats clearly functioned as alternative form of currency. According to the contracts, the conversion into cash is almost never an option. In the entire sample, only two contracts allow for up to half or the entirety of the cereals to be converted into cash, one at a fixed price per volume and one at the current market price.<sup>21</sup> The Antwerp contracts are also very explicit on the use of lawful measures (usually to the Antwerp standard) and on the destination of the delivered grain. In most cases the tenant has to bring the cereals to Antwerp, to the home of the family, the hospital or the *herberg* (probably a storage facility) of the institution. In a minority of cases, neighbouring cities or grain markets are mentioned: Lier, Mechelen, Bergen-op-Zoom. Sometimes no destination of the grain is specified leaving the decision to the landlord.<sup>22</sup>

Whereas in Antwerp the use of cereals as an alternative currency in leases was very prominent, it was much less common in Ghent. Already in the 1430s, private households seldom demanded cereals in Ghent (only 8 out of 187 contracts), and if grain was involved, the quantities were modest (on average 546 litres in the 1430s and 1464 litres in the 1490s). The ecclesiastical landlords from Ghent were more inclined to include cereal deliveries in their leases during the earlier phase, even in large quantities (7526 litres on average), but by the 1490s, such volumes had become less frequent. In Antwerp, a completely different picture emerges: both ecclesiastical institutions and private landlords were more likely to desire cereals, and they continued to do so throughout the fifteenth century. Interestingly, they often demanded comparatively 'standard' volumes of cereals: on average 3515 litres in the 1430s and 3898 litres in the 1490s. Combinations of rye and oats were dominant, with minor quantities of wheat, buckwheat, or peas added on occasion.

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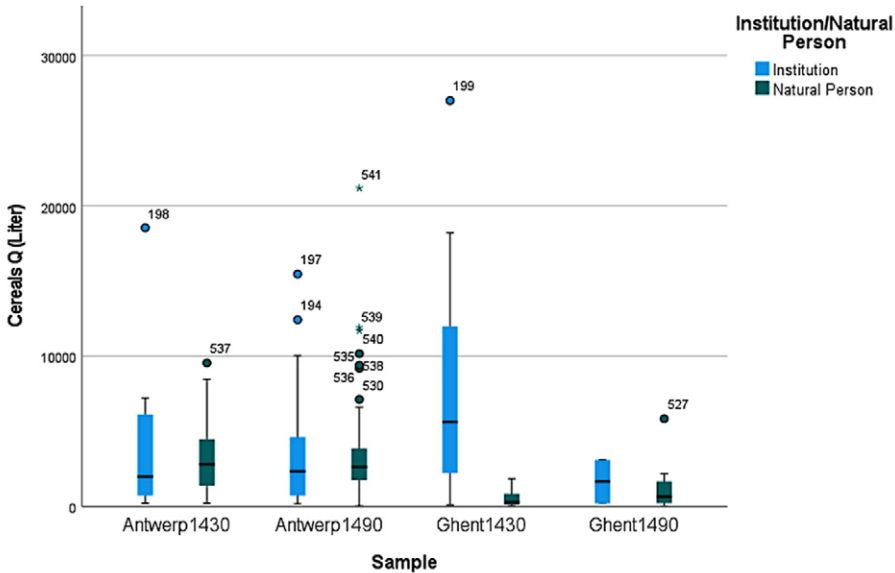
<sup>20</sup> CAA, SR 24, f°311r.

<sup>21</sup> This is stipulated in a contract from 1491 regarding the farm *Goet ter Voort* in Edegem, south of Antwerp: CAA, SR 99, f°46r. The annual rent is 4 lb. *groten brabant*, 132 *viertel* of rye (9586.8 litres), 1 *sister* of peas (290.5 litres), 1 *sister* of wheat (290.5 litres) and minor quantities of butter. Only the rye could be partly converted into cash at a fixed price of 2 s. 6 d. *groten brabant* per *viertel*. See also : CAA, SR 101, f°079v.

<sup>22</sup> In a lease of 4 *bunder* of land in Wilrijk in 1437, owned by the poor table of Mortsel, the annual rent of 16 *viertel* (1162 litres) of rye has to be delivered either in Antwerp or in Mortsel «*ter stede ende plaetsen daer de selve provisieren nu synde oft navels wesende liefste hebbem*» (to the place where the administrators of the poor table prefer the cereals to be delivered) (CAA, SR 24, f°300r).



Fig. 4. Cereals as part of the lease



A tentative quantification of the total volume of cereals entering the city of Antwerp via the settlement of leases in kind shows that considerable volumes are involved. In the 1430s, the lease contracts examined demanded the supply of 43,907 litres of bread grain per year. The average duration of a lease was 9.4 years, as a result the total amount of bread grain which entered the city through tenant farmers can be assessed at 412,727 litres, enough to feed 1130 adults throughout the year (supposing that an adult consumed one litre of bread grain per day, either as bread, beer or boiled). By the 1490s, this volume had increased to 679,968 litres, the equivalent of 1863 yearly rations. In other words: the amount of bread grain entering the city through the payment of leases, was sufficient to feed five to ten percent of the Antwerp population. Oats were also supplied in large quantities, but interestingly, declined between the 1430s and 1490s (from 330,786 litres to 72,337 litres). In Ghent, such deliveries did not make a significant contribution to urban food supplies (125,334 litres of bread grain per year in the 1430s; a modest 12,894 litres in the 1490s) and only a select number of ecclesiastical institutions relied on this kind of supply, more so in the 1430s than in the 1490s.

And yet, these assessments still underestimate the influx of grain from tenant farms to urban households. First of all, sharecropping is not taken into account, as the quantities to be delivered were not fixed in the contract. In the 1430s there were 3 sharecropping contracts (compared to 45 with fixed quantities of cereals to be delivered). Secondly, we limited the analysis to leases of land and farms. Urban landlords also owned tithes and mills: in the 1430s there were 11 lease contracts for tithes per year, and 5 for mills (either water mills or windmills). About half of them was paid in kind, the others in cash. Thirdly, not all lease contracts are registered by the

Antwerp aldermen. As mentioned above, registration was voluntarily and there were competing administrations providing the same service. And finally, leases were not the only form of in-kind income for urban landlords. In both Antwerp and Ghent, there was a vivid market in annuities, both life annuities and heritable annuities, mortgaged on land. A significant part of the annuities was expressed in kind – cereals notably. Taking all these direct cereal flows together, we might easily conclude that not 5 to 10 %, but rather a quarter to a third of the urban cereal supplies in fifteenth century Antwerp could have come from direct, land-based, supplies.

Apart from cereals, other products were delivered albeit in lower quantities. Poultry appear in the lease contracts (the occasional capons) as do sheep and pigs, but cattle – the basis of meat provisioning in both Antwerp and Ghent – were absent. In fact, in only 1 contract for the four samples and more than 500 contracts, cattle were mentioned (1 fattened calf supplied to the St. Bernards abbey in Hemiksem near Antwerp from Vremde in 1490).<sup>23</sup> Landlords, both private households and ecclesiastical institutions, clearly had other ways of acquiring meat. This is confirmed by an exceptional example of a household account by a member of the Ghent bourgeoisie: Simon Borluut, whose account book from the 1450s and 1460s has been edited and studied by Marc Boone (2021, 225-240). Borluut was a member of a prominent patrician family from Ghent, and was heavily involved himself in municipal politics in a turbulent age. His account books reveal a lot on both his relationships with tenants (very personal, as he presented them for instance with wedding gifts for their children), and his food provisioning strategies. At first sight Borluut did not make use of direct supplies: we see him buying cattle, pigs, beer, dry herring and sprat, pies etc. The cattle were bought, be it not on the urban market, but rather directly imported from Diksmuide in the polders. Borluut made ample use of ‘trusted suppliers’: The pastrycook is *his pasteidebacker*, the (female) brewer, is *his brusterighe*, and payments were done once in a year. However, the account book is only about *expenditure*, and not about income, and Borluut does not pay for either fresh fish, poultry and, most of all, cereals, which were most probably delivered to him by his tenants.<sup>24</sup>

As such, Borluut’s provisioning patterns – cereals in kind, the rest bought on the market from trusted suppliers – perfectly resembles the strategies deployed almost two centuries later, by a household from Antwerp – the Moretus family (De Staelen 2002). In the 1660s and 1670s Elisabeth Moretus was responsible for the provisioning of the Moretus family, and meticulously noted every expenditure. While almost all foodstuffs were bought, once again often preferring the same suppliers year after year, grain was sent in by tenant farmers from Hamme. Moretus paid the expenditure for taxes and the transport (which was not the case in the later Middle Ages, when these costs tend to be paid by the tenant farmer). Once the grain arrived in the city it was brought to the baker, who apparently also was responsible for the milling. In exchange, the family obtained a ‘credit’ from the bakery: it could buy the value of the

<sup>23</sup> CAA, SR 98, f°110v.

<sup>24</sup> In one case, this is confirmed for the delivery of oats (evene), for which Borluut paid the taxes: «Item, betaelt bi Liefkijne mijnen zuene de cuellootte van eenen muude evenen mersch witte evene die mi brochte Lievin Van den Walle js. Boudins in betalinghe liep de cuellootte 2 s. gr.» (Boone 2021, 235-38). The account book however does also contain examples of cereal rents paid by Borluut to different landlords, and converted to cash.

cereals delivered in bread.<sup>25</sup> So, just like the fifteenth-century Borluut family in Ghent, the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Moretus family in Antwerp held on to eating bread made from cereals produced on their own land. For all other foodstuffs, this was clearly less imperative.

For the Borluut and Moretus families, social status might have been the primary driver explaining the preference of cereals as an alternative currency in leases. On the other hand, the strategic importance of cereal stocks in times of food shortage might also help to explain their persistence. This is clearly shown for Antwerp in 1481-1483, when the combination of adverse weather, warfare and disruption of grain trade produced one of the worst subsistence crises of the fifteenth century. Starting in February 1481, the Antwerp aldermen intervened to secure the grain provisioning of their city, first of all relaxing the restrictions on the sale of bread (in order to attract suppliers from outside the city). At a later stage, export was forbidden and wholesale trade in grain was restricted, in favour of retail. In May 1481, the aldermen ordered the survey of all grain stocks available in the attics of houses, which already indicates the importance of grain stocks in private households. This was followed on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November 1481 by an ordinance which explicitly demonstrated the importance of in-kind deliveries by rural producers to urban consumers, covering both leasehold, and the payment of annuities in-kind:

*men gebiet van sheeren ende vander stadt wegen dat een yegelic, pachter ende lantman bynnen den margravesche geseten sinnen meester dien lijffrente oft pacht van coerne, het zij tarwe, rogge ofte ander greyn schuldich is, sal moeten contenteren ende betalen van tgene des hij hem tachter ende schuldich is, voere ende eer de selve pachter yemanne anders eenich coren sal moegen vercoopen* (CAA, PK 913: Gebodboeken, 1439-1496, f°68r)

(our translation: «it is ordered by the Lord and the City that every inhabitant of the margravate [of Antwerp], tenant farmer or villager, who owns his master an annuity or lease in cereals – either wheat, rye or other – will have to pay his arrears and settle his debt in full, before this tenant will be allowed to sell any cereals to third parties»)

Once the landlord had been satisfied (*sijn meesters betaelt*) and the subsistence needs of the peasant farmer had been covered (*tgene des hij met sijne familien totten naesten oexste in redelicheiden behouden sal*), any surplus had to be brought to the Antwerp market. On the first of December, these measures were generalized for the entire Duchy of Brabant, in an ordinance by duchess Marie of Burgundy.<sup>26</sup> The ‘corn laws’ of the 1480s hence demonstrate that cereal rents always had precedence over sales, providing landlords with a powerful incentive to maintain and expand their rents-in-kind.

<sup>25</sup> «gelevert aen den backer int Vosken 4 veertelen korens a 6 gulden d'veertel maer een kerf hebbe om voor 24 gulden broot te balen» (De Staelen 2002).

<sup>26</sup> CAA, PK 913: Gebodboeken, 1439-1496, f°65v-74r.

## To conclude

In the heart of the urban Low Countries, cereals frequently continued to be used as an alternative currency in the settlement of leases. For fifteenth-century Antwerp we estimated that a quarter to a third of the urban population could be fed by direct supplies from the hinterland, either from leases or annuities. In Ghent, this share would have been much lower. So, why did cereals remain a valuable alternative for money in one of the most commercialized regions of late medieval Europe?

First of all, these cereal rents were not a relic of an autarkic past. Rents-in-kind were not simply converted to cash as cities grew: the population of Antwerp increased in the fifteenth century, but so did the importance of cereals as a form of currency in lease contracts. Neither was there a relationship with trends in food consumption: while meat clearly gained importance in fifteenth-century food provisioning, it was notoriously absent in the in-kind supplies, which in Antwerp remained focused on cereals, and in Ghent on poultry, fruit, butter, and flax. In contrast, socio-economic status played a role: there is an evident social bias in the ownership of rural land, and only landlords owning an entire farm opted for an extensive range of in-kind deliveries. Bread made from homegrown grain, was important for the 15<sup>th</sup>-century Antwerp elite – an observation already made by Philippe Wolff (1954, 92, 175) for the elite of Toulouse. Even in Ghent, some institutions and some families kept on doing so, as the Borluut account book proves. In general, the whole concept of tenant farmers being obliged to deliver foodstuffs (or flax) or to perform labour services to an urban landlord, might have been a strong signifier of social status. During times of famine, leases-in-kind gave urban landlords a ‘preferential’ claim to highly valuable cereals, as the legislation in Antwerp in the 1480s shows. Even landlords, including those of middling status, who settled for cash payments possibly enjoyed a more direct access to grain in times of food shortage due to their landownership in the countryside. The quasi-absence of cereals in the Ghent leases confirms the observation that its citizens enjoyed a privileged access to cereals (via the grain staple), making ‘private’ arrangements largely redundant.

However, the rural economy also mattered, as is demonstrated by the high prevalence of cash leases in the polder area, versus the preference of in-kind supplies in the Campine area and Inland Flanders. How should we interpret these regional differences? Insufficient monetarisation of some regions is not the answer. In both regions, tenant farmers who were involved in food rents, nonetheless paid part of their leases in cash. Regions like Inland Flanders and the Campine area also participated actively in commodity markets. The level of competition in the land market might be more important. In Inland Flanders and the Campine Area, land was not primarily allocated via the land market, and apart from the few major farms in the area, leases were often supplementing inheritances. In the coastal polder areas, however, the access to land was primarily over a highly competitive lease market, in which leases were set at competitive cash rates linked to acreage. In this proto-capitalist rural economy, it is possible that the competitive lease market left less room for the interpersonal relationship between landlord and tenant farmer that was associated with the food rents.

Finally, what are the implications of this study for our knowledge of urban food provisioning in the later Middle Ages? In the ‘pragmatic moral economy’ of late medieval cities (Davis 2012), food was marketed, but this market was ruled by conventions, expectations and mutual trust between buyers and sellers. However, the price-setting of the most essential foodstuff – grain – largely escaped the control of individual cities or households.<sup>27</sup> And it was exactly this staple which was frequently used as an alternative currency. Hence, the use of grain as alternative currency was not a consequence of limited commercialisation, but rather of the volatility of prices associated with an uncontrollable market. Only the working class had no choice but to buy their daily bread, fully exposed to the volatility of the grain market.

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<sup>27</sup> Not a single system of bread price regulation developed in early modern Europe succeeded in shielding consumers from price spikes (De Vries 2019, 454).

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## Appendix: Statistical analysis of the preference for cash, kind and/or cereals as payment of rent.

A binary logistic regression in SPSS produces the following results:

### A. The preference for in-kind deliveries (as compared to contracts including only cash payments)

306 out of 706 contracts include payments in-kind. Significant (sig.) and strong (Exp (B)) differences in the preference for in-kind payments can be found only for the variables City (Antwerp more than Ghent) and Type of Property (Farms more than simple plots of land). Pastures are less likely to be associated with in-kind deliveries, but the explanatory value (Exp(B) is weak). The region also provides some significant results, with contracts in the coastal (Polder) area less likely to include payments in kind, compared to the Inland region. A low (Exp(B)) indicates a limited explanatory value of the latter observation.

Variables in the Equation							
		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1 <sup>a</sup>	City Antwerp (ref. Ghent)	2,783	,312	79,803	1	<,001	16,169
	Decade 1430 (ref. 1490)	,003	,003	,666	1	,414	1,003
	Owner: Institution (ref. Natural Person)	,248	,197	1,587	1	,208	1,281
	Region (ref. Inland)			38,823	5	<,001	
	Region Antwerp	-3,693	,828	19,889	1	<,001	,025
	Region Antwerp-Periphery	-1,090	,379	8,257	1	,004	,336
	Region Campine	-,011	,481	,000	1	,983	,990
	Region Polder	-1,488	,325	21,008	1	<,001	,226
	Region Unknown	-,945	1,149	,676	1	,411	,389
	Type (ref. Land)			81,947	2	<,001	
	Type Farm	1,725	,247	48,854	1	<,001	5,614
	Type Pasture	-2,295	,533	18,565	1	<,001	,101
	Constant	-6,097	4,686	1,693	1	,193	,002

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: City, Decade, Institution/Natural Person, Region, Type.

### B. The preference for cereals (as compared to contracts without deliveries of cereals).

204 out of 706 contracts include payments in cereals. Significant (sig.) and strong (Exp (B)) differences in the preference for in-kind payments can be found only for the variables City (Antwerp more than Ghent) and Type of Property (Farms more than simple plots of land). Pastures are less likely to be associated with deliveries in cereals, but the explanatory value is weak. The region also provides some significant results, with contracts for properties in the coastal Polder area less likely to include payments in cereals, compared to the Inland region. A low (Exp(B)) once again indicates a limited explanatory value of the latter observation.



**Variables in the Equation**

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1 <sup>a</sup>						
City Antwerp (ref. Ghent)	3,566	,329	117,535	1	<,001	35,380
Decade 1430 (ref. 1490)	,001	,004	,059	1	,809	1,001
Owner: Institution (ref. Natural Person)	,475	,227	4,386	1	,036	1,607
Region (ref.Inland)			41,626	5	<,001	
Region Antwerp	-3,875	1,082	12,817	1	<,001	,021
Region Antwerp Periphery	-,946	,372	6,460	1	,011	,388
Region Campine	,409	,463	,782	1	,376	1,506
Region Polder	-1,687	,345	23,909	1	<,001	,185
Region Unknown	-1,526	1,090	1,958	1	,162	,217
Type (ref. Land)			67,354	2	<,001	
Type Farm	1,749	,275	40,328	1	<,001	5,750
Type Pasture	-2,146	,589	13,271	1	<,001	,117
Constant	-5,089	5,622	,819	1	,365	,006

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: City, Decade, Institution/Natural Person, Region, Type.

Julie Claustre

*Les monnaies alternatives à Paris au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle,  
d'après les transactions d'un atelier de couture*

## 1. Introduction

L'étude qui suit est centrée sur l'atelier d'un acteur économique, le couturier Colin de Lormoye, qui était actif à Paris entre 1420 et 1455, sur la rive gauche de la Seine, entre l'abbaye Saint-Germain-des-Prés et l'église Saint-Séverin. L'analyse monographique des paiements en nature effectués dans sa boutique permet en effet d'examiner plusieurs hypothèses d'interprétation que les historiens formulent usuellement pour comprendre le recours aux paiements non monétaires dans les transactions économiques, un recours très fréquent, y compris chez des marchands professionnels (Dyer 2012, 93-95). Il s'agit donc de mener une microéconomie historique d'un atelier et des moyens de paiement en usage dans celui-ci, afin de tenter de révéler certains des motifs qui présidaient au choix du non-monétaire dans une économie hautement monétarisée. On arguera ainsi qu'une approche microanalytique est un complément nécessaire des analyses macrohistoriques fondées sur des séries de données quantitatives.

Après avoir présenté rapidement la source principale de cette étude, le livre de boutique de Colin de Lormoye, on examinera les paiements en nature acceptés par le couturier, puis ceux qu'il effectuait lui-même. Afin de dessiner quelques interprétations de ces comportements économiques, on tentera de répondre à plusieurs questions: ces paiements en nature reflètent-ils les besoins du couturier? Les nécessités de ses clients? Leurs opportunités respectives? Sont-ils liés à des contextes économiques spécifiques, qu'ils soient commerciaux ou monétaires?

## 2. Le livre de boutique de Colin de Lormoye

Si le manuscrit conservé à la Bibliothèque nationale de France sous la cote NAF 10621 est le seul livre de boutique d'un Parisien conservé pour la période antérieure à 1500, il est en réalité le témoin local d'un type d'écrit de gestion qui s'est diffusé dans la population urbaine européenne au cours du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle. En effet, bien connu et abondamment étudié dans les groupes marchands, l'écrit de gestion a concerné aussi dans ces siècles les groupes des artisans et des petits boutiquiers (Klapisch-Zuber 2001; Coulet 2004; Piccini 2008; Meneghin 2014, Pinelli 2015), voire des paysans (Balestracci 1984; Hautefeuille 2006). Il n'y a donc pas lieu de s'étonner de la tenue d'un tel livre par un couturier de Paris, qui a d'ailleurs son équivalent

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FUP Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing (DOI 10.36253/fup\_best\_practice)

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conservé à Florence pour les mêmes décennies de la première moitié du XVe siècle (Collier Frick 2002, 65).

Il s'agit plus exactement des vestiges du livre de boutique de Colin de Lormoye. En effet, réutilisé, après la mort de son auteur, comme renfort de reliure d'un livre imprimé, le livre initial a été largement amputé de son contenu. Lors de sa découverte en 1907 dans la reliure d'un imprimé de la Bibliothèque nationale de France, le conservateur Camille Couderc en a retiré des fragments qu'il a réunis en 34 feuillets (Couderc 1911).<sup>1</sup> On y trouve le texte plus ou moins étendu de 191 notices de différents types (Tab. 1), dont nous avons récemment proposé une édition revue et corrigée (Claustre 2021).

Tab. 1. Les différents types de notices du livre de Colin de Lormoye (1420-1455)

Types de notices	Nombre
bail (location d'un logement)	1
« compte » (balance de transactions)	14
« mémoire de besogne » (facture)	92
« mémoire de dépenses » (liste de dépenses)	6
« mémoire de dettes » (liste de dettes)	12
quittance de loyer	50
autre quittance	1
reconnaissance de dette	11
inconnu	4
total	191

Ces notices sont, pour beaucoup (92 sur 191), des factures du couturier, appelées «mémoires de besogne», mais on y relève aussi un grand nombre de quittances de loyer de ses propriétaires successifs (au nombre de 50) et des documents enregistrant l'état des rapports financiers entre le couturier et ses partenaires économiques («comptes», reconnaissances et mémoires de dettes). En revanche, ces notices ne disent rien de certains frais de l'atelier, comme les salaires des employés du couturier, ses «gens» et son «valeur» mentionnés ici et là (Claustre 2021, 46, 105). Elles se concentrent en effet sur les rapports entre l'atelier du couturier et ses partenaires extérieurs: propriétaires, clients, mais aussi quelques sous-traitants du couturier. Enfin, un petit nombre de notices concernent un mineur dont le couturier a la tutelle et pour lequel il effectue des dépenses, répertoriées dans ces notices (Claustre 2021, 24, 27).

Soulignons que les fragments conservés ne comportent aucune notation intime, aucune observation du couturier sur sa famille ou sur la situation politique: nous ne sommes pas en présence d'un livre de raison, mais bien d'un livre de gestion, d'où l'appellation «livre de boutique» que nous choisissons de lui appliquer. Cette dernière provient d'un document marseillais appelé *librum butigie* repéré par Daniel Lord Smail (Smail 2016, 114), mais à Paris aux XIVe et XVe siècles, c'est plutôt le mot, simple et flou, de «papier» qui prévalait pour désigner les papiers de gestion des boutiquiers lorsqu'ils étaient invoqués dans un tribunal ou lors d'une succession.

<sup>1</sup> Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF), Paris, NAF 10621, fol. 1-34.

Ce livre focalisé sur les transactions de l'artisan couturier les évalue toutes en monnaie et il est probable que la majorité d'entre elles ont été soldées en monnaie. Le couturier manifeste d'ailleurs une très grande aisance dans le maniement des différentes espèces monétaires ayant cours à Paris et dans leur conversion en monnaies de compte (Claustre 2021, 144-146). Ce n'est donc pas par manque de compétences qu'il accepte et effectue des paiements en nature. En effet, les notices de Colin de Lormoye témoignent de paiements en nature provenant de ses clients comme de lui-même.

### 3. Les paiements en nature acceptés par Colin de Lormoye

Commençons par ceux qui émanent de ses clients qui passent commande auprès de lui de vêtements, ou plus exactement de confections, puisque Colin de Lormoye, «couturier et tailleur de robes», façonne des vêtements à partir du tissu fourni par ses clients. Les factures de ces travaux de confection mentionnent certains des paiements qu'il reçoit, des mentions introduites par le mot «reçu» (sous diverses variantes graphiques). Toutefois, ces mentions de paiements sont loin d'être systématiques. En effet, les «reçus» de paiements, au nombre total de 79 dans l'ensemble des notices du couturier, correspondent aux versements intermédiaires de ses clients, non aux paiements complets des travaux du couturier. Dès lors qu'il considère une facture comme réglée, le couturier se contente de la canceler, c'est-à-dire de la barrer de traits verticaux ou obliques, et il ne prend pas la peine d'écrire alors le détail du règlement final. Seuls les paiements antérieurs au paiement final de la facture sont donc notés.

Ces mentions de versements intermédiaires attestent que le couturier accepte de ses clients des paiements en nature, en proportions non négligeables puisqu'ils constituent 1/5<sup>e</sup> des paiements mentionnés (14 sur 79 exactement). Trois types de biens lui sont ainsi fournis en paiement: des denrées alimentaires, des chandelles et un jardin.

Parmi les denrées alimentaires, ce sont des céréales qu'il reçoit le plus fréquemment en paiement (Tab. 2), même s'il lui arrive aussi d'être payé en noix (Claustre 2021, 106) et en beurre (Claustre 2021, 82).

Tab. 2. Les paiements en céréales acceptés par le couturier Colin de Lormoye (1420-1438)

Volume et type de céréale	Prix (sous parisis par setier)
0,5 setier de blé (Claustre 2021, 26)	16,0
1,54 setier de blé (Claustre 2021, 30)	19,4
1 setier de blé (Claustre 2021, 104)	18
2 setiers de blé (Claustre 2021, 42)	17
1 setier de blé (Claustre 2021, 95)	20
1,5 setier de blé méteil (Claustre 2021, 33)	36
0,5 setier d'orge (Claustre 2021, 33)	22
0,5 setier d'orge (Claustre 2021, 42)	16

Les quantités ainsi reçues par le couturier sont loin d'être négligeables, allant d'un demi à deux setiers, sachant que le setier de blé de Paris équivalait à 1,56 hl (Meuvret

1944, 1971, 74) ou encore à près de 120 kg: de quoi assurer l'approvisionnement de sa maisonnée pour plusieurs semaines. Surtout, le couturier semble recevoir ces céréales à très bon prix. On peut en effet comparer les prix indiqués dans ses factures à ceux issus de la mercuriale de Paris constatée sur les marchés aux grains des Halles, de la Grève et de la Cité (Meuvret 1960), à ceux enregistrés dans les comptes du collège de Beauvais (Baulant 1968), complétés par ceux figurant dans le *Journal d'un bourgeois de Paris* (Beaune 1990) et dans les registres de décisions du chapitre cathédral de Paris pour l'année 1431 (Tab. 3).

Tab. 3. **Prix du blé reçu en paiement par le couturier Colin de Lormoye (CDL) comparé à d'autres prix**

Date approximative du paiement	CDL (s.p./setier)	autre (s.p./setier)
décembre 1420 (Claustre 2021, 26)	16,0	480-512 (Beaune 1990)
1431 (Claustre 2021, 30)	19,4	40-45 (Meuvret 1960, Baulant 1968, Beaune 1990) <sup>2</sup>
janvier 1435 (Claustre 2021, 104)	18	22 (Baulant 1968, Beaune 1990)
1438 (Claustre 2021, 42)	17	80-128 (Meuvret 1960, Baulant 1968, Beaune 1990)

On le voit, si les prix auxquels est évalué le blé reçu par le couturier sont assez stables (de 16 à 19,4 sous par setier), en revanche les écarts entre ces prix retenus par le couturier et ceux relevés dans les autres sources parisiennes sont importants. Certes, les enseignements de cette comparaison sont limités par l'imprécision chronologique des factures de Colin, rarement datées avec précision, comme par celle de la publication de M. Baulant qui avait calculé à partir des comptes du collège de Beauvais des moyennes de prix annuelles et par les lacunes de la mercuriale de Paris (Meuvret 1960). De ce point de vue, il est rassurant de noter que les prévisions des prix du blé faites en janvier par le chapitre cathédral pour la suite de l'année 1431, alors qu'une grave pénurie sévit dans Paris, viennent confirmer tant les chiffres issus de la mercuriale (Meuvret 1960) que ceux provenant des comptes du collège de Beauvais (Baulant 1968) et du « Bourgeois de Paris », en fait un chanoine de la cathédrale (Beaune 1990). Ainsi, en comptant en 1431, 1 setier 1/2 boisseau et 1 mine de blé à 30 s.p., soit le setier de blé à 19,4 s.p., alors que les prix usuels s'élèvent alors au minimum à 40 s.p., le couturier obtint du blé plus de deux fois moins cher que ceux des marchés parisiens. Voilà de quoi le mettre à l'abri de la terrible famine qui sévit alors dans Paris.

À regarder de plus près ces transactions par lesquelles le couturier échange ses confections contre des céréales, deux types de situations se dégagent. En 1438, année de grande cherté d'après le « Bourgeois de Paris » (Beaune 1990, 376-78), il se procure du blé cinq à sept fois moins cher que les prix attestés par ailleurs. La facture qui fait état de ce « reçu » est au nom de Thibaut Lebeuf, un écuyer qui figure dans la clientèle du couturier pendant plus d'une quinzaine d'années, entre 1420 et 1438 (Claustre 2021, 42, 233). Ce bon client passe des commandes régulières de confections pour

<sup>2</sup> Archives nationales de France (ANF), LL113, p. 339.

son épouse, ses enfants, sa sœur, sa chambrière et pour lui-même. Il lui loue aussi une chambre et lui emprunte parfois de l'argent (Claustre 2021, 30). Sur sept notices relatives à ce Thibault Lebeuf dans le livre du couturier, trois seulement sont annulées, donc considérées par le couturier comme réglées (Claustre 2021, 26, 29-30, 32-33, 42, 49, 96). Thibault Lebeuf semble ainsi s'être trouvé dans une position perpétuellement débitrice par rapport au couturier, ce qui pourrait expliquer qu'il soit contraint de lui verser du blé à des prix très nettement inférieurs à ceux du marché. Cet écuyer possède des terres, exploitées par un fermier mentionné incidemment dans une notice (Claustre 2021, 30) et qui lui fournissent probablement de quoi régler une partie de ses achats. Outre ce versement effectué en 1438, Thibaut Lebeuf a déjà versé autour de décembre 1420 une mine de blé, soit un demi-setier, au prix de 16 s.p. le setier (Claustre 2021, 26), un prix particulièrement bas, à une époque pour laquelle on ne dispose ni de la mercuriale ni des relevés des comptes du collège de Beauvais, mais des seuls relevés du «Bourgeois de Paris» qui note une flambée des prix des céréales et d'autres denrées cet hiver-là (Beaune 1990, 165-170). Il semble donc que le couturier parvienne à se procurer, lors de plusieurs épisodes d'inflation alimentaire, des céréales à très bon compte pour prix de son travail. En période de difficulté annonaire, l'intérêt du paiement en nature apparaît ainsi nettement: il permet d'accéder directement à un produit rare, d'éviter le marché et d'en tirer un avantage financier.

La situation est différente au début de l'année 1435, alors que le « Bourgeois de Paris » fait état d'un marché céréalier favorable aux consommateurs (Beaune 1990, 334). L'archidiacre d'Auge paie une partie de sa facture avec un setier de blé à 18 s.p. (Claustre 2021, 104), à peine 20 % moins cher que les prix relevés au collège de Beauvais (Baulant 1968). Or, ce prix a été fixé, selon la notice du livre du couturier, après la consultation d'experts («sur le report de gant conoysans a la marchandise», Claustre 2021, 104), une précaution tout à fait exceptionnelle dans les papiers du couturier conservés. Cet archidiacre d'Auge était à la fois un dignitaire du diocèse de Lisieux et un des chanoines de la cathédrale de Paris depuis 1426. Il se nommait Pierre Cardonnel et était médecin<sup>3</sup>. Mais il avait aussi assumé les fonctions de prévôt des prévôtés de Rozay et d'Epône et d'officier des heures pour le chapitre en 1427<sup>4</sup>, c'est-à-dire des fonctions de gestion pour le chapitre cathédral (Gane 1999, 75). Voilà qui le plaçait en bonne position pour trouver des interlocuteurs marchands de céréales et pour négocier avec le couturier des prix moins défavorables. L'inventaire de ses biens dressé en 1438 juste après son décès mentionne d'ailleurs la présence dans ses maisons de mesures de blé et d'avoine, de stocks d'avoine, de blé (pas moins de 3 muids soit 36 setiers!), de seigle, de fèves, de pois et de vin, le tout représentant près de la moitié de la valeur de ses biens mobiliers (Douët d'Arcq 1880). Sans doute Pierre Cardonnel était-il très au fait des prix de ces denrées alimentaires qu'il stockait d'abondance chez lui. Il parvient en tout cas à imposer au couturier un prix du blé plus élevé que Thibaut Lebeuf dans une période de prix pourtant contenus. La facture qui se rapporte à lui est annulée, signe que le couturier la considérait comme réglée.

<sup>3</sup> ANF, LL113, p. 51.

<sup>4</sup> ANF, LL113, p. 97, 99.

Au total, les transactions en blé du couturier lui procurent ces denrées à des prix assez stables, le mettant à l'abri des énormes fluctuations du marché. Elles paraissent lui avoir été très favorables, mais d'une manière variable selon le profil de ses clients. Le contraste entre le petit aristocrate laïque endetté et le prélat bien doté et bien informé des prix parisiens est frappant, soulignant le caractère négocié et personnalisé de l'échange en nature. Dans les deux situations de transactions que nous venons d'évoquer, le rapport de force entre les parties est en fait inverse et aboutit pour le couturier à des gains de prix par rapport au marché très différents.

Une autre marchandise qui revient à plusieurs reprises en guise de paiement au couturier est constituée par les chandelles (Claustre 2021, 84-85). Fournies par le même client, elles sont plus exactement appelées « torches », terme qui désigne alors un flambeau composé de plusieurs chandelles cylindriques soudées ensemble (Vincent 2004, 92) ou plus précisément à Paris au milieu du XVe siècle un *cierge*, c'est-à-dire, une grosse chandelle pesant plus d'une livre (Gay 1887, I, 317, 379). Les « torches » fournies au couturier pèsent pour l'une, 18 onces, pour deux autres 20 onces, soit un peu plus d'une livre<sup>5</sup>, les deux dernières étant simplement évaluées en monnaie et non en poids (4 s.p. chacune). Ce client qui paie Colin de Lormoye en chandelles est le curé de l'église Saint-Séverin, dans la paroisse duquel il réside au minimum entre les années 1439 et 1448. Il se nomme Denis de Sabrevois (ou Sabrevrays) : ce théologien a été recteur de la faculté de théologie de Paris, chanoine de Saint-Merri<sup>6</sup> et il tient la cure de Saint-Séverin de 1438 à 1459 (Couderc 1911, 149-152). Quatre factures (Claustre 2021, 48, 62-63, 75, 83-85) se rapportent à lui dans le livre du couturier. La longue facture mentionnant ces chandelles (Claustre 2021, 83-85) énumère 19 commandes de confections, sept paiements en monnaie et trois paiements en « torche » pour un total de cinq « torches ». Elle se prête ainsi à une analyse plus précise des comportements de paiement des deux partenaires. La facture comporte d'abord trois ensembles de commandes de confections, séparés par des paiements partiels en monnaie : cinq travaux sont suivis d'un premier paiement de 7 s.p., deux travaux d'un deuxième paiement de 11 s.p.; deux travaux d'un troisième paiement d'un demi écu d'or. Puis vient un ensemble plus imposant de six travaux, comportant en particulier un *pourpoint* coûteux (16 s.p.). C'est cet ensemble qui est accompagné du versement de trois « torches » et d'un écu. Ensuite chaque nouvelle commande est accompagnée d'un paiement monétaire ou bien mixte (argent et « torche ») ou encore seulement en « torche ». Tout se passe comme si le couturier demandait, au fil de ses relations avec ce client gourmand, des paiements mixtes, propres à satisfaire les importants besoins en lumière de son travail de précision. En effet, le curé de Saint-Séverin est un client important pour le couturier, passant commande pour lui-même, mais aussi pour son clerc et pour ses deux neveux. Il apparaît comme un bon payeur puisqu'une seule des notices se rapportant à lui n'est pas annulée et qu'elle est très brève, se limitant à deux confections pour un montant de 5 s.p. (Claustre 2021, 75). Un autre indice qui plaide pour une demande de « torches » émanant du couturier est précisément ce terme de « torche » : d'après le règlement du métier des épiciers de Paris daté de 1450, « torche » et « cierge » sont deux termes

<sup>5</sup> La livre poids équivaut à 16 onces à Paris au XVe siècle. ORF, XIV, 115.

<sup>6</sup> ANF, LL 112, p. 259 (1420).

synonymes désignant des produits pesant plus d'une livre et contrastant avec le terme « chandelle » désignant des produits de plus faible poids, pesant moins d'une livre<sup>7</sup>. Précisément, un curé de paroisse était bien placé pour fournir des cierges, de grosses chandelles indispensables à la liturgie: au milieu du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle, il était fréquent que le curé soit chargé de fournir les cierges du chœur et du maître-autel, la fourniture des cierges des autres autels incombant à la fabrique (Vincent 2004, 139). Ainsi, on ne peut que constater l'habileté du couturier à obtenir une denrée indispensable auprès d'un fournisseur nécessairement bien achalandé, mais bien différent des fabricants et vendeurs professionnels parisiens, à savoir les chandeliers et épiciers installés en boutiques ainsi que les chandeliers du parvis de la cathédrale.

Dernier type de paiement en nature accepté par le couturier: un jardin («quortil», Claustre 2021, 75). C'est maître Rou (ou Raoul) Morin, un maître attesté comme tenant une école, ou «pédagogie», dans les années 1440 (Lusignan 1999, 115-116 et 221-223, Ioffé 2015, 353-58), qui cède ce jardin au couturier au terme d'une longue facture de dix-neuf travaux de confection, dont le montant total est évalué par le couturier à 6 francs, soit 96 s.p. Le jardin est quant à lui évalué au prix de 44 s.p. et c'est le seul paiement enregistré par le couturier pour cette importante facture. Trois grosses notices (Claustre 2021, 73-75, 81-82) se rapportent à ce client dans le livre de Colin. Rou Morin passe en effet commande pour ses parents, sa nièce, son cousin, son neveu, sa commère, mais aussi pour ses écoliers, les maîtres qu'il emploie dans son école, son cuisinier et son «dépensier», c'est-à-dire un autre de ses serviteurs nécessaires au fonctionnement de son école. Les seuls paiements notés dans les factures conservées consistent en ce jardin et en un pot de beurre de 19 livres (Claustre 2021, 82), dont on peut supposer que le directeur d'école qu'il était avait besoin pour nourrir son personnel et ses élèves. Quant au jardin, rien ne permet dans le livre du couturier de savoir ce qu'il en fait et en l'absence de toute information sur sa localisation et sur sa taille, il est difficile d'en apprécier la valeur. Tout au plus peut-on constater qu'il n'est pas rare que des jardins situés dans ou hors de Paris rapportent 16 à 20 s.p. par an de rente, à cette époque<sup>8</sup>. Ce n'était sans doute pas une mauvaise affaire, qu'il le revende, le loue ou le fasse mettre en culture par un jardinier (Gurvil 2010). S'il est délicat de conclure au sujet de ces transactions en nature entre Rou Morin et le couturier, le fait que d'une part les trois notices se rapportant à lui soient annulées, donc considérées comme réglées par le couturier, et que d'autre part, aucun paiement en monnaie n'apparaisse dans les notices conservées laisse à penser que ce client devait, en dépit de son activité académique, manquer de numéraire: les transferts de biens en nature viendraient dans son cas compenser les problèmes temporaires de trésorerie de son entreprise scolaire, entre les retards de paiement de ses élèves, les salaires de ses employés et les besoins quotidiens de ses élèves et employés.

Au total, même si les paiements en nature représentent une part minoritaire des paiements enregistrés dans le livre de boutique du couturier, ils sont loin d'apparaître

<sup>7</sup> ORF, XIV, 115.

<sup>8</sup> ANF LL 115, p. 113 (1441); LL116, p. 572 (1449).



comme des pis-allers, mais plutôt comme des occasions stratégiquement saisies par le couturier dans ses relations avec certains de ses clients.

#### 4. Les paiements en nature effectués par Colin de Lormoye

De manière symétrique, certaines factures et quelques autres notices attestent du fait que le couturier paie certains de ses partenaires économiques en nature, c'est-à-dire en travail. Ces situations, assez banales dans l'économie urbaine tardomédiévale (Bresc 2013, 41; Blasco Orellana *et alii* 2016, 288), sont différentes de celles qui précèdent en ce sens que c'est le couturier qui paraît être alors à l'initiative du troc.

Il lui arrive ainsi en une occasion de régler une partie de son loyer en « façons » de vêtements: c'est le cas en 1426 d'après une quittance de son propriétaire Colin Garot (Claustre 2021, 21). C'est aussi de son activité de confection qu'il paie la viande qu'il achète à un boucher (Claustre 2021, 45): la facture émise pour ce boucher énumère cinq travaux de confection pour le boucher et pour son fils, pour un montant global de 22 s.p., puis elle mentionne deux dettes de viande du couturier pour un montant global de 12 s.p. (« Sur se luy doi pour XI s.p. de cher. Item depuis en char XII d. ») La notice est annulée, donc considérée comme réglée par le couturier. Ainsi le couturier finance-t-il ponctuellement certains de ses besoins élémentaires, logement et nourriture, directement par son travail.

Mais c'est surtout un service de moyenne durée que le couturier a payé de son travail: Colin de Lormoye paie intégralement les frais d'école de son fils, nommé Galaes, en tâches de confection. Pas moins de neuf notices sont dédiées à son maître, Jehan Boucard, entre 1439 et 1443 (Claustre 2021, 52-54, 55, 56-57, 59-60, 63-65). Comme Rou Morin, Jehan Boucard tient une « pédagogie », soit une école. Recteur et confesseur des rois Charles VII puis Louis XI, c'est un maître célèbre de l'université de Paris. Ses commandes sont prolifiques: les quatre factures énumèrent au total 54 commandes de confections, pour lui-même, son clerc, les maîtres qu'il emploie et ses élèves. Avec cette école, c'est en effet une maisonnée assez nombreuse qui entre dans la clientèle du couturier. Chef de cette entreprise scolaire, Jehan Boucard contribue au vêtement de certains des élèves qui lui sont confiés (Antoine de Montigny, Ytasse, Dieudelige, Pierre de Bouvilies, Claustre 2021, 63-65), à celui de son clerc (qui reçoit une houppelande, une robe et un chaperon, Claustre 2021, 53, 64) et des maîtres qui travaillent pour lui dans sa pédagogie: maître Jehan Lamy reçoit un pourpoint, maître Pelin une houppelande doublée, maître Jehan Raro deux houppelandes, maître Heustace une houppelande, un chaperon et une paire de chausses, maître Robert une houppelande (Claustre 2021, 52-53, 54, 64). Cette part de rémunération en vêtements est très fréquente pour les domestiques dans la société médiévale. Le livre de Colin de Lormoye en atteste, bien au-delà du cas de l'entreprise scolaire de Jehan Boucard: nourrices, chambrières, valets, cuisiniers, clercs et pages de plusieurs de ses clients sont vêtus par leurs employeurs, qui passent commande pour eux auprès de Colin (Claustre 2021, 47, 50, 97, 101...).

À ces factures s'ajoutent des « comptes », c'est-à-dire des actes brefs par lesquels le couturier et Jehan Boucard établissent régulièrement le bilan de leurs transactions.

Chacun de ces « comptes » est signé par Jehan Boucard. L'un d'eux est particulièrement précis:

[L'an m]il quatre cens quarante et ung le premier jour de fervier Nicolas de Lourme [et] cousturier et moy Jehan Boucart contasmes ensemble de toutes les choses que paravant avions eu a faire ensembles tant a cause de son mestier de cousture que de l'escolage de son filz mon escolier par ainsi que fusmes quittes l'ung a l'aultres totalment tesmoing mon signe manuel cy mis ce dessusdit premier jour de fervier mil IIII<sup>c</sup> quarante et ung.

Somme XX f. VI s. VIII d. p.

Receu VIII f. IIII s. p.

Reste XII f. II s. VIII d.

J. Boucard (Claustre 2021, 59).

Cette cédule s'achève ainsi sur un état numérique du coût de l'enseignement, de celui des confections et du reste, important, dû par le couturier au maître de son fils: c'est là un type de document tout à fait singulier par lequel deux professionnels comparent la valeur économique de leur travail. Trois des « comptes » que le couturier et le maître ont préparés sont datés, respectivement des 15 juin 1441, 1<sup>er</sup> février 1442 et 2 mars 1443 (Claustre 2021, 55, 59-60). Or l'année scolaire commence habituellement à l'automne pour s'arrêter autour de la Saint-Jean-Baptiste, le 24 juin. Ces comptes pourraient donc correspondre à des bilans financiers semestriels établis par le maître avec le père d'un de ses élèves. Dans ces conditions, Jehan Boucard facturerait à plus de 20 francs, soit plus de 320 s.p., une demi-année d'enseignement. De son côté, les dizaines de factures du couturier révèlent qu'il évalue la confection des vêtements de grande taille, houppelandes, manteaux ou robes, à 6 ou 8 s.p. Un semestre d'enseignement vaudrait donc 40 à 50 de ces travaux de couture. Deux factures émises par Colin de Lormoye pour Jehan Boucard et conservées dans leur intégralité énumèrent un total de 31 travaux de confection pour un montant global de plus 168 s.p. (Claustre 2021, 54, 63-64): une trentaine de travaux de couture atteignent la valeur de la moitié d'un semestre d'enseignement de l'école de Jehan Boucard. Ces rapprochements, faits par les acteurs eux-mêmes à travers ces petits textes appelés « comptes », révèlent bien l'écart considérable entre le prix de l'enseignement et celui du travail de couture dans la société médiévale, un écart qui creuse la dette scolaire du fils du couturier et que le couturier s'efforce de combler en multipliant les travaux de confection.

Le couturier va même plus loin puisque, devant financer les études de son fils, il ne se contente pas d'augmenter la charge de travail de son atelier. Il accepte aussi de jouer le rôle d'intermédiaire pour maître Jehan Boucard en sous-traitant une partie du travail d'entretien de la garde-robe du maître auprès d'un fripier et d'un probable tondeur de draps: le lavage et le « défronçage » d'une « chape » par le « friepier » sont ainsi facturés par le couturier à 2 s.p. (Claustre 2021, 54) et une opération de « tontaje » est facturée également à 2 s.p. (Claustre 2021, 65). Tout se passe donc comme si le couturier cherchait à capter la part la plus grande possible de l'activité vestimentaire au service de l'école de Jehan Boucard. Le surtravail auquel il s'astreint pour régler la

dette scolaire de son fils le conduit à établir des circuits d'échanges relativement complexes, puisqu'il est amené non seulement à travailler pour les élèves et employés de Jehan Boucard, mais aussi pour son boulanger (une houppelande doublée, Claustre 2021, 64) et pour l'épouse de celui-ci (une «robe hardie», Claustre 2021, 54). Un sur-travail qui s'est avéré fructueux pour le couturier et son fils: Galaes ou Gélase Gourdin est devenu bachelier en 1447, licencié et maître ès arts en 1448 (Studium 2019, 19778). On le retrouve chapelain de la cathédrale de Paris dès le 17 juillet 1448 dans la chapelle des saints Denis et Georges et il reçoit successivement les ordres sacrés jusqu'à celui de prêtre en 1450-1451<sup>9</sup>.

## 5. Interprétations

De cet examen microanalytique des transactions de Colin de Lormoye, on peut tirer quelques interprétations des usages des paiements en nature et en travail parmi des citadins du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle.

Première hypothèse: ces modes de paiement sont-ils l'effet d'une volonté des acteurs d'échapper à des réglementations des prix contraignantes? Pour répondre, il faut s'intéresser à la formation des prix des principaux biens et services échangés dans la boutique de Colin de Lormoye. Concernant les céréales, leur commerce est libre à Paris à cette époque: ce sont non les prix des grains sur les marchés, mais le poids et la qualité des pains vendus par les boulangers qui sont réglementés (Meuvret 1960). Dès lors, en période de cherté, acquérir des céréales à bas prix permet d'éviter la baisse des volumes de pain disponibles et la hausse des prix des grains sur les marchés de la ville. Concernant le travail du couturier, aucun texte réglementaire parisien postérieur à 1351 ne fixe les prix des façons. Plus exactement, les tarifs des façons sont absents de tous les règlements du métier parisien connus depuis la fin du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle (Lespinasse 1886, 178-89). Seules deux ordonnances royales sur l'ensemble des prix et salaires parisiens, datées de 1307 et 1351, ont légiféré en matière de prix des confections (Fagniez 1900, 15, Lespinasse 1886, 33). Or, les prix pratiqués dans la première moitié du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle par Colin de Lormoye, d'après ses factures, sont très différents de ces tarifs, de même d'ailleurs que le lexique du vêtement. En revanche, il s'avère que les prix qu'il pratique sont d'une étonnante stabilité sur une trentaine d'années. En particulier, s'ils varient avec le genre (homme/femme) et le statut d'âge (adulte/enfant) des consommateurs, ils ne varient pas du tout avec la nature des étoffes que le couturier découpe et assemble, ni avec les mensurations des destinataires dont il n'est jamais fait mention (Tab. 4).

L'atelier de Colin de Lormoye suit donc pendant une trentaine d'années un tarif des façons fixe. Seule la confection des pourpoints y échappe, car pour ces vêtements dont la caractéristique est d'être rembourrés, le couturier fournit et facture les étoffes de rembourrage, qui viennent considérablement gonfler le prix des façons: le prix des pourpoints oscille donc dans l'ensemble des factures entre 4 et 28 s.p. (Claustre 2021, 211). Hormis cette exception des pourpoints, le couturier se conforme pour son

<sup>9</sup> Il est nommé chapelain en 1448, Arch. Nat. LL116, p. 477. Il est promu acolyte en 1450, LL116, p. 804, sous-diacre, puis diacre, puis prêtre en 1451, LL117, p. 16, p. 34, p. 60. Il renonce à sa chapellenie en 1487, LL123-124, p. 616.

travail à un tarif d'une remarquable fixité, un tarif coutumier qui n'est probablement pas imposé par l'organisation corporative, mais par le chef de boutique lui-même.

Tab. 4. Prix habituels des façons de vêtements chez Colin de Lormoye

Type et quantité de vêtements	Prix unitaire (sous paris)
Houppelande: 275	6 ou 8 (homme/femme)
Chaperon: 174	2 ou 3 (sans/avec bourrelet)
Robe: 103	4, 6 ou 8 (enfant/adulte, homme/femme)
Jaquette: 40	4
Chausses: 29	2

Au total, le recours aux monnaies alternatives ne paraît donc pas résulter d'une volonté de contourner des réglementations en matière de prix.

Deuxième hypothèse: ce recours est-il l'indice de problèmes monétaires que le couturier et ses clients tenteraient d'éviter? Relevons tout d'abord que le livre du couturier ne mentionne aucunement la prise en compte d'une telle difficulté. Mais il est vrai que les mutations monétaires sont si fréquentes dans les années 1417-1433 qu'elles font sans doute partie de la toile de fond du fonctionnement de la boutique, au début de la période d'activité de Colin de Lormoye. Des mutations monétaires sont intervenues à de multiples reprises dans les années 1417-1422 et 1427-1429 (Bompaire et Dumas 2000, 414). D'autres sont documentées par les registres de décisions du chapitre cathédral de Paris, où les mentions de monnaie faible (*debilis monete*) et monnaie forte (*forti monete*) sont particulièrement nombreuses dans les années 1421-1423, 1426, 1428 et 1433<sup>10</sup>. Le couturier excelle d'ailleurs dans l'art de passer d'une unité de compte à l'autre (parisis et tournois) et de ces unités de compte aux diverses monnaies réelles (blancs, écus, saluts, lions). Les périodes d'instabilité monétaire aiguë liées aux mutations pourraient coïncider avec les paiements en blé, blé méteil et orge acceptés par Colin fin 1420 et fin 1432 (Claustre 2021, 26, 33). Il est donc possible que la volatilité monétaire ait provoqué le recours ponctuel de Colin à des paiements en grains, mais il est douteux qu'elle explique l'ensemble de ses pratiques.

Troisième hypothèse: le recours aux paiements en grains s'explique-t-il par la volatilité des prix des subsistances dans cette société médiévale? Il nous semble l'avoir bien montré par la comparaison des factures de Colin et des séries de prix établies à Paris. Le couturier se met ainsi à l'abri des fluctuations extrêmes des marchés parisiens. À certaines conditions toutefois: il doit avoir dans sa clientèle des personnes dotées de terres productrices de céréales et dans de telles difficultés financières qu'elles sont contraintes de lui céder des denrées à des coûts très inférieurs à ceux du marché. L'écuier Thibault Lebeuf est dans cette situation, contrairement au chanoine Pierre Cardonnel. L'examen de ces contrastes de situations suggère l'intérêt pour l'artisan d'avoir une clientèle diversifiée, faite de personnes riches faisant de nombreuses commandes, mais aussi de propriétaires fonciers peu solvables, aussi paradoxal que cela puisse paraître, car de ces personnes peu solvables il est aisé et profitable

<sup>10</sup> ANF, LL112 et 113.

d'obtenir des grains en période de cherté. Cette troisième hypothèse conduit ainsi directement à la formulation d'une quatrième.

Quatrième hypothèse donc: le recours à des monnaies alternatives est étroitement lié à la structure des revenus dans la société considérée. Le dénivelé économique et social qui sépare le couturier du maître de son fils, Jehan Boucard, et l'impossibilité pour le couturier de gagner assez d'argent avec son travail auprès d'autres clients pour payer ce maître en monnaie l'amènent à un surtravail, voire à se faire pratiquement l'employé de ce client particulier. Le couturier n'est en effet détenteur que de sa force de travail, n'étant pas possesseur de la matière première textile, très coûteuse en revanche. Or, sa force de travail s'évalue dans le Paris médiéval à un niveau assez bas. En effet, quand Colin de Lormoye fabrique une chape noire pour le chapitre Notre-Dame en 1451, 14 s.p. lui reviennent contre 80 au drapier qui vend l'étoffe<sup>11</sup>. Quand il paie les frais d'école de son fils, il doit fabriquer une trentaine de pièces de vêtements pour financer un trimestre. Les couturiers et tailleurs de robes figurent d'ailleurs parmi les contribuables les moins taxés, à Paris comme ailleurs (Claustre 2021, 173, 176; Swanson 1989, 46; Davies et Saunders 2004, 7). L'analyse serrée des transactions entre Colin de Lormoye et ses clients, l'observation des relations de troc qu'il instaure avec certains, échangeant services contre services, « besogne » contre « besogne », suggèrent ainsi fortement que d'importantes inégalités de revenus génèrent le recours à des monnaies alternatives, y compris au sein d'économies hautement commercialisées et monétarisées.

Partant du livre de boutique de Colin de Lormoye, on a pu observer que les paiements en nature sont bien présents en ville au XVe siècle et qu'ils recouvrent des réalités diverses: paiements en travail, en céréales, en noix, en beurre, en cierges, et même en parcelle de terre (un jardin). Ils animent une part de troc dans cette économie largement monétarisée: le couturier échange ainsi ses façons de vêtements contre des services d'enseignement, de logement ou contre de la viande. Ils interviennent pour des motifs assez divers: comme moyens d'accéder à des denrées alimentaires à bas coût en temps d'inflation, comme moyens d'obtenir de façon sûre des biens de première nécessité, comme moyens de neutraliser les effets de l'instabilité monétaire, comme moyens de rétribuer des services très coûteux en l'absence de capacité d'accumulation monétaire, c'est-à-dire comme moyens d'accéder à une forme de crédit. Plus généralement et surtout, ces paiements alternatifs paraissent étroitement liés aux forts dénivelés économiques et sociaux qui traversent la société parisienne. Loin d'être le symptôme d'une économie archaïque ou de pénurie, ils sont plutôt celui des inégalités prodigieuses de la société urbaine tardomédiévale.

La lecture serrée des notices enregistrant les transactions entre le couturier et ses clients, notamment celle des factures et des «comptes» concernant Jehan Boucart, Thibault Lebeuf et Pierre Cardonnel, montre que ce ne sont pas principalement les institutions, corporatives ou monétaires, encadrant les échanges qui expliquent les pratiques transactionnelles des acteurs, mais bien les propriétés sociales des acteurs engagés dans ces échanges, ainsi que leur place dans la hiérarchie sociale et dans la division du travail de la société tardomédiévale.

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<sup>11</sup> ANF, LL117, p. 121.

Au point de vue de l'épistémologie de l'histoire économique, cela revient à dire que l'économie des marchés anciens ne suffit pas à rendre compte des transactions qui s'y déroulaient et qu'elle doit être complétée par une sociologie des acteurs des échanges (Bourdieu 1979; Douglas et Isherwood 1979; François 2019). L'examen microanalytique des situations documentées par les écrits de gestion d'un artisan s'avère ainsi complémentaire des analyses macroanalytiques qui agrègent les données sur les volumes et les prix des marchandises et rémunérations.

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Alejandra Irigoin

*Respondentia: The alternative contract for global trade finance  
in the Early Modern Period*

Respondentia in the title is evocative of the name of the main thoroughfare in front of all European factories in eighteenth century Canton and that of the main promenade between East India Company's Fort William and the Hoogly River in Calcutta at the time. To name such surroundings at the heart of European commerce in Asia with that of a contract is interesting and curious enough to merit a reflection on its role in the financial history of early modern global trade. Such central loci were not named after alleged superior and more efficient alternatives – in the canonical literature – like the bills of exchange. This paper argues that what explains its prevalence in financing long-distance trade was a basic characteristic of this contract across markets and nations until the 1800s, namely the specification of the monies in which the contract was settled, which made it perform better than other cashless alternatives. In an international trade lacking both a common standard for precious metals across markets and a cashless means of settlement, trade meant dealing with different monies and diverse means of payment. Thus, performing with «foreign money» added another risk to the better known mercantile and navigation hazards: a currency risk.

Drawing mostly from references available in (admittedly a bit aged) historical literature on different trades, it is possible to look at the respondentia contract anew through the lens of monetary issues. This paper argues that respondentia granted certainty to the values expected in return of the capital or, more broadly, the future value of the trade. In so doing, it provided a mitigation of a currency risk in the long-distance trade of the period. It also allowed those who intermediated in it to reap the benefits of arbitrage profits. This also justifies the persistence of respondentia contracts across markets and nations until the 1800s.

The paper documents the use of the instrument in a variety of trades that Europeans and non-Europeans alike carried out outside Europe. The **first section** traces the global use of respondentia into the 1800s, and discusses the understanding of the instrument in a comparative assessment of the drivers of this mode of trade finance. The **second** delves into the nature of the premia and the determinants of its high rates. Roughly, it describes the trends across eighteenth-century global commerce; the **third** takes on the exchange character of the instrument looking into the monetary issues embedded in maritime trade that performed within a diverse monetary setting. It discusses the relative efficiency of the contract over cashless alternatives which boomed in Europe at that time. Some conclusions follow.

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Respondentia appears to be the most ubiquitous private contract for trade finance outside the chartered companies. The instrument was ‘widespread’ in the commerce of Europeans overseas where the use and circulation of bills took much longer to take roots (Prakash 2008). It had different names in different trades (*correspondencia*, *cambio marítimo*, *riesgo marítimo o de mar* in Spanish; *risco* or *ganbo de mar* in Portuguese, *risque* or *prêt à la grosse aventure* in French, *cambio marittimo* in Italian, *bordermerije* or *bomerie* in Dutch and respondentia in English. It was widely used in the Mediterranean since Roman times, probably by the Phoenicians as well, and was particularly associated with the Genoese early intermediation of trade in Byzantium and the Levant (DeRoover 1969). It was similar to the *muzarbat* or the *avak* among Indian *sarrāifs* (Haider 2019) or the *nagegame* of the Japanese trade with China before the sixteenth century (Oka 2001), so it is difficult to claim, conclusively, that respondentia had clear European roots. Yet, after 1600, it reached another global scale with European long-distance sailing. It spread from the Mediterranean to the three oceans and the China seas, at a time when the circulation of bills was evolving into a cashless system of payment at the core of Europe.

Charles Lockyer, a supercargo of the East India Company, EIC hereafter, in the 1710s, advised that «A man of an honest character seldom wants money at *Bottomree*, or *Respondentia* to what port soever, he is bound, on his own personal security». Nevertheless, he detailed the rates of premia in Madras for lending to eleven Asian destinations ranging from 16-18% for Aachen and Bengal to 40-45% to China and Persia (Lockyer 1711, 17-18). Captains of the English Company in India used respondentia to transfer profits and legacies back home and in deals with South Asian lenders (Prakash 2008). Because it was dominant in the trade finance of Spaniards in both America and Asia, it has been cursorily associated with Spain’s limited financial development (Carrière 1970). However, the contract was also instrumental to subscribe the initial capital of the *Compagnie Francaise des Indes Orientale* in 1700 (*Recueil ou collection des titres ... 1775*) and was what financed early Portuguese trade from Brazil in the seventeenth century, when sugar served as remittance (Strum 2017; Mauro 1960). In the early eighteenth century, private merchants used it for remittances in the diamond trade through the EIC (IOR.Misc IOR/M/fs 389-406). It also appeared in the businesses of the Dutch and of the Danish and Swedish companies in the East Indies later in the century. It showed up equally in the West Indies trade. Dutch merchants in Curaçao sent «sealed bags of Spanish silver» to Amsterdam via Albany, NY in the 1740s on respondentia with «a 10% agio» (McCusker 1978, 293-95), and North Americans, who were latecomers to the East Indies, used respondentia too in deals in India and China by the 1800s (Porter 1937).

This ubiquity is intriguing. It highlights another feature of respondentia that seems central for its spread: its preference over bills of exchange in those trades. By prescribing the quality of the monies in the repayment of investments, the contract seems convenient for maritime commerce involving different currencies and peoples with a long waiting time – as apparently it was not used in overland (shorter distance) exchanges. Arguably, it served well to hedge against uncertainty in future prices.

## I

Across trades and over time, this contract had common basic characteristics. It comprised an advance of capital (whether in goods or money) to be reimbursed after the vessel's successful arrival to a port of destination, for a pre-established percentage on the principal without a clear maturity or sight term. Everywhere the loan was timed from the date of the ship's departure to an additional, defined period following the arrival to destination. This could be a matter of weeks in the Mediterranean and in the China Seas; of months (between one and three) in intra-Asian trade or in the Atlantic, where terms followed the fairs of goods, and it might extend over years in longer distance sailing over the Pacific. It mostly applied to one-way trips, which suggests a trade or capital flowing in one direction only. The destination port was not always specified or was broadly defined. For instance, destination could be to the «Kingdom of China, Coast of Java, and Coast of Coromandel» in lending contracts for Asia, or to «the Indies» or «Mar del Sud» (South Seas) in the Atlantic. Sometimes the loan allowed other ports of call on transit, which was a frequent occurrence in the seventeenth century in intra-Asia trade or in the Caribbean. Over the Pacific, lending in Manila was confined to Acapulco as terminus of the one galleon line. Round-trip specific destinations were rare; they seem related to capital originating elsewhere than the port of departure.

A caveat is in order though: given the private nature of the contract, i.e. a one-off, termed, and non-negotiable agreement between private parties, little hard evidence remains to quantify information on values or trends. As in the case of bills, few traces of its systematic use survive unless there was a dispute or the intervention of a notary. Institutional lenders were an exception rather than the norm and they notably clustered in the Asia trade. Evidence is more abundant among their records, in private papers of merchant-brokers and in the registers of notaries whose role in maritime commercial contracts was different from that of eighteenth-century France (Hoffman et al. 1995). There is no evidence that matching borrowers and lenders to mobilise capital or liquidity was their function. They did not necessarily overcome asymmetric information but rather established the legitimate claims and means to solve disputes on transactions which were realised thousands of miles away and took months (and often years) to settle. Nevertheless, the qualitative evidence is very abundant, as historians have widely recorded its use in the vast scholarship of the different trades, but always separately and in isolation, with various and disparate interpretations. This segmented approach to the instrument has led to different understandings of the contract. Because it was waning in the later half of the eighteenth century and a cashless means of remittance altogether replaced it in the nineteenth century, financial historians assumed the inefficiency of *respondentia*, associated with the shallow development of the financial markets where it was ordinary.

There was some attention to the contract, mostly in continental Europe, from historians looking into the «commercial revolution» (See 1928, Hoover 1926, Sayous 1927, De Roover 1946). Flemish, French, and Italian economic historians studied its Mediterranean iteration into the Atlantic in the 1960s and 1970s, where the contract was preminent in the sourcing of American silver to the Old World since 1600

(Everaert 1971; Carrière 1970; Bernal 2013). Despite its importance for French commercial houses invested in the re-export of textiles, slaves and silver specie, French scholars defined the *respondentia* as «*technique menue . . .*» (Carrière 1970, 231) and qualified the business as «tantamount to trying luck, to making a good move; this playful conception of business reveals an increasing . . . diversion of funds from productive investments» (Chamboredon 1995, 387).

So, research on the instrument declined as it had not ostensibly been conducive to the development of the financial system or to improvements in productivity. Financial historians turned their attention to the finance of wars, of princes and of parliaments, and to the establishment of banks and stable fiat monies, focusing instead on the role of bills of exchange, bonds, and sovereign debt instruments. Research on private trade finance was overshadowed by the incipient corporate finance of the East Indies companies, and remained locked in a multitude of separate, micro studies on the business of individual merchants or merchant houses. But *respondentia* did not disappear, and probably even expanded beyond Europe. In fact, historians of extra-European trade have repeatedly come across the contract, without much exploration beyond it being mostly considered an ‘anomaly’. For McCusker, «not all is perfectly clear (about the contract) but it was certain there were no bottomry transactions of the usual sort» (McCusker 1978, 295).

Historians’ definition of *respondentia* owes much to a vast literature that appeared in Europe in the late eighteenth century on the contractual and legal elements of commercial and financial instruments. (Targa 1692/1803; Ricard 1722, 1723; Cunningham 1761; Weskett 1781; Émérigon 1783; Allen Park 1787/1799; Marshall, S. 1802; Annesley 1808). These titles, mostly published in English, offer a common general description of the instrument and point at the specificities of how the Spanish used it. For a lack of a clearer definition, Weskett noted that it was «in Spain where they (*respondentia*) are more frequent than elsewhere – and better understood» (Weskett 1781). Yet, Spain’s legal tracts on commercial and financial contracts, namely the *Ordenanzas de Bilbao* enacted in 1737, distinguished *respondentia* (ch 23) for the first time, from bottomry, policy insurance and other lending instruments after centuries of use. In a 1783 book dealing with commercial contracts, the French lawyer Balthazard-Marie Émérigon contended that «the contract *à la grosse* is adopted in all maritime places. It is neither a sale, nor a partnership, nor a loan properly so called, nor an insurance, nor a monstrous compound of various contracts. [...] It has a character and attributes of its own. [...] *It is different from all other contracts. It forms a special kind of contract.*» (Émérigon 1783, 389 emphasis added). So, exactly what sort of contract was the *respondentia*? Was it a securitised loan or a risky investment?

Because bottomry loans also consisted of an advance in capital securitised on the ship or on freights if taken by shipmasters, historians writing in English have associated both instruments and defined *respondentia* as a «loan cum insurance» – mostly to reflect on its waning importance once the maritime insurance policy appeared in Northern Europe (Steckley 2001; Ebert 2011; Leonard 2012). However, the risk of total loss was moderated by General Average (Weskett 1781, Fusaro et al 2023) or the best practice of the local *Lex Mercatoria*. Partial losses from jettison or proven negligence of the captain were apportioned among those vested in the ship load; or in the Spanish case by the *averia*, which was managed by commercial guilds

at the port of departure after 1660 (Diaz 1961). In France, for instance, creditors of *prêts-à-la-grosse* had prelation over other freighters in the case of damage (Émérigon 1783, 241).

Securitisation by pledging the ship to a commercial transaction was still common practice in eighteenth century Europe (Bernal 2013, 47; Lo Basso 2016b). Even in England after 1720, when the insurance of marine property was incorporated, lending by respondentia continued, albeit more sparingly, in London's private deals in the East Indies (Steckley 2001; Weskett 1781, 58; Annesley 1808, 173-194). As a result, historians in all trades insist on considering the contract as a mix of insurance and capital (Van Dyke 2011, 45; Carrasco-Gonzalez 1995, 81; Haider 1996 fn58) although London insurers did not cover respondentia because they found it «inconvenient to price the risk» as the nature of the assets was controversial (Weskett 1781, 461-467). The payment of the principal, interests and premium would happen only if the return of the ship had been successful. Otherwise, lenders lost the whole investment.

Under respondentia, the lender assumed the «sea risk» if the goods or the ship never arrived at destination. Such risks were conventionally presented as “the risk of fire, sea and unintentional loss”; it became a fixed clause everywhere in all contracts written in an increasingly formulaic manner. Thus, while the borrower took the commercial risk, the lender assumed the risk of losing any claim to repayment if the goods or the ship pledged as security failed to reach the destination safely because «an act of God, the fortunes at sea or the assaults of men of war -corsairs, pirates or enemies». For instance, a contract in Surat for Batavia in 1749 indicates the risks as «by fire, storm, arrest, war, robbers, or in any other way whatsoever»;<sup>1</sup> and another one signed in Cadiz for Lima in 1777 defined «risk from the sea, wind, earth, fire, friends, foes and any other wretched events at sea».<sup>2</sup> Proforma specifications in a model of a respondentia bond in Madras in 1818 stated «the usual Risk of the Seas, Rivers, Enemies, Fires, Pirates, &C».<sup>3</sup>

Security was placed on the goods on board and eventually on the assets of the person(s) who took the goods on lien. Thus, the loan was increasingly void of collateral other than the goods themselves. As the separation between capital ownership and management of the investment increased with the scale of trade, they became distinct. This separation of the security from the principal accelerated with the expansion of overseas commerce after the sixteenth century, and by the eighteenth century, it was overwhelmingly a lien on the merchandise aboard.

In advancing goods for cash (or other goods), respondentia seems a sort of private limited partnership (e.g., *mutuum, in solidum*), having been considered a

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<sup>1</sup> «Bottomree Johanees Kupe for Surat, 5,505 rupees. Batavia, Surat 16 Jan 1790» Source Tamil Nadu State Archive, Chennai, India. Doc. No. 123 pp. 315-17. Thanks to Gulhan Nadri for kindly sharing the document with me.

<sup>2</sup> «Riesgo, Jose Retortillo contra Juan José Ezpeleta, 7,080 pesos, para Lima. Cádiz, 20 Dec. 1777», Archivo Histórico Provincial de Cádiz, Protocolos Notariales de Cádiz, leg. 389, ff. (illegible). Thanks to Xabier Lamikiz for sharing this document.

<sup>3</sup> Template of a respondentia bond contract Madras for Penang, Source: *The Madras Commercial Ready Assistant* (1818) pp. 169-70

derivation of the *commenda*. However, with an allocation of gains and losses independent of the results of the trade, it was unlike the *commenda* (Pryor 1977). As the repayment of the principal upon returning to the port of departure was contingent on the safe arrival of the ship or cargo, historians have also associated it with sea loans (*nauticum foenus*) (Gonzalez De Lara 2001; Williamson 2010). Yet, unlike the sea loan, which was paid in the *same* currency, *respondentia* was by design repayable in a different (and specific) currency at a foreign port.

## II

The assumption of very high risks in long-distance trade has persuaded historians that the high ‘interest rates’ charged on the principal was directly related to such hazards. Recorded rates of more than 40, 50 or even 70 per cent were frequent in the seventeenth century as allegedly they included the insurance. Hence, the characterization of *respondentia* as a high profit, high risk investment prevailed. As rates tended to correlate with the distance, historians have seen a time dimension in the cost of capital that reinforces the impression about navigation risks pushing the rates (Boxer 1963; Mesquida 2018). Others interpret the high rates differently as the suitability of the contract to by-pass usury law restrictions (Lamikiz 2023), the scarcity of «indigenous capital» (Van Dkye 2005, 153) or, at destination (Bernal 1992), the greater «hazards of coastal navigation» over open seas (VanDyke 2011, 47), and even the ‘exploitative’ nature of the financing (Torri 2018, 116-17). Everywhere, however, rates quoted were systematically much higher than the customary interest rates or rates charged on alternative investments. The commercial risk distinctly fell on the borrower and the rate, indeed the premium,<sup>4</sup> was established ex-ante with the initial capital outlay; the borrower must have been confident that the ventures would yield even higher returns. Arguably, the premium could also be considered the upper bound rate at which borrowers were willing to pay for capital rather than indication of risk or the opportunity cost of capital. Reportedly, *respondentia* rates declined over the eighteenth century; high rates and a falling trend throughout that century are common phenomena across long-distance commerce by 1800.

Nevertheless, *respondentia* premiums were similar in the Cadiz-Veracruz and in the Acapulco-Manila lines, despite different business organisations and time at sea. In the 1660s, Genoa’s rates for Lisbon, Smyrna or Athens were 80 per cent higher or double than rates for Alicante or the «coast of Spain», despite comparable distances. Moreover, these rates pale before rates for ‘New Spain’ via Cadiz (Lo Basso 2016a, 155-58). Europeans (non-Spanish) charged 15-16 per cent from Flanders and Amsterdam to Cadiz in the late seventeenth century, rates jumped to 40 and 60 per cent if capital continued to ‘the Indies’ or the River Plate (Everaert 1971, 5; Freeman 2020). It was still so in deals from Nîmes in the 1760s, which paid 18-20 per cent to Cadiz and 30 per cent for America (Chamboredon 2016). Seemingly, premia did not have a time component and it appears more related to the marketplace of destination.

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<sup>4</sup> The word «premium» is derived from the Latin *praemium*, lit. «reward» or «prize», premia in plural. Broadly speaking, a premium is a price paid for above and beyond some basic or intrinsic value of goods or assets.

An additional, and clearly separate, interest was charged for delays when the clearing went beyond the established time period after arrival. Whereas it never applied in the very liquid Manila, the additional interest on delays appeared later in Cadiz, when returns began to fall (Lamikiz 2023; Ruiz Moreno 2023). Clearing was delayed in Mexico once the fleet and the termed fairs ceased to operate by the mid-eighteenth century. Selling the goods required a longer time now, and goods were often consigned to the next season to minimise low prices and losses from overstocking, as flows of similar goods from Acapulco and Cadiz kept pouring in. Thus, delays in the clearing added interests to the capital. Elsewhere, where interest rates were charged, premia bore no relation with the (approximate) customary local rates. In Asia, these rates moved around a monthly 0.75 per cent in Surat and Bombay (Chaudhury 2015, 91; Haider 1996), 1.5 per cent in Canton (Van Dyke 2011, 45), or an annual 10 per cent in Macao (Guimaraes 2003); In Europe, merchants and brokers were charged at a monthly 0.5-1 per cent in Cadiz, and 1.25 per cent in Genoa, or 12 per cent per annum in Flanders. Much higher premia seem independent from the local cost of money, so they cannot be an indicator of the cost of money.

Historians point at premium rates overshooting during wars as a foremost risk to trade; the effects, however, are ambiguous. In some cases, there were provisos for increasing the premium if there was a threat, as in the original subscription of the French *Compagnie des Indes* (*Recueil ou collection des titres, édits, déclarations, arrêts, règlements et autres pièces concernant la Compagnie des Indes orientales établie au mois d'août 1664 or, hereinafter, Recueil ou collection des titres*). Yet it is unclear whether the risk was related more to the impact of war in Europe than at sea or overseas. This situation affected risk and premia differently. For a Geneva broker of respondentia, Francois Tronchin, war was also an opportunity to stock and advance goods in Cadiz for re-exports in the future, and to hedge against higher prime costs caused by labour shortages in manufacturing from the war mobilisation. In turn, if war was at sea or on the journey, the aftermath was a safe «opportunity for high profits because the accumulation of silver the American ports» (Tronchin 1740s). Reporting to his clients, he made very clear the direction of trade: prices (and the expected rates of return) were heavily dependent on the relative abundance of silver at destination, so the risk calculation was always to avoid glutting markets in America.

Unlike insurance – where a premium as calculation of risk was paid *before* the ship left port and the insured was reimbursed if a claim was filed by a third party – under respondentia the lender assumed the risk in full. He advanced the principal and waived the right to claim repayment if the goods (or ship) pledged as security failed to reach the destination. So, premia seem to be more an estimation of the future returns. Lenders might, and did in some cases, additionally ensure the value of the capital if the loan was registered with authorities before departure. Borrowers were not allowed to take insurance on the lien, whether goods or money, and insurers in England had misgivings to issue policies on «such immaterial asset» (Weskett, 1781). War effects are not visible in the case of Manila, shown below in Figure 1. Clearly losing the Galleon Covadonga to Admiral Anson near Manila in the 1743 – laden with 1.3-million-peso coins and bars for a total of 35 tonnes of silver (Williams 1999, 167) – was a blow to lenders as respondentia returns never arrived, creating a credit crunch. Yet, the respondentia rates did not change and jumped only once silver-laden

galleons returned. So, premia did not exactly capture risk from war incidents; if anything, premia seem *directly* related to the availability of capital.

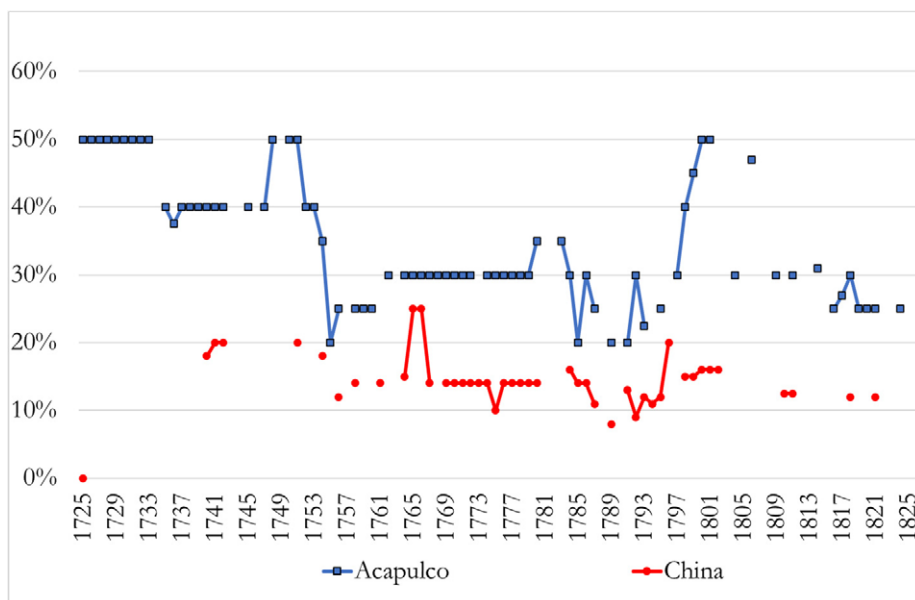
There were means to mitigate the overall exposure to risk, however. Throughout, loans were spread among many ships and in many small amounts, even on the same ship. It was the case in foreign lending to junk merchants in Canton (Van Dyke 2011, 153), Genoese lending in the Mediterranean, as well as in the Spanish and French deals in the Atlantic (Carrasco-Gonzalez 1995, Appx A-1; Chamboredon 1995, 704-07). Clearly, *respondentia* did not favour economies of scale. Similarly, the contract was neither non-negotiable or transferable across the cases, so the contribution to liquidity was limited.<sup>5</sup> Without enhancing further liquidity and without increases to scale, the contract did not seem effectively designed to favour the growth of trade. Over time, there was some of concentration of lending in bigger amounts by fewer lenders in the Spanish Atlantic (Bernal 1992). As loanable sums grew larger in the Pacific, more suppliers of funds sprang up in Manila. In any case, they continued using the contract over the course of the century. Historians of Spanish commerce characterise it as a ‘highly regimented system’, with a monopolistic design geared to generate extraordinary profits to privileged (Spanish) agents by creating an ‘artificial scarcity’ of imports in Spanish America (Baskes 2005, 29). This seems more persuasive as an identification of the symptoms rather than an explanation of the causes. Considering the potential purchasing power of colonial exports (e.g., silver) this and other oft-cited rationing strategies (like spacing fleets, etc.) misrepresented the agency of metropolitan and colonial economic actors. A proper discussion of this matter reasonably falls beyond the scope of this article.

Thus, premia did reflect neither the risks nor the duration of the journeys; it did not seem to bear a particular relation to the nationality of borrowers or the organisation of the business. Even *respondentia* rates were frequently different for different transactions in the *same* ship (Carrasco Gonzalez 1995, 94; Lamikiz 2023, 5). It is difficult to see a time component in premia, as interest for delays was charged separately, as mentioned above, so it did not price the opportunity costs of capital. Lending at *respondentia* charged a premium *ex-ante* defined as a fixed rate of return, which being an advance of capital appears to have been directly related to the expected profits from that trade.

Figures below chart rare longitudinal data on *respondentia* premia in different long-distance routes of the time. Figure 1 shows *respondentia* rates in Manila on lending for Acapulco and China throughout the eighteenth century. The premium charged for both destinations followed a parallel trend, where rates were systematically higher for the Pacific trade, which had silver specie as a return. *Respondentia* for China, in turn, changed silver coins for merchandise. The difference in the level suggests the difference in the expected returns from one and another commerce.

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<sup>5</sup> Denzel describes the «*prestamo marítimo* as a “*emprunt contracte*”, an instrument that served (alone?) to acquire money» (2010, xlvii, his emphasis).

Fig 1. Respondentia Premia in Manila 1725-1821<sup>6</sup>

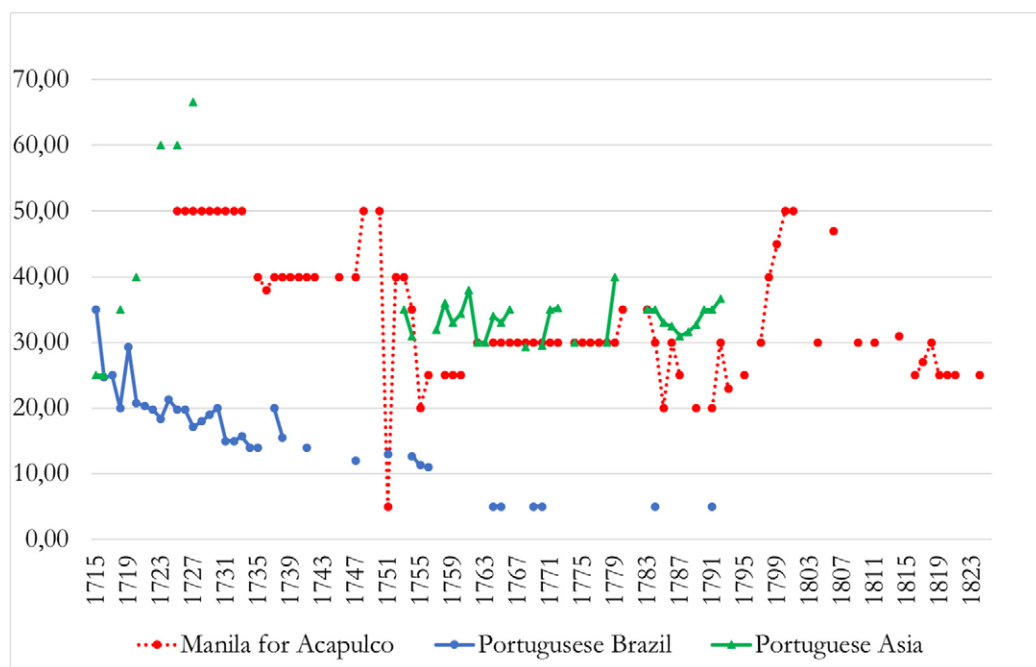
Source: Rivas Moreno, Juan José, “An Alternative Model for Early Modern long-distance Trade Finance: The Capital Markets of Manila, 1680-1838”, Ph.D. Diss., Department of Economic History, LSE, 2023, p. 227.

Figure 2 frames the premia paid in Manila for the Pacific trade with Portuguese lending in the Atlantic and India trades; it outlines the trend that premia followed in the respective commerce. Throughout the eighteenth century, rates declined in the Atlantic, while the reduction was much slower in the Pacific. Premia in commerce with Asia over the Pacific and Indian oceans remained steady and at higher levels than in Atlantic commerce – the latter being clearly the most competitive of the three trades (De Vries 2003).

<sup>6</sup> Thanks to Dr. Rivas Moreno for sharing this unpublished data from his Ph.D. dissertation, and to Professor Costa for the data on *riscos* from her presentation.



Fig. 2. **Premia on Risco do Mar for Asia and Brazil, Lisbon, 1715-1791, Manila for Acapulco**



Sources: Data on Manila from Rivas Moreno (2023); Portuguese Brazil and Asia (annual average round trip) from Costa and Pinto de Albuquerque (2022)

Clearly, premia varied according to the trades. As in the case of Manila, the rates paid in Lisbon suggest that they varied according to the destination rather than the origin of capital. Higher and steady rates in lending to Asia reflect the persistent potential for arbitrage of trading there.

Why would merchants with the same legal culture use dissimilar instruments? Why merchants from different legal-institutional backgrounds would use the same instrument? Was a cashless system of payments necessarily an inferior design when trade was in specie (gold/silver coins) as it was in the East?

### III

As the contract mobilised capital with which to procure working capital to further trade elsewhere with a turnover in the order of several months or years, the *respondentia* contract resembles venture capital. Yet, when looking into the currency component of the contract, e.g., the specification of the specie on which to be reimbursed, *respondentia* also looks more like a forward swap, as it was dealt with spot and future prices of goods whose quality was difficult to price – like sugar and

diamonds.<sup>7</sup> The contract clearly was suitable to finance trade among economies performing with different cash means of payment and to obtain Mexican silver specie in Cadiz and Manila. In these regards, it was clearly an ‘importer’ type of finance, that avoided currency risk costs and realised profit from arbitrage when dealing with foreign specie within private money markets, as discussed below. Looking into notarised contracts in thirteenth century Genoa, De Roover (1969) could not establish whether this was an exchange or a credit transaction. If the latter, as a «transfer instrument it could serve as an international long-distance settlement» (20); if the former, an operation to disguise a loan, it was then a credit instrument for trade, although both were probably not mutually exclusive. In any case, as de Roover put it, «It anticipates future developments in the money market» (22).

Indeed, insofar as there was a change (*permutatio*) of money (*pecunia*), respondentia differed from all other contemporary instruments in one critical aspect which although it was noted by De Roover (1969), it was disregarded by historians.<sup>8</sup> By specifically establishing the species with which the capital was to be paid back, the covenant reduced the uncertainty ingrained in long-distance trade in goods and money. Thus, respondentia, as *cambium maritimum*, always involved an operation of exchange (Lo Basso 2016). This made respondentia also very distinct from bills of exchange, which sought to minimise the use of bullion in settling international balances.

Economic historians consider silver another commodity. So trading in coined silver in foreign markets poses the question as to whether this was a barter of commodities. *Cambium maritimum*, as the contract was known in the Mediterranean, implied by design an operation for exchanging currencies (Lo Basso 2016). Although premia and principal were not always distinguished in the Atlantic contracts – indeed, it was an exception – there was a clear prescription of the monies or type of specie in the repayment in all trades; for example, «*taes de prata de barras*», «*Surat silver rupees of 30 heavy stuivers each*», «*pesos Fuertes*», «*piastres*», «*pagodas at the exchange of 160 Spanish dollars per 100 star pagoda*», etc. (see the Appendix). Whilst in the Manila deeds, pesos minted in Mexico were the default currency. Historians of the Spanish Atlantic trade emphasise a feature of the contract that allowed a further «33% (extra) gain» on top of the premia agreed upon, as the exchange involved specie as remittance back to Spain. (Bernal 1992, 318-19). Despite the obvious implications for the balance of payments, and the dissemination of silver beyond Spain, studies confined to national cases have disregarded this issue.

The role of foreign specie in exchange (and the potential for arbitrage) was clear as stated by the EIC Council at Fort St. George in Madras as early as 1628:

Should the Company determine to revive that trade (at Bantam), it would be advisable, instead of sending reals [Spanish silver specie] thither direct, to forward them, in the first instance, to Surat, where they might be invested in

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<sup>7</sup> The alternative was to wait for the sale in London «by accepting a bill at given rate, i.e. 162d per pagoda when the book rate was 114d or sending the diamonds for sale at probably higher profit» (Lee Saxe 1979, 14)

<sup>8</sup> This hid the interest and true nature of the contract as a loan, so historians allege that respondentia was favoured to avoid usury laws.

goods that would produce 100 per cent profit or more at Bantam. A ship should also be (dispensed) direct to Masulipatnam (as is done by the Dutch) to purchase goods and then go to Bantam; for upon these two factories will and must your southern trade be grounded, if ever you mean to reap profit thereby (Foster 1909 I, 307).

This excerpt showcases the deals with foreign silver monies in India, and in Asia more generally. Procurement of Chinese goods in Canton was a privilege of the Hong (guild of merchants). Europeans advanced capital to them by using a combination of «at least 80%» silver specie and import goods, «or paid entirely of silver *coins*» (Van Dyke 2011, 41 my emphasis). Prices clearly depended on the money of the advancement. Still in the 1800s, the U.S. merchant and Consul in Canton, Sullivan Dorr, reported that deals with silver would improve by 20 per cent the price they ought to pay for teas in Canton. «Sometimes teas, silks and nankeens were not procurable on credit or by bartering with other goods ... they were “cash goods”; so the correspondent advised “loading ships only with (Spanish) dollars”» (Dorr 1945). At the turn of the nineteenth century, Dorr reckoned that «*there was a premium on cash*» for trade in Canton (Dorr 1945, 299 my emphasis). Still at the turn of the twentieth century, the *Tate Modern Cambist* reported foreign (Mexican) dollars «formed a favourite medium of exchange», in the interior of China, principally in the tea districts, and «circulated with a premium well above their intrinsic value» (Tate 1908, 184-86).

Thus, as foreign silver specie improved the terms of trade of Europeans in Asia, most of deals with Asia involved cash. Their economies performed with currencies of various metals, gold, silver, brass or copper that were traded freely in markets and bazaars. Thus, the rate of exchange between currencies was sensitive to price tradable goods and returns. The variety of ‘foreign’ coins in circulation and their valuation in sterling, as late as 1818, shown in Figure 3, was further enlarged by intense intra-Asian commerce, creating uncertainties about future prices to price-taking European merchants (Deyell 1987; Haider 1996).

Fig 3. Variety of Coins in Circulation in Madras, 1818

**THE MADRAS COMMERCIAL READY ASSISTANT. 131**  
**OF SILVER COINS.**

	Finenes.		Weight.		Grains of Pure Silver.	Value in London		Value in Calcutta.		Value in Madras.		Value in Bombay.			
	Ounces	Dwts.	Dwts.	Grains.		₹.	D.	₹. Rps.	Ans.	Pice.	Pags.	Fans.	Cash.	₹. Rps.	Qrs.
English Crown Standard,	11	2	19	8½	429.7	5	0	2	7	1	0	33	12	2	42
Spanish Dollar do.	10	14	17	8	370.9	4	3½	2	1	9	0	28	49	1	0
Rupee of Shah Allum,	11	16	7	10	175.1	2	0½	0	15	11	0	13	40	1	0
" Benares,	11	10	7	6½	167.5	1	11¼	0	15	2	0	12	73	1	0
" Ditto,	11	16½	7	11½	172.4	2	0½	1	0	1	0	13	54	1	0
" Sicca 19 Sun,	11	15	7	11½	175.8	2	0½	1	0	0	0	13	45	1	0
" Arcot,	11	9	7	9½	170.	1	11¼	0	15	5	0	13	9	1	0
" Ditto,	11	10	7	6	166.8	1	11¼	0	15	2	0	12	69	1	0
" Ditto,	11	10	7	9½	169.8	1	11¼	0	15	5	0	13	7	1	0
" Ditto late Coinage,	11	6½	7	8	166.5	1	11¼	0	15	1	0	12	67	1	0
" Bombay (old.)	11	15	7	10½	174.6	2	0½	0	15	10	0	13	37	1	0
" Ditto (new) or Surat,	11	1	7	11	164.8	1	11	0	14	11	0	12	56	1	0
" Lucknow,	11	10½	7	5½	166.5	1	11¼	0	15	1	0	12	67	1	0
Sultance,	11	5½	7	9	166.2	1	11¼	0	15	1	0	12	66	1	0
" Ferr kabad Sicca,	11	9½	7	5	165.2	1	11	0	15	0	0	12	59	1	0
" Chanderry ditto,	11	1½	7	5	159.5	1	10½	0	14	6	0	12	24	0	3
" Ouker y ditto.	10	1½	7	7	148.9	1	8½	0	13	4	0	11	26	0	3
" Shree Sicca of Poona,	11	0½	7	4½	158.5	1	10	0	14	5	0	12	18	0	3
" Hulee Sicca,	11	14½	7	7½	171.2	2	10	0	15	6	0	13	16	1	0
" Ougein,	11	7	7	6½	166.8	1	11¼	0	15	2	0	12	69	1	0
" Mysore or new Holkar,	11	9	7	5	165.1	1	11	0	15	0	0	12	59	1	0
" Indore Holkar,	11	6½	7	5	164.	1	10½	0	14	11	0	12	52	0	3
" Chinsouree,	11	4	7	4½	159.7	1	10½	0	14	6	0	12	25	0	3
" Broach (old.)	11	1½	7	10	170.8	1	11¼	0	15	6	0	13	14	1	0
" Broach (new.)	10	12	7	10	157.3	1	10	0	14	3	0	12	10	0	3
" Brodera (old.)	10	17½	7	10½	162.7	1	10½	0	14	9	0	12	44	0	3
" Brodera (new.)	10	11½	7	10½	157.3	1	10½	0	14	3	0	12	10	0	3
" Anasai Coined at Csira,	10	11¼	7	8½	155.1	1	9½	0	14	1	0	11	77	0	3
" Anasai Coined at Pittlaud,	10	4½	7	9½	151.	1	9	0	13	8	0	11	52	0	3
" Amedabad Sicca,	10	14½	7	10	160.	1	10½	0	14	6	0	12	27	0	3
" Mungul Sai,	10	11¼	7	10½	157.2	1	10	0	14	3	0	13	10	0	3
" Munro Sai,	10	13½	7	9½	157.6	1	10	0	14	4	0	12	12	0	3
Bussorah Cruse,	5	1½	11	16	118.1	1	4½	0	10	8	0	9	8	0	2
Faanam Cannanore,	11	0½	1	11¼	32.9	0	4½	0	2	11	0	2	43	0	0
" Bombay (old.)	11	15	1	11¼	35.	0	4½	0	3	2	0	2	56	0	0
" Pondicherry,	11	7½	1	0½	22.8	0	3½	0	2	0	0	1	60	0	0
" Ditto double,	10	19	1	18½	39.	0	5½	0	3	6	0	3	0	0	0

Source: *The Madras Commercial Ready Assistant, containing of the Exchange of Money of the Different Settlements in India, also, of English Money with Madras currency, Mocha dollars and Caveers reduced to Spanish Dollars and the weight of Spanish dollars and Canton Money ...* (Madras, Commercial Press, 1818, 131-32).

Paper instruments (hundis) existed in Mughal India run by *sarrafs*, money changers and/or lenders, that spread to north and west India. These private bankers issued and discounted convertible hundis offering a means to transfer money over distant places (Habib 1971; Haider 2019). The exchange rate was determined by the balance of payments among these markets, so *sarrafs* 'regulated' it by changing the

rate accordingly. Factors of the EIC and the VOIC borrowed from them too as they were mostly remitters given that their balance of trade with India was largely negative. So Europeans were also ‘takers’ in the exchange rate. Hundis worked well as means of payment and contributed to other means of settlement like book credit. Although it is not clear to what extent hundis fully substituted cash and conveyed a cashless means of remittance (Habib 1971, 300), Nadri persuasively considers the large money market they organised as “open and competitive” (Nadri 2008, 71). A study on the business of one of the largest Bengal bankers of the mid-eighteenth century, and main lender to European Companies, shows that some sort of respondentia lending still generated more than a third of his income from financial assets, including re-coinage (*batta*), tax revenue collection and lending (Chaudhury 2015, 91). Equally, merchants of Surat trading to Mokha chose between bills and respondentia in lending to the English in the mid-1780s, according the (then current) «advantages of favourable exchange between Surat rupees and Spanish dollars needed for investment at Mokha» (Nadri 2008, 68).

Monetary diversity was especially high in South and South-East Asia where sultans, rajas and princely states coined silver and copper. Foreign coins circulated by tale and the exchange rate between coins fluctuated with market prices. Regional differences in the price and exchange rates of silver coins were apparent in the correspondence at EIC’s Fort of St. Georges (Madras) in the mid-eighteenth century:

13. THAT notwithstanding a head of Batty is open’d on the DeveCotah Books for the difference between the real Exchange of Rupees at that Settlement and the price at which they are invoiced yet you have in some Instances credited yourself in Cash for Rupees paid away even at higher Rates than the Invoice Price altho’ in reality the Exchange was much less by which you have made a considerable Gain, for Example, In the Month of June 1754, 12000 Rupees are receiv’d at DeveCotah and invoiced at the usual rate of 350 Rupees for 100 Pagodas, the Current Exchange then being 388 Arcot Rupees for Pagodas 100, the difference between those two Exchanges is wrote off to Batta; but in the same Month Batta paid in Rupees to Seapoys carried to the Credit of Cash at the Rate of 320 Rupees for 100 Pagodas, so that a Gain is made here of 68 Rupees on every 100 Pagodas which is near 22  $\frac{2}{3}$  Cent.

Source: Records of Fort St. George Diary and Consultation book, May 1756 (1943 vol. 85,130)

Thus, in a trade where differences between exchange rates and current cash may be large, pricing and returns faced additional costs from currency risk. To work this out, a contract that secured the specie in which the investment was to be settled seems more convenient than otherwise.

Mughal tried to standardise the silver in circulation with the sicca rupee in the sixteenth century, but it was not complete as it wholly depended on imported silver. Along with cowrie shells and other commodity monies in Gujarat and Bengal, for instance, foreign silver coins such as Shahis from Iran and Larins from Hurmuz and Basra circulated at premium. Regional chieftains also had access to coinage, so Gujarat persisted in using their Mahmudi (88 grains of silver) and even issued inferior

coins under Mughal names (between 75 and 87 grains) (Haider 1999). With European trade at Surat, by the mid-seventeenth century, the Spanish real or piece of eight became the preferred silver coin from Mokha to Canton. After 1680, Asia imported silver mostly coined in the shape of reals and pesos. (Chaudhuri 1968, table 1; Gaastra 1983; Dermigny 1964). This supply of foreign coins expanded together with the extraordinary growth in Spanish America silver coinage (Irigoin 2020).

Among the great variety in the Asian monetary setting, the case of China stands out. Although China used units of account of silver tael (a weight measure) and copper coins, the empire never minted silver or gold, and copper was a provincial coinage prone to debasements and counterfeiting (King 1965). Thus, China lacked a standard, or a par value for silver, and from the mid-eighteenth century it increasingly relied on foreign coins coming to South China ports. «Silver (coins) was a public necessity in Asia» and the «proof was in the price» (De Vries 2015, 24). This establishes a first difference between Asian monetary regimes and those of Europe, where gold and silver circulated by tale and sovereigns' control over mintage was limited; neither money markets nor coinage was centralised, and they relied on imported silver for their own coinage or on foreign coins as a means of payment in domestic transactions. Without an official par or mint value, even a mint to where individuals could bring the silver, there was no way (or standard) for trading silver weight for silver weight (or gold) but, rather, coin for coin, whichever the metal. Thus, Spanish American coins, the most abundant high quality currency of them all, were made to circulate by tale and enjoyed a growing premium (in sterling) over its content. As in the Mediterranean in the 1640s, where the coin was priced at 52-54d in Alicante, 54-57d in Malaga, 54-60d in Livorno, 56d in Genova and 57 to 66d in Smyrna, in the same years it was quoted by the High Admiralty Court in maritime disputes (Blakemore 2017). In Asia, the silver peso quoted at 62d in Basra, 63<sup>1/2</sup>d in Bombay and 50d in Batavia, at 57d in Malacca and 64<sup>1/2</sup>d in Surat in 1789 (*An account of monies .. 1789*).

Monetary historians considering metallic currencies as commodity monies owe a lot to models conceived in the bimetalism of Europe (Flandreau 2006; Bignon and Dutu 2014), but their assumptions do not help to appraise monetary developments in extra-European economies nor in Spanish America. In the latter case, the assumption that silver and gold as commodities were minted in “relatively small” volumes (Velde, Weber and Wright 1997, 1) as in Europe does not hold. Between 1772 and 1800 – when the first reliable population data are available – Mexico minted an annual average of 110 grams of silver (about 4 pesos) per capita every year of the most current coin worldwide (Irigoin 2020). Although Indian rulers also cut coins, mostly of silver sourced as returns from trade. Rupees had different market values according to the year and mint of issue and their content of fineness varied greatly, including the coinage at the three ports controlled by the English Company. There was not even any consistency among these rupees though (Furber 1948, 350). Foreign coins could be converted into rupees at the imperial mints but in fact, it was the *sarraf* who actually established the value of foreign coins in money markets. Thus, there was not a silver standard for foreign trade either until 1835, when a new Company rupee was based on the sterling standard. In China, foreign coins too were priced by private shroffs (money changers and/or assayers) according to the weight

*and touch* (fineness) of the specie. So Europeans were also takers in the price of silver until the Bogue (1843) and Tientsin (1858) treaties, which gave them a word on the rate at which foreign coins were converted (Irigoin et al. 2023). Thus, in Asia, a complementary system of metallic monies and a substitution of silver coins could happen at the same time instead of bimetallism.

There were no 'foreign coins' in Spain or Spanish America until the nineteenth century; and if at all, they were considered bullion in Spain. Until 1686, both performed with the same monetary unit under similar names and denominations. Following the wild debasement of copper in the 1640s, which brought considerable disorder to money markets in Europe, Spain in the 1680s added a new lighter silver coin to the piece of eight (peso de 8 reales) minted in the colonies. The debasement made the peso worth 10 silver reales or 15 reales equivalent to 2 maravedis of billon, which depreciated the new silver coin in Spain by  $33\frac{1}{3}$  per cent compared to the old coin, a difference that increased over the years. This gave way to a distinction of monies, both physical and of account, weakening the exchange rate of Spanish money with the coin minted in America. Maravedis, an imaginary money, was the basic unit of account, so everything in Spain was valued as a compound of maravedis; i.e., 34 of which made a real, and as 8 reales made the old silver peso minted in America worth 272 maravedis the new one coined in Spain, was worth 512. Merchants and the Treasury used maravedis in their accounts in Spain, but were unknown in Spanish America where silver coinage of steady intrinsic content dominated. Reliant on cash from Acapulco, Manila too performed with these coins, and neither Manila nor Spanish America issued small change of copper coins. Commercial transactions inside Spain (and with Europe) used gold and silver imaginary monies; the *doblon* for gold, the *ducado* of 375 maravedis and the *peso de 128 cuartos* of 512 maravedis, which became the *peso de cambio* (*peso de 128 cuartos*). Its value declined relative to the base coin of 8 reales per peso (old silver) as more reales made a peso.<sup>9</sup> This permeated into foreign trade; in England, whereas the par exchange value of the *peso* (*de cambio*) oscillated around 40d, the mint par value of the coin was 54d, making a 33% per cent premium on the physical peso in London.

From the monetary standpoint, noteworthy are two interesting features of the instrument as was used in thirteenth century Genoa (De Roover 1969). First, the lender's profit was determined by «undervaluing the foreign currency in which the loan was repayable» (De Roover 1969, 17) and «overvaluing it at the fair» (De Roover 1969, 20) or otherwise, it was «determined by manipulating the exchange rates and setting arbitrary values» (De Roover 1969, 24). Second, being conditional on the ship's arrival, the instrument «was rarely, if ever, used for the purpose of remitting funds to another country» (De Roover 1969, 23). In the eighteenth century, this was available to only a handful of few European countries.

Europeans had also struggled to establish a uniform coinage throughout the seventeenth century (Van der Wee 2005). They had, however, different means of

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<sup>9</sup> The exchange with Amsterdam quoted the (imaginary) *Ducado de cambio* (ducat) at 375 maravedis. In 1761, the silver to gold ratio between current physical coins at 1:15 made the price of the old coin minted in America equal to 680 maravedis (*Itinerario de las Carreras de Posta...* 1761, 9-10).

securing the monetary system away from private agents; they established institutions that «standardised» money and «centralised» money markets (Neal 2000). Along with their own coins, they developed monies of account, e.g. a unit of measurement for metallic monies or an assigned quantity of weight of a certain fineness, whose value attempted to follow the market price of gold and silver, setting the exchange rate at a variable number of their current monies. Imaginary monies (e.g., the Venetian' *scudi d'or* and the Genoese' *scudi de marche*) developed as units of account that standardised payments and simplified the settlement of balances in foreign money in the exchange fairs (Denzel 2010).<sup>10</sup> As a rule of thumb, current monies, denominated in monies of account, tended to overvalue the foreign coins at home to avoid the melting of their own silver (already scarce) and to attract precious metals to their mints (Van der Wee 1977); the difference between these two prices of the money of account and current monies was called *agio*.

In the 1640s, the *Amsterdamse Wisselbank* used bank money as money of account and centralised transactions with shorter and more regular turnover of bills, fostering a cashless system of payment. Hence, public banks replaced the fairs, developing the international system of transfer payments that matured in the eighteenth century (Nogues 2018). Its bank guilder became a unit of exchange for international deals within Europe and both Dutch Indies, whether trading in precious metals, buying from the West Indies and Europe, selling to mints, or administering exports to the East (Guillard 2004). Amsterdam became the chief money market in Europe and the marketplace for American silver (Morineau 1985). This intermediation allowed for the domestic economy to decouple from uncertainties in international markets. Subsequently, in London and Hamburg, other banks too offered a cashless settlement of balances for overseas trade that coevolved with financial development. Bank money became fiduciary and *agio* worked as a «sluice gate» (Neal 2000), allowing for a flexible exchange rate to fend off the withdrawal of coins in reserve. In Amsterdam, *agio* oscillated around two and five per cent between 1640 and 1775 (McCusker 1978, 43, 44, 62) while Hamburg offered a 20-30 per cent premium on their *reichsthaler banco* (Pfister 2017). In 1761, *agio* was 25 per cent in Genoa, 18 per cent in Venice and in Hamburg, and 22 per cent in Frankfurt am Main (*Itinerario de las Carreras de Posta...* 1761).

Outside Europe, commodities and merchandise were transacted in current monies (Posthumus 1943, LX). In the West Indies, Europeans used the monies of account of their metropolises, but colonists set their own currencies on the most current Spanish American silver coin (piece of 8 standard) and used it as a unit of account. Even French and English merchants in the Caribbean traded on the Spanish American peso (McCusker 1978, 287). Apparently, bills were ultimately «credit instruments for metropolitan merchants» only (Denzel 2010, xlvii). In North America, local assemblies separately set and repeatedly changed the face value of their monies, so exchange rates diverged wildly (McCusker 1978, 125-229, 234-256; Mossman 2012, 62-63). Eventually, Queen Anne's proclamation of 1704 undervalued the foreign coin in the colonies at 72sd – one third below the mint par

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<sup>10</sup> Admittedly, Denzel refrained from discussing the impact of American silver (2010, lxii).



value the peso coin was assigned in Britain (54d). So did the French in their Caribbean colonies (at the same ratio) (McCusker 1978, 282) and the Portuguese in Brazil, who 'cried up' the current money between 33 per cent and more in the 1710s during the gold boom and the renewal of minting in Brazil (Cerqueira Lima 2017).<sup>11</sup>

Monies of account were unknown in the Spanish Indies, where her coin (called the dollar in English after the 1680s) served to price goods and services. As the coin enjoyed a steady intrinsic value throughout (albeit three minor debasements in 1732, 1772 and 1786), variations in the exchange were driven by devaluations elsewhere or changes in the metropolitan monies of account. It was Spain (with much less centralised coinage) that in the late eighteenth century counted twenty different types of «physical current» coins of silver, gold, copper and various «imaginary currencies» (or monies of account) (Larruga 1778 I, 73), with, overall, an undervalued rate of exchange compared with the colonial coin.

In the East Indies, companies equally undervalued the foreign coin in Asia to obtain silver and reduce silver exports from Europe. By the mid-eighteenth century, the Dutch issued *assignaties* (i.e., interest bearing bills) denominated in different monies that priced lower the silver ducatoon in Asia; e.g., at 78 stuivers in Batavia (it went to 72 between 1732 and 1782) against 63 in Amsterdam. They helped to mobilise private capital in further financing imports of Asian goods, although this did not fully substitute the export of silver (Feenstra 1994). Hence, private agents made a 24 per cent profit on the exchange rate difference between Batavia and Holland (Prakash 2008, 88, 89). Having traded Spanish American silver in Asia at 54d since 1619, over a mint par in London of 50d, as of 1681 the East India Company invoiced the dollar coin at 60d per ounce sterling in Asia in their bills, all the while adding transaction and transportation costs to their prime cost in London, which was set at 54d after 1720 (Morse 1926 I, 47). In the 1770s, bills on Canton denominated in Spanish dollars now «at the exchange of the season» (a fixed, yet variable, exchange rate) sought to procure specie in Asia for the China trade. Competition pushed up the exchange rates; the EIC further increased it to 62 and 66d, but the Danes and Swedes were offering both higher rates and shorter sight (Morse 1922). In 1787, EIC started issuing 30-day sight bills on Bengal at 39 rupees per 100 dollars, a premium over the current exchange par of 41 ½ (Morse 1926 II, 142). Bills went up at 84s during the French Wars, which put a lot of pressure on the pound to suspend convertibility in 1797; the rate for rupee bills climbed to 42-43 per 100 dollars (Morse 1926 II, 358,388) and the Company paid up to 69d-66d in 1801-02 and 1804-05 in London for the coins (Report, 1810 table 13, 168). There were even no purchases in 1809 and in 1810-11; extraordinarily, flows reverted and London imported silver dollars from China and India.

As in the Caribbean, the peso/real coin in Asia was also the «measure of all money, (the) universal basis for the exchange quotations» (McCusker 1978, 280-81). However, the exchange par was determined by the purchasing power in private markets «free of regulations». Thus, neither in East or in West Indies, did the value of the piece of eight / dollar ever reflect the actual par of exchange at the commercial

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<sup>11</sup> The Dutch used a different exchange rate that overvalued the silver coin in Europe; it was worth 48 stivers there versus the 38 it was in Amsterdam in 1740 (McCusker 1978, 297).

rate and far less the intrinsic value.<sup>12</sup> As Roover pointed out, «the manipulation of exchange rates and setting arbitrary values» to coins at home and abroad conceived in the *cambium maritimum* affected the flow of silver. Thus, bills did not circulate outside the companies, other than as remittance of profits or for coins negotiated throughout Southeast Asia rather than of credit. Contrarily, respondentia thrived in all European deals with China in Southeast Asia at the peak of the trade in the 1780s (VanDyke 2011, 41-48).

Private bills appeared only much later in Asia when the standard of the silver dollars was collapsing, so sound specie was short. They appeared in the Canton trade in the 1820-1830s by way of U.S. merchants drawing on London and British houses in India (Irigoien et al. 2023). As late as 1831, Mr Palmer, then governor of the Bank of England and partner in the Calcutta house of Palmers, Mackillop and Co., declared to Parliament:

All exchange operations in bills *have reference to the actual produce of the remittance in bullion* in the country to which those remittances are sent” ..“The company *will at all-time order bullion to be transmitted*, if bills are not procurable at the bullion rate (remitters calculated «the bullion rate by adding various costs for bullion shipping to its value»)... bullion was remitted (BPP 1831/32, 107, 111 my emphasis).

Thus, in long-distance commerce, bills could not be an efficient cash substitute beyond Europe, without some monetary authority or institutions capable of setting and regulating the value of the foreign coins. In most of Europe, foreign silver coins were received by count and priced in monies of account that tended to overvalue it. In Britain, they were priced by weight (Tate 1908, 318) at the ratio of the sterling standard, i.e., the mint par established in 1604 and restored by Newton’s assay after the «great recoinage» of 1696. By 1779 in Canton, the Spanish dollar had become current already and had “acquired an imaginary value through convenience”; the Dutch were already «pass(ing) the silver coin by tale instead of weight» (Morse 1926, 280; Van Dyke 2011, 43). Chinese assayers were pricing exports and import, including gold coins, in Spanish dollars. In 1796, the EIC followed suit. By then, the specie was already trading at a 9 per cent premium over its intrinsic value (Morse 1926 II, 41, 313). Within Europe, the greater efficiency of bills enabled the substitution of precious metals for a cashless means of payment when prices fell within import/export bullion prices (Sperling 1962). This was impossible in Asia, where cash had a premium determined by demand, which was increasing steadily after the 1790s, or in America, where as a source of the cash had an overvalued currency driven by a very elastic Asian demand. Thus, Europeans chose respondentia to settle exports to the New World and to pay for their imports in Asia, while they chose bills in more ‘certain’ money markets inside Europe only, or in exchanges within a ‘more convenient’ rate the Company might offer, compared with the bullion rate.

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<sup>12</sup> The Proclamation of 1825 failed to centralise coinage in the possessions. They maintained their own currency regime until late in the Nineteenth century (Shannon 1951). Hong Kong used the (extinct) Spanish dollar as unit of account until the 1860s.

## IV

This paper shows the global dimension of *respondentia* as a private instrument in early modern global trade. Although bills of exchange were known in Europe for long already, the contract that established the specie of the return was preferred in commerce outside Europe. The instrument known in the Mediterranean moved to the Atlantic and the Pacific to finance the procurement of American silver. Asian economies depended on trade for their coinage of silver and gold; and Europeans took it over the Indian Ocean and China sea as they intermediated global trade. Large economies in Asia lacked institutions to set or keep a standard for their own coinage and their money markets were not centralised, so they relied on foreign specie and performed within a huge diversity of means of payments. Originally, the contract allowed a mitigation of uncertainty in the future returns of investments in contexts lacking common standards for precious metals, as it had formerly been the case of earlier maritime commerce in tradable good that were difficult to price, such as pepper, sugar and diamonds. With the expansion of trade that intermediated American silver to Asia, *respondentia* developed as an instrument for exchange over time. In so doing, it also allowed the capture of arbitrage.

Asian elastic demand for sound silver coins gave a growing premium to cash, overvaluing, in turn, the purchasing power of Spanish American silver. European intermediation found means to deal with the resulting issues in prices and exchange rates. They designed (or adapted) instruments and institutions to manage variations in international supply and demand of precious metals. By using monies of account applied to prices, contracts and accounting, they buffered their own currencies from such changes. Furthermore, they set different prices and exchange rates (or currencies) for their colonies than at home, and managed exchange rates according to their international trade position. Europeans intervened overvaluing their currencies at home by introducing changes in their monies of account; they, too, had a dual monetary system in the metropolis and the home country, with different valuations for the silver coin in one and another. Spain, on the other hand, undervalued her own currency against the stronger silver coin from her colonies, resulting in different capabilities and results.

Decoupling the price of precious metals from the market with institutions that could control the flows allowed a crucial tool of monetary policy to some European markets. Such means and institutions did not exist in Asia or America, so private money markets were far more 'open', following raw variations in international trade. While high-quality coins continued flowing out of Spanish America, they met the near bottomless demand for sound money in Asia, and China in particular. Trade expanded in a Smithian way as the instrument was not designed to enhance productivity, but to capture arbitrage profits. As long as cash enjoyed a premium in Asia, silver specie continued flowing East, from America to Europe, and from Europe to Asia, so bills took longer to serve as remittance. They were not a realistic alternative to make a cashless means of settlement for global trade, so *respondentia* lingered beyond the notional inefficiencies of its nature.

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Template of a respondentia bond contract Madras for Penang. Source: *The Madras Commercial Ready Assistant* (1818) pp. 169-170.

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*Tavola rotonda*

*Round table*



Je voudrais, au terme de cette table-ronde, revenir sur deux composantes du recours aux monnaies alternatives qui sont apparues comme majeures aux cours de cette *Settimana*. La première se manifeste au cours de l'évaluation qui préside aux échanges en nature. Les systèmes monétarisés dans lesquels la plupart des transactions observées prennent place peuvent, à l'occasion, fournir des équivalences monétaires des objets ou des services troqués, qui simplifient notablement l'appréciation des parties en présence. On peut, dans ce cas, parler de prix du marché ou de valeur intrinsèque. Certaines évaluations peuvent toutefois atteindre une certaine complexité du fait du nombre important de paramètres intervenant dans la composition de la valeur de chaque bien ou service. Certains de ces biens ou services peuvent, en outre, se trouver «hors-marché» du fait de leur état (que l'on pense, par exemple, aux objets d'occasion) ou de leur rareté (ce qui peut être le cas, par exemple, de certains services exceptionnels). Car le fait d'être «hors-marché» ne signifie pas que le bien ou le service en question ne puisse pas servir de mode de paiement. Nous l'avons vu avec les vieilles poèles mises en gage à Najac (Petrowiste) ou le plomb vieux récupéré à Rouen (Kucab). La complexité que peuvent revêtir parfois les opérations d'évaluation n'a toutefois pas représenté un frein absolu à des échanges en nature qu'experts et autorités se sont attachés à encadrer, ce dont témoignent divers traités médiévaux d'arithmétique marchande (Guidi-Bruscoli; Scherman) ou la législation encadrant, aux XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles, la *datio ad solutum*, en France comme en Italie (Barbot).

S'il existe des règles marchandes et si l'on peut se référer au « dit d'expert », la contrainte exercée par ces règles ou ces avis n'est cependant pas absolue. La comparaison faite entre les législations française et italienne des XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles met en évidence l'impact de considérations morales visant à la défense des intérêts soit des créanciers, soit des débiteurs (Barbot). L'un des apports importants, selon moi, des travaux présentés au cours de cette *Settimana* est la relative subjectivité des évaluations qui président aux échanges en nature. Il apparaît clairement que l'équivalence qui régit l'échange est le fruit d'une forme de négociation. Même quand il y a référence explicite au prix du marché, un jeu demeure possible sur le facteur temps et sur la date de référence pour ce prix (Kusman et De Meulemeester; Lambrecht, Verfaillie et De Waele) qui peut déplacer le curseur en faveur de l'une ou l'autre des parties.

Le recours aux monnaies alternatives est - les travaux présentés le montrent bien - un phénomène culturel très large. Mais cette diffusion ample ne doit pas nous amener à négliger la dimension individuelle ou catégorielle de l'échange qui se manifeste à travers la négociation et qui est peut-être à la base du succès ou, tout au moins, de

la large diffusion des échanges en nature dans des marchés fortement monétarisés. Chez les mineurs d'Idrija (Safley), les paysans des Pays-Bas (Lambrecht, Verfaillie et De Waele), les apprentis marseillais (Michaud) ou dans la Galeria degli uffizi des Médicis (Maitte), le paiement en nature ne va pas toujours de soi et fait l'objet, comme le salaire en argent, d'une âpre négociation. La recherche d'un équivalent juste (Coquery) ou «à la hauteur de son statut» (*in xta qualitatem seu statutum vel conditionem* – Michaud) montre tout ce que l'évaluation compte d'arrangements. La négociation introduit ainsi une variable importante qui peut faire pencher l'échange en faveur de l'une ou l'autre des parties et participer d'une forme de dépendance. On peut alors se demander, avec Luca Mocarelli, si le recours au troc ou au paiement en nature est toujours libre. Le principe suivant lequel «pour que l'échange puisse avoir lieu, il faut une double coïncidence des besoins» est-il vraiment toujours de règle? La négociation comme certaines des règles adoptées plus ou moins explicitement peuvent influencer sur l'appréciation de cette «double coïncidence», voire contraindre certains individus à accepter un échange qui ne leur est pas toujours favorable. Cela replace la relation personnelle au cœur de la transaction et remet en cause la vision quelque peu idyllique ou purement égalitaire de l'échange en nature et explique qu'il ait pu participer de certaines «stratégies» économiques (Soens et Bruyet; Claustre; Caliste et Verna).

D'où la seconde composante du recours aux monnaies alternatives mises en évidence au cours de ces journées: la défiance. La défiance apparaît, en effet, comme la rude toile de fond de ce type d'échanges et se développe sur le terreau des abus constatés. La crainte ou le sentiment d'être dupé (*imbrogliato*) est au cœur des calculs savants proposés aux marchands par divers manuels de comptes, dès le Moyen Âge. L'insistance sur la nécessité d'une relation de confiance n'en est probablement que le reflet. Nous voyons bien, avec l'exemple des Salviati (Scherman), que l'échange en nature ne s'installe qu'une fois la confiance gagnée, qu'une fois dépassée la méfiance qui, elle, est première vis-à-vis de ce type d'échanges.

Le vocabulaire garde la trace d'une certaine ambiguïté des sociétés anciennes vis-à-vis du troc. En ancien français, par exemple, le terme «baratter», proche de l'italien, signifie «troquer, échanger», mais également «tromper, frauder, chicaner» (Godefroy 1881). Le mot tomba en désuétude; Furetière le signalant, comme un «Vieux mot français & hors d'usage, qui signifioit tromperie, fourbe, mensonge, calomnie» (Furetière 1701). Son souvenir demeurerait toutefois encore dans cette langue au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle sous la forme «baratterie» pour désigner une «fraude commise par le capitaine, le maître ou patron du navire au préjudice des armateurs, des assureurs...» (Littré 1863-1872) et il se conserve à travers le mot «baratin»: «flot de paroles pour enjôler ou abuser». En revanche, le verbe «troquer», attesté en français dès le XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle au moins, ne semble pas véhiculer une telle charge négative dans la mesure où le sens qui lui est donné est simplement celui de «faire un troc, échanger une marchandise, un meuble contre un autre» (Furetière 1701). Encore que la citation proposée par Furetière (il a troqué son cheval borgne contre un aveugle) laisse à réfléchir... Sans doute conviendrait-il de mener une enquête plus large sur le vocabulaire de l'échange en nature afin de mieux apprécier la manière dont cette pratique pouvait être perçue. L'ambivalence constatée en français invite toutefois à ne pas s'arrêter à la seule valeur

négative du terme et à ne pas considérer la défiance comme systématique ou universelle.

Il faut, ici, s'interroger sur le biais que peuvent introduire des sources contractuelles mettant principalement en rapport des étrangers. Une partie, bien plus difficile à apprécier, de ces échanges pouvait aussi s'effectuer au sein de cercles plus intimes, familiaux ou amicaux, sans que le recours à la garantie de l'écrit soit jugée nécessaire. Mais autour de quels produits, de quels services et avec quelle intensité?

Nous pouvons être alors tentés de parler de prêt, de dépannage ou de coup de main, plus que d'échanges; la contrepartie pouvant s'inscrire dans le temps long des relations familiales. Est-ce dans la limite ténue entre échange de bien ou de service et entraide que se perd la part la plus informelle, mais aussi la plus positive, du troc?

Au terme de cette *Settimana* portant sur *Les monnaies alternatives. Marchandises et services comme monnaies d'échanges dans les économies des XIII<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles* qui a permis d'évoquer les mécanismes du recours aux monnaies alternatives, la diffusion de ces dernières, leur nature et leurs usages, divers questionnements demeurent. Des pistes de réflexions ont été ouvertes, par exemple, sur ce que les différentes formes de paiement en nature peuvent avoir en commun; sur les effets produits par le paiement d'une partie au moins des salaires en nature sur le pouvoir d'achat des travailleurs; sur l'ampleur de l'abandon du recours au paiement en monnaies alternatives dans l'industrie, au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle; sur l'interprétation du dépôt d'un gage comme le signe d'une précarité économique;...

Il n'était pas question de prétendre épuiser un tel sujet en quelques jours de communications et de débats. À tout le moins pouvons-nous nous réjouir d'avoir montré que, loin de constituer un mode d'échange «primitif», le recours aux monnaies alternatives trouvait toute sa place au sein des économies monétarisées d'ancien régime. Puisse cette *Settimana* contribuer, selon le vœu exprimé en 1941 par Karl Polanyi, à «se défaire des superstitions économiques du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle» (Polanyi (1944) 1967, 56).

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William Caferro

*Roundtable comments*

The presenters have provided much new material to contemplate and assess. The papers represent an impressive geographical, methodological and temporal range. We have learned about non-transferrable credit vouchers in the early modern Austrian mining industry (Safley); in-kind wages and payments made to workers in medieval Marseilles (Braid, Michaud); alternate modes of debt recovery in seventeenth and eighteenth century England (Collins); the recourse to *corrodies*/pensions in premodern Germany as protection from market forces (Pelzl, Zuijderduijn); the non-monetary relations between lords and peasants in the medieval and early modern Low Countries (Lambrecht, Verfaillie and De Waele), the exchange economy in medieval Sardegna (Alias); urban and religious accounting practices in French city of Rouen (Kutab); the importance of pearls and jewels in exchanges and accumulation of capital in the fifteenth century Venetian Jewish ghetto (Scuro); the use of candles as a species of «circular economy» in early modern England and Italy (Sapoznik, Sales i Favà); the practice of barter in international trade (Guidi-Bruscoli; Verna, Calista; Scherman) and barter with respect to the bodies of fugitive Africans and Amerindians, which served as commodity money (Strum). The list is not all inclusive, but indicative of the many ways that scholars have challenged traditional assumptions and proposed potential new paths for study of the mechanism, diffusion and nature of alternative currencies.

As is the nature of such endeavors, the papers do not form a cohesive whole. But numerous common issues forcefully emerge. A principal one is that the use of in kind compensation/alternative currencies existed alongside the use of specie, and that the opposition between the two, like most historical binaries, is illusory. Barter was used in the absence of specie, but was also an intrinsic part of economic systems. It existed in urban settings, rural settings; monetized economies and less-monetized economies. It was openly acknowledged in account books and a prominent aspect of the international market place. Barter was not an alternative to a monied economy or an indelible sign of a «natural» primitive economy. Scholars thus need to take care in relaying economic history in evolutionary terms, following the well-trodden path of earlier generations, who posited an initial phase of «truck and barter», followed by the rise of a monetary economy, the introduction of credit, etc. The more nuanced, contradictory interpretation is the more useful and historically accurate one. Economic history is rife with anomalies and contradictions that render any seamless account problematic and require open acknowledgement for the sake of fruitful investigation that escapes an inevitable teleology (Caferro 2018, 1-2, 10-21, 178-99).

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It is worthwhile to consider anew the words of the anthropologist Clifford Geertz, who stated that «explanation does not consist in reduction of the complex to the simple» but, instead, «in substituting complex pictures for simple ones». «Elegance is a scientific deal, but it is departures from that ideal in which creative developments occur» (Geertz 1977, 33). The papers at this conference have replaced simplicity with complexity and, although we may quibble about the use of the term «elegance», scholars have demonstrated «creative developments» that do not fit neatly with received wisdom. As with the recent scientific discourse about evolution, one species does not merely replace another, but often exists alongside it until the newer, better adapted one eventually emerges. Even with regard to alternative currencies we have seen wide variation: from local exchange in utensils and animals, to international exchange in cloth, to use of bills of exchange in payment as well as labor itself as payment (Camuzzi).

The essays evoke the work of the economist Karl Polanyi and his notions of «embeddedness» with regard to premodern economic activity. Writing in 1944 toward the end of the Second World War, Polanyi cautioned economists to «subdue» their «natural proneness to follow the proclivities of fathers» and acknowledge that «man's economy ... is submerged in his social relations». Polanyi's economic individual did not act «to safeguard his individual interests in the possession of material goods; he acts so as to safeguard his social standing, his social claims, his social assets» (Polanyi 1944, 44, 74). Polanyi's «birds-eye view» of economic systems of the past stressed how «the organization of labor» corresponded to «the general organization of society», that was embedded in a social culture specific to that place and time» (Polanyi 1944, 46, 76). There is in short a social/cultural context beyond market forces that renders «value» a variable not easily quantified. Our papers have shown that value could be monetary, in kind, even honor-bound and «symbolic» in nature (Kutab). In the case of compensation of soldiers in medieval Italy, whose greed for gold is much discussed by Machiavelli among many others, success in the field was viewed as ennobling, a form of compensation that went beyond a wage or income.

It is telling how often the name of Marc Bloch appears in the essays, used most often to criticize long term wage series that often fail to account for in kind payments and additional variables. The citations are meaningful because Bloch, a founder of the Annales school of study, was followed by a later generation led by Immanuel Leroy Laudurie, («Motionless History») that stressed the «empirical» nature of numbers and the benefits of long term statistical study that became popular also with the Cliometric school of economists in America. Statistics served as a means of getting at «hidden truths», particularly standard of living, a most appealing entrée into the past, where scholars have been able to agree on a suitable basket of goods, which varied depending on circumstance and class. Professor Maitte addresses these difficulties and suggests remedies for long term studies. But by and large the papers reveal, implicitly and explicitly, a skepticism about the worth of long term wage and data sets. The issue is particularly noteworthy in this era of «big data» broad scholarly collaborations and digital platforms that seek to examine the *longue durée*. Scholars of wages must contend with the ever present problem of wage stickiness (Braid) in

addition to limited evidence, unexpected variables and, most important, differences in context.

I, for one, see the utility of long term series, which remain popular with economists, because they do reveal often previously unseen patterns. Moreover, it would be incorrect, nay, arrogant, to suppose that any historical study accounts for all attendant variables. At the same time, there is the risk of false parallels, of positioning the past too closely in terms of modernity, of telling history teleologically and positing an appealing account of the past that de facto relegates anomalies, contradictions and troublesome data to scholarly asides that may eventually become ignored for the sake of the «larger point». As noted above, barter and alternative currency exist today, so their use in the past should in fact be of little surprise.

It is significant that several of the essays regarding wages involve ecclesiastical sources, harkening back to Thorold Rogers' famous use of monastic records (18<sup>th</sup> century) in England to show the *longue durée* of daily craft wages. Monastic institutions kept careful records, making them a valuable historical source. But their use raises broader methodological questions, as monastic sources are not the same as records, often notarial, for the institutional church, or for secular institutions, such as local governments. Indeed, we have encountered a variety of private, semi-private and public institutions, whose natures require closer examination, as they had different sources of revenue, which affected the manner (and rates) by which they made payments and transferred of funds. We need in short consider the other side of alternate currencies: the sources of revenue of the institutions we study. The charitable religious institution Orsanmichele in Florence, for example, gained substantial revenue from bequests of plague victims immediately after the Black Death (and from repurposed beeswax as we have seen). But the same plague, and a cycle of famine and war that accompanied it, reduced Florentine state income from indirect taxes, a critical source of revenue, affecting wages of public employees. Generally speaking, throughout the crises of the fourteenth century in Italy, city revenue from indirect taxes (*gabelles*) fell precipitously, pushing some states to the brink, forcing them to eliminate some jobs, consolidate others and cap wages, just as traditional market forces would suggest increases. Although it may appear perhaps an overly bold statement, the famous War of Eight Saints (1375-1381) that involved much of central and northern Italy can be viewed in the first instance as a problem of papal liquidity. The pontiff was unable to raise revenue to pay his captains and army, which led the men to band together in late 1374 to stage a prodigious raid in central Italy, extorting enormous bribes, that led directly to the war.

The preceding discussion lays bare the problems attendant the term «institution», with its manifold meanings. In economic discussions the term serves as the centerpiece of New Institutional Economic (North 1970, 1-17) and Game Theoretical Models (Grief 2006, 5-28) that have accompanied it. In secular political discussions, «institution» is associated with «the state» or alternatives to the state. Professor Scherman's use of the term «quasi-institution», which he paired with Giorgio Chittolini's notion «quasi-città» to describe merchants working together without juridical framework for the 15<sup>th</sup> century Florentine Salviati bank, brings together the economic and political ambiguities perhaps in an unintentional way.

The point underscores a further observation regarding the terminology used in the papers. As Professor Guidi Bruscoli pointed out in his essay, the term «barter» in the sixteenth century did not have the same meaning as it does today. This is true of numerous terms contained in the papers, such as «trade unions», «capital markets» and others. The terms are evocative of the present day and thus carry baggage and assumptions that can easily distort the past. It is unclear what the solution is or indeed whether one is needed. The issue reinforces the importance of context: how the distant past does not readily map on to the present-day world. And the challenge of terminology is not restricted to economic language. It involves also the period labels used for the eras under consideration. The papers routinely use the late Middle Ages and Early Modern period as signifiers, but it is not always clear whether the papers refer same thing. The term Renaissance appears hardly at all.

Finally, I would like to raise two additional brief points. Professor Safley's notion of an «ecology of work», which highlights the interaction among physical environment, regulatory systems, market forces and social relations offers a useful paradigm for assessing the numerous variables attendant economic study, with implication that may be extended beyond his Austrian workshops. And with respect to alternative currencies, it is important to stress that specie, its erstwhile antagonist in this conference, was not itself monolithic and took different forms that had social and cultural valence apart from its intrinsic value. Medieval and early modern craft wages, particularly those used for long term series, have traditionally been rendered in silver currency, reflecting the predominance of that coin in Europe (particularly in northern Europe), and its utility in making comparisons across time and space. In bimetallic Florence, however, where gold was more abundant (used primarily for big business and international trade), the coin found its way also into the local market place (along with silver coins). Evidence suggests that gold was used in payments of lower level workers, depending on circumstance. Carriers who carried letters to allies in times of peace were often paid in silver, but those who carried letters during war were compensated in gold, to account for the «danger» of their missions – suggesting a range of factors that conditioned the type of coin used, factors that are not readily evident when the wages are decontextualized for long term comparison. In any case, the evidence serves as a parallel to alternative currencies, reaffirming the importance of context and necessity for scholars to remain open to consideration of numerous, often anomalous variables.

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Luca Mocarelli

## *Tavola rotonda*

Vorrei, alla conclusione di questa settimana molto interessante e ricca di spunti di riflessione, svolgere alcune considerazioni, richiamando in apertura tre suggestioni di carattere metodologico, proposte da alcuni grandi pensatori, che sono state confermate da quanto ho sentito in questi giorni di lavori. La prima osservazione, di Paul Valery, «la storia è la scienza delle cose che non si ripetono», invita a rifuggire indebite generalizzazioni e semplificazioni, mentre l'avvertenza di Simone Weil che «la trappola delle trappole è la quantità» suggerisce un uso accorto e consapevole della dimensione quantitativa, di grande importanza per la storia economica e sicuro tallone d'Achille di tanta cliometria. Infine, la considerazione di Jorge Luis Borges che «se la realtà non ha alcun obbligo di essere interessante a tale obbligo non possono sottrarsi le ipotesi», sottolinea la necessità di abbandonare ogni sterile descrittivismo per adottare un accostamento problematico che, indagando a fondo e con domande pertinenti l'oggetto di studio, consenta un reale avanzamento delle conoscenze (Mocarelli 2017, 85, 78, 90).

Bene, devo riconoscere che in questi giorni ho ascoltato, con soddisfazione, contributi decisamente in linea con questi preziosi suggerimenti: *case studies* rappresentativi affrontati con grande finezza, attenzione ai dettagli e capacità di analisi; dati non creati a tavolino ma ricavati, con impegnativi lavori di ricerca, dalle fonti e poi trattati in modo adeguato; presentazione di diverse ipotesi di lavoro di particolare interesse e certamente degne di approfondimento. Vorrei allora articolare, prendendo spunto dalle relazioni presentate e dalle discussioni che hanno originato, alcune riflessioni, con una speciale attenzione per il tema delle retribuzioni, e una proposta operativa che aiuti a indirizzare il dibattito verso una dimensione storicamente più appropriata.

La prima considerazione prende spunto dal tema del convegno che si inserisce, rilanciandolo, in un dibattito di lungo corso della storia economica, quello relativo alla dicotomia economia naturale-economia monetaria che ha avuto in Italia un significativo momento di sintesi all'inizio degli anni Ottanta del secolo scorso con l'annale Einaudi dedicato al tema (Romano e Tucci 1983). Nella loro premessa Ruggiero Romano e Ugo Tucci, dopo avere ricostruito le origini del dibattito, in particolare a partire dal fondamentale lavoro di Dopsch del 1930, si interrogavano, con la consueta finezza, su come il quadro teorico che si era progressivamente affermato potesse fornire una buona chiave di lettura della storia economica italiana, partendo dalla constatazione che l'economia per il consumo diretto e l'economia di scambio non erano due opposti che si negavano a vicenda ma che, viceversa, avevano convissuto per secoli.

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Occorreva quindi, secondo loro, abbandonare un'idea evolucionistica per cui si sarebbe passati nel corso del tempo da uno stadio inferiore, l'economia naturale, a uno superiore, l'economia monetaria, in grado di aprire la strada al capitalismo. A maggior ragione perché, nel caso italiano, il passaggio da una forma all'altra non è stato assolutamente lineare e anzi la «dimensione monetaria, si svolge, si sviluppa, si afferma *insieme* (e contro) quella non monetaria, e una vittoria ha tanto più senso quanto meglio si indica la forza, il valore, la resistenza dell'avversario che viene sconfitto» (Romano e Tucci, XXX). Si trattava peraltro di un convincimento in linea con le considerazioni sviluppate da Roberto Sabatino Lopez che, proprio in quello stesso periodo, aprendo la settimana del Datini dedicata a *La moneta nell'economia europea*, invitava, come ci ha ricordato nella sua prolusione Philippe Bernardi, a non isolare «la moneta metallica dalle altre monete o quasi monete come gli strumenti di credito e gli oggetti di baratto» (Lopez 1981, 7).

Non è certo un caso che anche in questa settimana del Datini, così come nel volume edito da Einaudi, la quota più rilevante dei contributi sia dedicata al medioevo e alla prima età moderna, senz'altro il periodo in cui la contrapposizione, ma anche la compresenza, delle due soluzioni appare più marcata e più significativa. Del resto, si trattava di un mondo dove la dimensione non monetaria degli scambi e delle relazioni risultava centrale di già, com'è prevedibile, nelle campagne o dove prevaleva un livello poco complesso di transazioni, ma poi anche ai piani alti della vita economica. La pratica dello scambio utilizzando merci, anche di grande valore, in luogo del denaro era infatti ancora molto diffusa, oltre che attestata nei manuali di mercatura, tra i mercanti europei del 400-500, come hanno mostrato bene nei loro interventi Matthieu Scherman, Francesco Guidi Bruscoli e Nenad Fejic.

Inoltre, e mi sembra altrettanto rilevante, le monete alternative si ritagliavano uno spazio significativo anche in quello che è sempre stato ritenuto l'ambiente di elezione dell'economia di mercato, vale a dire le città. Infatti, non solo una parte rilevante dei cereali consumati all'interno dei centri urbani (a Milano quasi il 40%) non passava per il mercato – venendo ridistribuita da ospedali, enti assistenziali, monasteri o, introdotta per il proprio consumo, da nobili e proprietari terrieri – (Maffi e Mocarelli 2021, 44-49), ma anche una quota molto cospicua delle retribuzioni, compresa tra il 5-10% e oltre il 50%, a seconda dei lavori e delle professioni, veniva pagata in natura e non in moneta, come ci ha opportunamente ricordato Corine Maitte.

Proprio quest'ultima evidenza apre a una seconda riflessione relativa al fatto che, quando si considera la moneta e il suo impiego nelle retribuzioni, bisogna comunque interrogarsi sulla sua reale diffusione e soprattutto chiedersi quale tipo di moneta effettivamente circolasse. Se si guarda ad esempio al caso piemontese, studiato dal compianto Giuseppe Felloni, ci si rende conto che la quota di gran lunga prevalente della circolazione metallica, nel suo complesso quasi triplicata tra metà e fine Settecento, era costituita da monete d'oro e d'argento, il 70% nel 1750 e ancora il 64% nel 1799. Il biglione rappresentava dal canto suo una porzione ridotta, il 28,5% e il 31,7% alle stesse date, mentre del tutto trascurabile era la quota delle monete di rame, 0,1 % e 3,9% (Felloni 1968, 158).

In una situazione come questa, dove lo stock monetario in circolazione era rappresentato soprattutto da monete 'alte', è evidente che il grosso della popolazione risultava escluso dalla circolazione monetaria. Infatti, a essere rilevante non è solo la

quantità di moneta che circola sul mercato, ma anche la sua tipologia. Inoltre, disporre della moneta poteva non essere sufficiente, perché per poterla utilizzare era pur sempre necessaria la presenza di una piazza di mercato. Se questa si trovava a decine di chilometri di distanza, risultando di fatto inaccessibile, il fatto di possedere la moneta serviva a ben poco, come è dato di verificare nel caso dei lavoratori delle miniere di mercurio di Idrija presentato da Thomas Safley.

Ma c'è un altro aspetto molto rilevante che andrebbe valutato quando si ragiona intorno alla corresponsione della parte monetaria delle retribuzioni, vale a dire il fatto che noi disponiamo quasi esclusivamente di note di pagamento dove i valori sono espressi in moneta di conto, la lira, e non in moneta effettiva. Siamo quindi di fronte a un vero e proprio 'buco nero' perché, oltre all'ignoranza relativa alle specie utilizzate per i pagamenti, dobbiamo anche considerare i giochi consentiti a chi pagava dallo scarto molto frequente tra monete di grida e in abusivo. A Milano, ad esempio, i capimastri e gli appaltatori al servizio del pubblico, ma non solo loro, hanno potuto giocare ampiamente sui crescenti differenziali tra le due valute delineatisi a partire dall'inizio degli anni Sessanta del Settecento che hanno indotto a utilizzare le monete dette di grida per il pagamento dei tributi e dei dazi, mentre quelle in abusivo servivano per acquistare i generi alimentari e pagare i salari, venendo escluse soltanto dai banchieri e dai grandi negozianti (Mocarelli 2018, 106).

Una prassi messa a dura prova dalla riforma monetaria del 1778, di fatto consistita in una rivalutazione del 20% della lira, che ha indotto molti appaltatori a chiedere un indennizzo perché, dopo tale intervento governativo, avevano sofferto per «aver perduto il vantaggio che ne ritraevano dal pagamento delle giornate in abusivo», a fronte di contratti di appalto stipulati invece in monete di grida. Tra l'altro va anche ricordato che, persino nelle città, il pagamento in denaro poteva risultare problematico proprio per le difficoltà nel reperire il numerario di basso conio necessario. Quando i Fè, i più importanti appaltatori edilizi nella Milano del secondo Settecento, si sono visti ridurre, in seguito alla riforma del 1778, il pagamento per i lavori fatti alla strada della Scala da 9.930 lire in abusivo a 8.275 di grida hanno sottolineato come avessero, conformandosi alla prassi corrente in precedenza, «fatto i cambi in regola del 20%», sostenendo la spesa maggiore proprio per «procurarsi moneta e danari spicci delli quali vi era scarsezza», da utilizzare per pagare i giornalieri (Mocarelli 2008, 231).

Del resto, le sovrapposizioni e gli spazi di ambiguità, ma anche i margini di manovra, erano enormi, perché, trattandosi di una realtà economica dove la moneta, che in genere non abbondava, era una moneta-merce (fosse d'oro, d'argento, di rame o di altre leghe metalliche), era abbastanza naturale, per cercare di contenere e risolvere i problemi di carenza di numerario che periodicamente si presentavano, utilizzare altri beni alla stregua o come sostituti della moneta. Valeva a tutti i livelli, per i mercanti come per la povera gente. In una recente ricerca Lorenzo Avellino ha mostrato con grande dettaglio e ricorrendo a fonti inesplorate come la grande diffusione della produzione della seta greggia nella Lombardia nel XVIII secolo abbia messo a disposizione di una fascia molto ampia della popolazione – dai contadini coinvolti nell'allevavano dei bachi, alle donne impegnate nell'attività di trattura, ai tessitori che ricevevano il filo da lavorare – un bene con le caratteristiche ideali per fungere da mezzo di pagamento, essendo leggero, facile da rubare e da trasportare, e di alto



valore unitario. Di conseguenza il prezioso filato è stato in grado di alimentare articolati e complessi circuiti di scambio non monetari, in cui le donne svolgevano un ruolo centrale, consentendo persino la regolazione di micro-partite di debito e credito (Avellino 2023a).

Verrebbe quindi da chiedersi se nell'età preindustriale la vitalità di un'economia dipendesse, alla fine, più dalla varietà e dalla disponibilità di monete alternative, assicurata in primo luogo dal grado di diversificazione del tessuto produttivo, che da quella della moneta metallica circolante, e se i vantaggi e gli spazi di libertà assicurati da questa persistente presenza di una valida alternativa possano contribuire a spiegare le tante resistenze incontrate dall'affermazione di una economia pienamente monetaria. Potrebbe essere ma, a conferma di quanto occorra diffidare delle generalizzazioni, potrebbe essere vero anche il contrario e cioè che il grande utilizzo di monete alternative e le difficoltà incontrate dalla diffusione della moneta metallica dipendano invece dall'arretratezza dell'economia e dalla sua grande distanza dalle logiche di un mercato moderno, come avveniva in tante realtà europee dove l'autoconsumo continuava a essere assolutamente centrale.

Che si tratti di un tema molto complesso lo conferma il fatto che in Italia dalla seconda metà del Cinquecento si è sviluppata anche una circolazione imponente di moneta di carta – lettere di cambio, fedeli di credito ecc. – per rispondere ai bisogni e agli stimoli dell'espansione dell'economia internazionale. Del resto, il futuro sarà rappresentato proprio dalla moneta merce su specie cartacea che si sviluppa in questo periodo tra Italia e Francia dove quindi è da ritenere che mancassero non tanto le *technicalities* finanziarie, quanto invece piuttosto la necessità. In questa logica il persistente uso di beni nei pagamenti e nelle transazioni testimonierebbe la presenza di un equilibrio sub-ottimale (De Luca, Lorenzini 2014).

Queste diverse possibilità suscitano però una terza riflessione, per me cruciale, che riguarda un convitato di pietra rimasto sullo sfondo, ma in realtà onnipresente, in questa settimana di studi. Si tratta del come, in un mondo dove le monete alternative erano così rilevanti, si attribuisse valore alle merci usate negli scambi o per pagare servizi. Un aspetto a mio parere decisivo se si vuole indagare e comprendere una realtà economica come quella preindustriale dove molto spesso, e persino nelle città, la componente non monetaria finiva per prevalere. La questione è di grande interesse anche dal punto di vista teorico perché una delle ragioni che avrebbero portato nel corso del tempo a preferire la moneta al baratto e/o all'uso dei beni e delle merci nelle transazioni sarebbe proprio rappresentata dal fatto che nello scambio tra beni o tra beni e servizi è molto difficile attribuire loro un valore preciso. Solo la moneta, infatti, rappresentando un'unità di misura univoca, consente di attribuire un valore inequivocabile e soprattutto comparabile ai beni, assicurando così la trasparenza dei prezzi.

Quello che sembrano attestare diverse delle fonti contabili utilizzate nei lavori qui presentati è che per prezzare le merci che poi si usavano negli scambi e nei pagamenti si faceva talvolta riferimento alle monete effettivamente circolanti sul mercato, ma molto più spesso alla moneta di conto. Ora, a parte il fatto che sarebbe pur sempre da capire quanto questo aspetto, per noi certamente fondamentale, lo fosse in una realtà economica e sociale che si muoveva con ben altre logiche, è indubbio che, nell'attribuzione di un prezzo o di un valore, entravano in gioco molti aspetti e non

solo di natura economica. Basti pensare a tutte le discussioni sul giusto prezzo che attraversano il medioevo e l'età moderna, oppure alla grande complessità sottostante la formulazione delle stime che ci ha opportunamente ricordato Michela Barbot. Dibattiti e controversie che, tra l'altro, non riguardavano solo i beni, i terreni o gli immobili ma anche, e forse ancor più, i salari (Caracausi 2011). Di fatto quando ci si accosta a questi temi bisognerebbe sempre chiedersi: i prezzi di che cosa e, soprattutto, dove, visto che la realtà urbana era profondamente diversa da quella rurale, sia per quanto riguardava il valore dei beni che i livelli delle retribuzioni.

All'atto pratico, comunque, nella determinazione dei prezzi e nell'attribuzione del valore ai beni, un ruolo molto significativo era svolto, anche allora, dalla disponibilità delle informazioni e dalla presenza di fortissime asimmetrie di conoscenze e di potere tra i soggetti coinvolti. Ed è evidente che su mercati molto sottili come quelli dell'età preindustriale, dove erano in gioco molte variabili che non tutti erano in grado di conoscere, e tanto meno di dominare, la possibilità di giocare sui prezzi e sull'attribuzione di un valore, anche riferendosi alla moneta di conto, offriva a mercanti e proprietari grandissimi margini di manovra e di guadagno. Era, ad esempio, proprio la possibilità di erogare in natura, conferendo cereali e/o vino, parti più o meno consistenti della retribuzione o del compenso per i servizi prestati a consentire ai datori di lavoro di conseguire ulteriori guadagni a scapito dei lavoratori, applicando valori di mercato a loro più favorevoli.

Infatti, anche dove i mercati erano rigidamente regolati, come nel caso dell'annona urbana, esistevano comunque ampi spazi di libertà che consentivano di acquistare i beni nei luoghi di produzione, dove costavano meno, contabilizzandoli poi a valori cittadini (Maffi e Mocarrelli 2021, 45-47). Come hanno fatto i già ricordati Fè quando nel 1758 hanno rilevato il «negozio di vino Bettinelli e Piazza», riducendo così i costi di acquisizione della bevanda destinata ai lavoratori e ampliando i propri margini di guadagno. E, di lì a poco, in occasione della costruzione del naviglio di Paderno loro appaltata, hanno anche chiesto e ottenuto di poter aprire delle «specie di bettole e far somministrare commestibili e vino agli uomini...impiegati nel detto travaglio senza aggravio alcuno di dazio» (Mocarrelli 2008, 229-30).

L'accesso diretto a beni come i cereali e il vino, che potevano poi essere contabilizzati applicando prezzi più elevati quando si trattava di conferirli ai lavoratori, era del resto una delle modalità a cui ricorrevano più di frequente i mercanti, utilizzandola anche al di fuori dei contesti urbani. Esempio al riguardo è il caso dei bresciani Archetti che nel corso del Settecento hanno organizzato intorno a Campione nell'alto Garda il più importante polo di lavorazione del ferro allora presente nella Penisola, sfruttando al meglio la presenza in loco di un fitto reticolo di fucine e di consolidate abilità artigianali, e creando al tempo stesso le condizioni per una forte dipendenza degli artefici nei loro confronti, poiché li rifornivano del semilavorato da trasformare e soprattutto dei cereali necessari per la sopravvivenza, assolutamente indispensabili in aree montane come quelle qui considerate, strutturalmente deficitarie al riguardo. E proprio sul conferimento di parte rilevante delle retribuzioni in natura hanno potuto realizzare ingenti guadagni, non solo perché avevano ottenuto, per alimentare la numerosa manodopera, l'autorizzazione da Venezia a condurre a Campione in esenzione di dazio ben 2.000 some di cereali ogni anno, che peraltro già acquistavano a prezzi convenienti sull'importante mercato all'ingrosso di Desenzano, ma anche

perché ne avevano approfittato per avviare un lucroso contrabbando in direzione del limitrofo Trentino (Mocarelli 2010, 156-57).

C'erano poi anche opzioni di guadagno molto più semplici nella loro totale arbitrarietà. È quanto ci ha mostrato Catherine Verna evidenziando come in un'altra area siderurgica, questa volta francese, il Vallespir, il valore del ferro quando serviva per pagare i salari, venisse fissato a un livello inferiore, 24-29 *sous* al quintale, rispetto a quello vigente per i prezzi all'ingrosso, che oscillavano tra i 30 e i 32 *sous*. Una chiara dimostrazione del fatto che nella determinazione dei prezzi da utilizzare e da applicare il guadagno poteva derivare, sia dalla capacità di porre in essere soluzioni che consentivano di ridurre i costi di approvvigionamento dei beni poi conferiti ai lavoratori, sfruttando non solo la propria forza economica ma anche le relazioni politiche, sia giocando su relazioni di potere decisamente asimmetriche che si traducevano in uno scambio ineguale.

Va peraltro sottolineato, a conferma della complessità della realtà storica, che dal pagamento in natura potevano comunque trarre vantaggio anche i lavoratori perché chi riceveva una parte più o meno consistente della retribuzione sotto forma di cereali o di vino era meno penalizzato, quando i prezzi aumentavano, come è avvenuto negli ultimi decenni del Settecento, rispetto a quanti ricevevano i pagamenti in moneta. Non è un caso che nella sviluppatissima agricoltura della bassa pianura lombarda i lavoratori che versavano nelle condizioni peggiori fossero gli avventizi e gli obbligati, proprio quelli che ricevevano il loro salario quasi esclusivamente in moneta. Nel Cremonese, ad esempio, un salariato fisso riceveva negli anni Trenta dell'Ottocento conferimenti in denaro e in natura per un complesso di 600 lire annue, mentre gli obbligati percepivano una retribuzione monetaria superiore ma avevano in proporzione «una minore somministrazione di derrate in natura per cui può ritenersi il loro salario complessivo di circa 270 lire» (Faccini 1986, 420). Non diversa era la situazione nella pianura parmense dove, tra Sette e Ottocento, «la posizione dei salariati era certamente migliore di quella dei giornalieri, atteso il maggior peso che la retribuzione in natura esercitava sui loro compensi, e che non era mai inferiore al 65% dell'intero salario. Ciò poneva i primi più al riparo dalle conseguenze negative del lento ma progressivo deterioramento della moneta divisionale che solitamente ricevevano in pagamento delle loro prestazioni» (Spaggiari 1966, 135).

I pagamenti in natura, quindi, potevano risultare in diversi casi molto convenienti, ovviamente per ragioni diverse, sia per i lavoratori, che per i mercanti e i proprietari terrieri, come conferma la persistente importanza del pagamento di molti canoni di affitto in generi e non in denaro contante. Del resto, si trattava di relazioni dove a contare non erano solo la dimensione economica ma anche, e ancor più, i rapporti di relazione e di fiducia tra i soggetti coinvolti, come confermano le complesse relazioni di debito e credito che si potevano creare, all'interno delle quali anche i lavoratori, pur nella loro posizione subordinata, avevano carte non trascurabili da giocare (Avellino 2023b, 148-54). Proprio la grande importanza acquisita dalla dimensione sociale e relazionale negli scambi indurrebbe a ritenere che la moneta metallica, dato il suo carattere 'neutrale' e per certi versi oggettivo, venisse utilizzata innanzitutto e preferibilmente nelle relazioni tra soggetti che non si conoscevano per evitare i prevedibili fenomeni di *free riding* consentiti dalle fortissime asimmetrie informative presenti e dalle ancora limitate capacità di *enforcement* delle normative.

Ora, ed è il mio quarto spunto di riflessione, il fatto che si trattasse di una realtà economica così diversa dalla nostra non significa che i protagonisti dell'età preindustriale fossero all'oscuro delle logiche di mercato. Mi limito in proposito a fornire due esempi che dimostrano una profonda conoscenza delle dinamiche economiche allora in atto. Il primo si riferisce ai criteri con cui venivano fissate le retribuzioni. La scelta della cifra da corrispondere non era infatti arbitraria o dettata dalla consuetudine ma teneva nel dovuto conto la presenza di eventuali altri impieghi alternativi e concorrenti, ben noti non solo agli impresari ma anche ai lavoratori. Esempio è quanto facevano gli scalpellini al servizio della Fabbrica del duomo di Milano che si assentavano «dal lavoro in estate per restarvi invece d'inverno con la stessa paga di soldi 35 al dì». A fronte di questa evidenza l'istituzione ha deciso di pagarli 25 soldi nel periodo invernale, quando le possibilità di trovare altri impieghi erano ridotte al minimo, 35 soldi a marzo, aprile, settembre e ottobre e 46 soldi da maggio ad agosto, quando più forte era il richiamo esercitato dagli alti salari agricoli corrisposti nel periodo dei raccolti.

Inoltre, ed è il secondo esempio, c'era pure una chiara consapevolezza del fatto che su mercati anche relativamente vicini potevano esserci prezzi molto diversi, se non altro per l'elevata incidenza assunta dai costi di trasporto delle derrate e delle merci. La Fabbrica del duomo di Milano, ad esempio, pagava le giornate estive dei maestri da muro e dei lavoranti impegnati a metà Settecento negli interventi agli stabili della sua possessione di Gudo Visconti nel pavese rispettivamente 30 e 15 soldi, mentre a Milano corrispondeva 35 e 18 soldi, quindi tra il 14 e il 17% in più, proprio perché il costo della vita nei due contesti era molto diverso (Mocarelli 2008, 223, 228). Basti in proposito osservare che sul mercato di Casalpusterlengo, collocato nella bassa pianura lombarda, il frumento poteva arrivare a costare, come è avvenuto nel 1788, quasi il 30% in meno rispetto a quanto avveniva a Milano, 22 lire al moggio a fronte di 31 (Zaninelli 1964, 131).

Si tratta quindi di una realtà che deve essere studiata, e soprattutto compresa, *in iuxta sua propria principia* senza liquidarla sbrigativamente relegandola nella categoria dell'arretratezza sulla base di quanto si è poi verificato a partire dalla rivoluzione industriale inglese. Questo vale in particolare con riferimento al grado di monetizzazione dell'economia perché, se è indubbio che un suo aumento costituisca un progresso in direzione della modernizzazione, lo è altrettanto che il progressivo ridimensionamento delle monete alternative privava i più poveri e vulnerabili di un importante ammortizzatore, ridimensionando le opzioni a loro disposizione ed esponendoli ai rischi di un'istituzione per sua natura amorale come il mercato.

È allora evidente che, se si guarda alla realtà preindustriale, non ha molto senso calcolare e costruire serie di salari monetari per poi utilizzarle per calcolare i salari reali da cui far discendere la presenza di una presunta divergenza all'interno dell'Europa o tra l'Europa e il resto del mondo. Se in merito inizia a esserci una crescente consapevolezza, chi sinora si è mosso costruendo megatrend plurisecolari da usare in chiave comparativa, ritenendo, come ha chiaramente evidenziato Deirdre McCloskey (2013, 5), di maggior utilità e rilevanza la comparabilità e l'*indicativeness* rispetto alla rappresentatività, obietta che non basta sottolineare le debolezze dei lavori di economia storica pubblicati da Allen in poi, ma bisogna anche essere in grado di proporre un'alternativa. È quello che intendo fare in questa parte conclusiva del mio

intervento, suggerendo alcune proposte metodologiche e indicando alcune piste di approfondimento.

Innanzitutto, se anche si volesse privilegiare la dimensione comparativa sarebbe buona pratica comparare il comparabile. Detto più chiaramente non ha alcun senso confrontare nel Settecento le Province unite, di fatto un territorio a scala regionale, con un'entità, l'Italia, che, oltre a essere molto più estesa e profondamente diversificata, all'epoca non esisteva proprio e che per di più viene ridotta, in gran parte delle comparazioni sin qui effettuate, ai dati dei prezzi e dei salari di De Maddalena per Milano, di cui ho mostrato la fragilità (Mocarelli 2008, 215-22), e di Parenti e Malanima per la Toscana. Se proprio si vuole fare un confronto lo si faccia con la Lombardia che aveva dimensioni, popolamento, grado di urbanizzazione, struttura economica pienamente comparabili con le Province unite. Certo il rischio è che così facendo molto probabilmente la presunta piccola divergenza tra l'Europa ritenuta più avanzata e quella ritardataria svanirebbe come neve al sole.

Del resto, non bisognerebbe dimenticare mai che, se si vogliono realmente indagare i processi di sviluppo, la scala più appropriata da adottare, come aveva già evidenziato Pollard proprio con riferimento al caso britannico (Pollard 1984, 5-60), è quella regionale e non certo quella statale. Mi sembra un approccio più sensato rispetto a quello di fingere di comparare unità statali, magari ancora inesistenti, applicando una *reductio ad unum*, che rappresenta la negazione della complessità dei processi storici, per cui i prezzi e i salari di qualche città vengono ritenuti rappresentativi di contesti molto più ampi. Ma è davvero possibile ritenere, come è stato fatto, che i dati relativi a Londra, Milano e Firenze ci dicano quanto succede nell'Inghilterra meridionale e nell'Italia settentrionale tra medioevo e rivoluzione industriale (Malanima 2013)? E Torino, Genova, Venezia, Bologna, solo per richiamare le città principali?

È evidente che qualsiasi comparazione dovrebbe in primo luogo recuperare la complessità alla base di ogni ricostruzione storica allargando lo sguardo al di là dei soliti dati e contesti. Questo significa prendere in considerazione non solo le città, dove nella migliore delle ipotesi viveva e lavorava il 15-20% della popolazione, e rivolgersi anche alle campagne, come di recente ha fatto Giulio Ongaro (Ongaro 2023); tenere nel dovuto conto non solo la dimensione monetaria, come è emerso chiaramente anche in questa settimana; considerare non il singolo lavoratore ma la famiglia che era l'unità di vita e lavorativa. Mettersi in questa prospettiva significa certamente compiere ricerche che consentano di reperire nuovi dati e riscontri tali da permettere di ricostruire la dimensione micro soggiacente a quella macro, con una particolare attenzione alla comprensione delle logiche e dei meccanismi di funzionamento del sistema e alle relazioni tra le due. Del resto, anche gli sviluppi più recenti dell'economia evidenziano che una macro analisi che non è micro fondata rappresenta un esercizio sterile e invitano a considerare la micro impresa familiare una immagine speculare della macro economia che aggrega sia imprese che famiglie.

Si tratta quindi di riconsiderare in modo critico i due pilastri, salari e prezzi, alla base della costruzione delle serie plurisecolari dei salari reali utilizzati poi per calcolare i living standard e le varie divergenze. Per i salari questo sta già succedendo (Hatcher 2018) con conseguenze certamente significative. Penso però che indagare le condizioni di vita richieda un approccio più complesso che prenda in considerazione e cerchi di ricostruire le entrate della famiglia che è la vera unità di misura significativa.

È evidente allora che non si può considerare solo il salario del capofamiglia e cioè quanto si riceveva dall'esterno sotto forma di moneta o di beni. Bisognerebbe almeno considerare anche la produzione domestica di beni semplici che venivano poi venduti e che poteva coinvolgere donne e bambini; le attività svolte per la sussistenza della famiglia e infine i trasferimenti di beni da parte di istituzioni. Sarebbe interessante ricostruire come cambia nel corso del tempo la proporzione tra queste voci e soprattutto come si differenzino in proposito le famiglie urbane e rurali.

Ma altrettanto importante è riconsiderare il paniere di riferimento utilizzato per calcolare i salari reali che dovrebbe tenere conto delle differenze tra città e campagna, della presenza all'interno delle città dei sistemi annonari, dei beni effettivamente consumati. Abbiamo iniziato a farlo in un articolo appena pubblicato che, prendendo in considerazione Milano, Bologna e Firenze, coniuga dimensione quantitativa e qualitativa avendo di mira precisamente due obiettivi: un nuovo calcolo dei salari reali, dato che «the existing calculations used for this purpose have many criticalities» e una attenta considerazione del «role played by urban public institutions in mediating between the market and consumers, with relevant effects on price trends and, therefore, on the purchasing power of the urban population» (Mocarelli, Ongaro, e Prosperi 2023, 1). Si tratta solo di un primo passo ma ci sembra che vada nella giusta direzione.

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FABRIZIO ALIAS, Uso e diffusione della ‘moneta alternativa’ in Sardegna tra XI e XIV secolo

Tra XI e XIII secolo l'economia della Sardegna (allora divisa nei quattro regni o giudicati di Cagliari, Arborea, Torres e Gallura) era caratterizzata da un ridotto uso della moneta, quest'ultima compensata attraverso l'impiego di beni e servizi come mezzo di scambio. L'inserimento della Sardegna nei traffici commerciali tirrenici tra XII e XIII secolo favorì la transizione verso un'economia monetaria, di cui furono veicolo i mercanti pisani e genovesi radicati nell'isola. Ciò non significò peraltro la scomparsa di mezzi alternativi alla moneta, ma solo un ribaltamento del rapporto tra questi ultimi e la moneta stessa. L'intento del presente contributo è quello di indagare a fondo uso e diffusione dei mezzi di scambio non monetari in Sardegna tra XIII e XIV secolo, ponendoli in relazione alla moneta e cercando di coglierne ruolo e funzione nel peculiare contesto economico isolano.

*Between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, the economy of Sardinia (which was then divided into four kingdoms or giudicati: Cagliari, Arborea, Torres, and Gallura) was characterized by a limited use of currency, which was compensated through the exchange of goods and services. The integration of Sardinia into Tyrrhenian commercial trade between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries facilitated the transition towards a monetary economy, driven by Pisan and Genoese merchants who had established themselves on the island. However, this did not lead to the disappearance of alternative means of exchange; rather, it brought about a shift in the relationship between these alternative means and currency itself. The purpose of this study is to thoroughly investigate the use and dissemination of non-monetary exchange methods in Sardinia between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, while relating them to the role and function of currency within the unique economic context of the island.*

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<sup>1</sup> In questa sezione del volume abbiamo inserito gli abstracts inviatici dagli Autori.



MICHELA BARBOT, Cedere dei beni al posto del denaro dovuto. La datio in solutum in Francia e Italia fra XVII e XVIII secolo

Questa ricerca, incentrata su una comparazione fra la Francia e l'Italia di Antico Regime, ha per oggetto la datio in solutum, ovvero la cessione di beni a saldo di un debito monetario. Dopo averne illustrato i tratti essenziali, il testo presenta le interpretazioni giuridiche della datio in solutum, analizza la sua regolamentazione legislativa e si concentra sul caso, ben documentato, del Ducato di Milano. La ricerca mostra come le differenze fra la Francia e l'Italia rivelino due diverse attitudini politico-istituzionali nei confronti dei processi di indebitamento: la prima, quella francese, più propensa a proteggere il creditore; la seconda, quella italiana, più incline a soccorrere il debitore, ma al contempo più attenta a mitigare questo squilibrio mediante l'imposizione di una lunga serie di regole procedurali.

*This research, which focuses on a comparison between early modern France and Italy, deals with datio in solutum, i.e. the transfer of goods in settlement of a monetary debt. After illustrating its essential features, the text presents the legal interpretations of datio in solutum, analyses its legislative regulation and addresses the well-documented case of the Duchy of Milan. The research shows that the differences between France and Italy reveal two different political attitudes towards debts and obligations: the French one, more inclined to protect the creditor, and the Italian one, more disposed to assist the debtor, but at the same time more careful to soften this imbalance through the imposition of a long series of procedural rules.*

PHILIPPE BERNARDI, Prolusione

Il rifiuto del baratto al di fuori degli scambi monetizzati va di pari passo con la percezione di questa pratica come una modalità di scambio 'primitiva'. Nel cuore delle economie monetarie, tuttavia, il pagamento in natura coesiste con altre forme di scambio, come il dono, la permuta, il credito, il commercio formalizzato e lo scambio monetizzato di beni. Questa prolusione mostra che la rilettura antropologica delle pratiche di baratto, scambio e pagamento in natura fornisce strumenti concettuali che consentono agli storici di fare il punto sulla diffusione e sull'importanza di queste pratiche economiche. In primo luogo, si analizza la coesistenza del baratto e del denaro, prima di esaminare la diversità delle forme assunte dal pagamento in natura e i suoi ambiti di applicazione.

*The rejection of barter outside of monetised exchanges goes hand in hand with an apprehension of this practice as a 'primitive' mode of exchange, and proclaims the 'modernity of money'. At the heart of monetary economies, however, payment in kind coexists with other forms of exchange, such as gifts, exchange, credit, formalised trade and the monetised exchange of goods. The aim of this prolusion is to show that anthropology's re-reading of the practices of barter, exchange and payment in kind provides conceptual tools that enable historians to take stock of the spread and importance of these economic practices. It looks first at the coexistence of barter and money, before examining the diversity of forms taken by payment in kind and its areas of application.*

## PHILIPPE BERNARDI, Tavola rotonda

L'intervention proposée dans cette table-ronde porte sur deux composantes majeures du recours aux monnaies alternatives. La première de ces composantes est la part prise par la négociation. La complexité de l'évaluation dans les échanges en nature a largement été mise en évidence. Il semble néanmoins important de souligner la relative subjectivité de cette opération qui, malgré la référence explicite au prix du marché, conserve une dimension culturelle. Ce constat engage à ne pas négliger la dimension individuelle ou catégorielle de la transaction qui peut faire pencher l'échange en faveur de l'une ou l'autre des parties et participer d'une forme de dépendance. La seconde composante évoquée est la défiance. La défiance apparaît, en effet, se développe sur le terreau des abus constatés. La crainte ou le sentiment d'être dupé. Le vocabulaire en garde la trace, non sans révéler une certaine ambiguïté des sociétés anciennes vis-à-vis du troc, qui invite à ne pas s'arrêter à la seule valeur négative du vocabulaire et à s'interroger sur le biais que peuvent introduire des sources contractuelles mettant principalement en rapport des étrangers.

*Questa tavola rotonda si concentra su due aspetti principali dell'uso delle monete alternative. Il primo è il ruolo della negoziazione. La complessità della valutazione negli scambi in natura è stata ampiamente sottolineata. Tuttavia, è importante sottolineare la relativa soggettività di questa operazione che, nonostante il riferimento esplicito al prezzo di mercato, mantiene una dimensione culturale. Questa osservazione significa che non bisogna trascurare la dimensione individuale o di categoria della transazione, che può far pendere lo scambio a favore di una o dell'altra parte, determinando una forma di dipendenza. La seconda componente è la diffidenza. La sfiducia sembra svilupparsi sul terreno degli abusi osservati. La paura o la sensazione di essere ingannati. Il vocabolario lo testimonia, ma non senza rivelare una certa ambiguità delle società nei confronti del baratto, che ci invita a guardare oltre la valenza negativa del vocabolario e a considerare la parzialità che può essere introdotta da fonti contrattuali che mettono in contatto soprattutto estranei.*

*This round-table discussion focuses on two major aspects of the use of alternative currencies. The first is the role of negotiation. The complexity of valuation in exchanges in kind has been widely highlighted. However, it is important to emphasise the relative subjectivity of this operation which, despite the explicit reference to the market price, retains a cultural dimension. This observation means that we must not overlook the individual or category dimension of the transaction, which can tip the exchange in favour of one or other of the parties, resulting in a form of dependency. The second component is mistrust. Distrust appears to develop on the soil of the abuses observed. The fear or feeling of being duped. The vocabulary bears witness to this, but not without revealing a certain ambiguity in ancient societies with regard to bartering, which invites us to look beyond the negative value of the vocabulary and consider the bias that may be introduced by contractual sources that mainly bring together strangers.*

ROBERT BRAID, Alternative forms of remuneration at the Holy Spirit Hospital of Marseille in the fourteenth century

The monetisation of exchanges tends to favour economic development, yet many forms of payment persisted throughout the preindustrial era despite rapid growth. Services in particular were remunerated in a variety of forms which depended on the particular relationship between the employer and the worker. The evolution in the composition of wages impacted social relations and structures as much as standards of living. Through an extensive examination of its account registers as well as local legislation, this paper analyses the variety of ways the Holy Spirit Hospital of Marseille remunerated individuals it employed as doctors, surgeons, scribes, wet-nurses, domestic servants, artisans and casual laborers. Workers who lived separately from the hospital were usually paid only in cash, while employees who were part of the household could receive cloth, shoes, clothing, meals, housing and medical care in addition to a cash salary. Contrary to what historians have observed in other regions, the share of in-kind payments did not increase after the Black Death for casual agricultural workers, who were paid in cash through this period. Only construction workers started to receive meals in addition to wages in the 1360s. Domestic and agricultural servants, however, received fewer in-kind payments after the epidemic. More importantly, this study reveals the numerous services that were provided by individuals for strikingly below-market rates. It is argued that the hospital was able to significantly lower operating costs by offering individuals *social currency*, intangible benefits instead of cash or in-kind payments, in exchange for numerous and valuable services. After the Black Death, however, the value of social currency decreased relative to other forms of payment.

WILLIAM CAFERRO, Alternate currencies, bills of exchange and warfare in Trecento Italy

The connection between war and cash payments (gold/silver) has long been a staple of military history: a largely self-contained field that has stood apart from monetary history. The present essay examines the use of alternate currencies to compensate soldiers for war in *trecento* Italy during the era of costly mercenaries («the age of the companies of adventures») and the so-called bullion crisis. The paper investigates the recourse to in kind payments (horses, grain, utensils, ceremonial armor, cloth, land) and to bills of exchange, letters of payment and paper instruments. The use of paper is noteworthy, counterintuitive and the worthy of further research that includes consideration of the use of notarial documents, *apodisse* and *bollette*, in payments to soldiers. The broad aim of the paper is to bring together more closely study of the economy of war with monetary history and economic history more generally.

## WILLIAM CAFERRO, Roundtable comments

The papers at this conference have replaced simplicity with complexity and, although we may quibble about the use of the term «elegance», scholars have demonstrated «creative developments» that do not fit neatly with received wisdom. As with the recent scientific discourse about evolution, one species does not merely replace another, but often exists alongside it until the newer, better adapted one eventually emerges. Even with regard to alternative currencies we have seen wide variation: from local exchange in utensils and animals, to international exchange in cloth, to use of bills of exchange in payment as well as labor itself as payment.

LISA CALISTE, CATHERINE VERNA, Pratiques du troc, industries et stratégies individuelles (Lodévois et Vallespir, XV<sup>e</sup> siècle-vers 1550)

Dans les districts industriels méridionaux du Vallespir (comté de Roussillon) et du Lodévois (Languedoc), les échanges en nature (en biens et en service) sont des pratiques courantes, dont une partie a été enregistrée par les notaires. À partir d'un corpus de 425 actes, il est possible d'aborder les conditions juridiques du « troc », les catégories des produits échangés, tous fabriqués sur place et leurs prix rapportés au marché. Dans les deux districts, les paiements en nature participent aux échanges du quotidien : l'on échange ce dont on dispose pour obtenir un produit dont on a besoin. S'y ajoute la pratique du troc par les marchands et les pareurs, pour le drap et le fer qui sont exportés sur les marchés internationaux. Échanger est dans ce cas un moyen d'accéder aux produits en dégageant un bénéfice et en contrôlant la main-d'oeuvre. Ainsi, les acteurs économiques quelle que soit leur identité sociale ou professionnelle prennent part au « troc » et pratiquent le paiement en nature par choix, entre nécessité et profit.

*In the southern industrial districts of Vallespir (Roussillon) and Lodévois (Languedoc), exchanges in kind (in goods and services) are common practice, some of which has been recorded by notaries. Based on a corpus of 425 notarial deeds, it is possible to examine the legal conditions of 'barter', the categories of goods exchanged (all of which are manufactured locally) and their market prices. In both districts, payments in kind are part of everyday exchanges: people exchange what they have in order to obtain a product they need. Merchants and drapers also barter, for wollen cloth and iron, which are exported to international markets. In this case, barter is a way to obtain products making a profit and controlling the workforce. Thus, regardless of their social or professional identity, economic players take part in barter and make payment in kind out of a choice between necessity and profit.*

JULIE CLAUSTRE, Les monnaies alternatives à Paris au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle, d'après les transactions d'un atelier de couture

Centré sur l'atelier d'un acteur économique, un couturier actif à Paris entre 1420 et 1455, cet article propose une analyse des paiements en nature effectués dans sa boutique afin de tester les hypothèses d'interprétation que les historiens formulent

usuellement pour comprendre le recours aux paiements non monétaires. La source qui permet de conduire cette étude des modes de paiement en usage à Paris au XVe siècle est constituée par les vestiges du livre de boutique du couturier, qui documentent les paiements qu'il reçoit en céréales, denrées alimentaires, objets et les services scolaires fournis à son fils et qu'il finance par son travail. Ils éclairent les motifs et circonstances qui peuvent expliquer le recours au troc dans une économie urbaine hautement monétarisée et commercialisée.

*Focusing on the workshop of an economic agent, a parisian tailor between 1420 and 1455, this article proposes an analysis of the payments in kind made in his shop in order to test the hypotheses of interpretation that historians usually formulate to understand the use of non-monetary payments. The source for this study of the methods of payment in use in 15th-century Paris is the tailor's shop book, which document the payments he received in grain, foodstuffs, objects and school services provided to his son and financed by his work. They shed light on the motives and circumstances that might explain the use of barter in a highly monetarised and commercialised urban economy.*

NATACHA COQUERY, Guerre, dirigisme, approvisionnement. Les marchandises de luxe, monnaie d'échanges alternative sous la Terreur

De 1792 à 1795, la guerre absorbe la moitié du budget de l'Etat français alors que la situation fiscale est désastreuse. Le pouvoir politique se résout à mettre en place une économie dirigée pour soutenir la production, ravitailler les armées et les villes, limiter la chute de l'assignat. Une pratique alternative est organisée, les paiements en nature, sous l'autorité du comité de salut public : produits fabriqués de luxe contre matières premières et produits de nécessité. L'objectif est de comprendre les logiques en jeu : le rôle des puissances neutres et des négociants français, l'exigence d'approvisionnement, la revalorisation inattendue d'un secteur spécifique de l'économie française (le luxe), la balance entre idéologie et pragmatisme politiques.

*From 1792 to 1795, the war absorbed half of the French state budget at a time when the fiscal situation was disastrous. The political authorities decided to set up a managed economy to support production, supply the armies and towns and limit the fall in the scrip. Under the authority of the comité de salut public, an alternative practice was organised - payment in kind: luxury manufactured goods in exchange for raw materials and necessities. The aim is to understand the logic at play: the role of neutral powers and French traders, the need for supplies, the unexpected revaluation of a specific sector of the French economy (luxury goods), and the balance between ideology and political pragmatism.*

JEAN-LUC DE MEULEMEESTER, DAVID KUSMAN, Honour, social capital and alternative currencies: the «leisting» custom in the cities of the Late Medieval Low Countries and Rhineland

In this paper we analyse a specific legal clause inserted in debt contracts in the late Medieval Low Countries: the 'leisting' custom. It implied personal sureties, i.e., vassals or councillors of the debtor (and sometimes himself) who had to go

sojourning in an inn for an unspecified period, and there live, eat and drink conspicuously (“as good pledges should do”). This legal mechanism often implied high aristocratic debtors with, in a first stage, ecclesial creditors (as abbeys) and Italian financiers. We show how the innkeeper played an instrumental role in this framework. In Brussels, the technique fostered undoubtedly the use of alternative currencies by noble pledges to circumvent the lack of cash money or the intricacy of exchange rates. Later, this credit technique also spread among local merchants and well-off burghers as debtors and creditors, especially in Northern Low Countries as exemplified by our example of Kampen. In the latter city, this legal tool could well have been favoured by town authorities as an indirect regulation of the property market, avoiding therefore too much speculation on the urban plots during periods of expansion and works of public concern. The efficiency of this custom remains somewhat open to debate, the long-time span of its use suggesting a relative efficacy, whereas its sudden suppression (as in Kampen) hints at some abuses.

NENAD FEJIC, An apparent paradox: wool as an alternative currency for merchants and weavers in Dubrovnik (Ragusa) in the 15<sup>th</sup> century

This article examines the use of wool as an alternative currency in Dubrovnik in the first half of the 15th century. The actors of this practice were Catalan merchants who advanced wool to local weavers. In return, the weavers had to refund the credit by transforming the wool into fabrics. The quantity of fabrics returned was always greater than the quantity that could be produced from the wool received. This use of wool as an alternative currency corresponded to the mining prosperity in the Balkans. Silver, a precious metal, was exported by the Catalans, rather than being used to finance local wool production, which therefore had to resort to a local financing circuit, where wool, in the absence of silver currency, served as an alternative currency.

FRANCESCO GUIDI-BRUSCOLI, ‘Wherever they consider it more profitable, for cash, baratto or credit’. Florentine merchants and the export of silk cloth (15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries)

This article is centred on *baratto*, or market exchange, which consisted in making payments in kind even in the context of a monetised economy. Documentary evidence shows how frequently this type of commercial transaction was adopted in late-medieval long-distance trade, and which strategies led to its adoption. Far from being a feature of a ‘primitive’ economy, *baratto* in international trade implied a network of information, a knowledge of the demand and an ability to connect marketplaces, that only few possessed. Examples are taken mainly from account-books and correspondence of Italian (Florentine) merchants, who were able both to assess the monetary value of each merchandise and to know the market where it would be more profitable to sell it for cash or, again, through *baratto*.

ANNE KUCAB, Les monnaies alternatives à Rouen à la fin du Moyen Âge

Les sources rouennaises conservées pour la seconde moitié du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle renseignent sur les transactions économiques d'une des principales villes du royaume de France. Grâce aux comptabilités, il est possible de déterminer la place non négligeable qu'occupent les monnaies alternatives dans la vie des habitants. Celles-ci revêtent plusieurs formes : troc, retenue sur salaire, paiements en nature. Elles participent de différentes transactions : dans le cadre du travail, d'échanges commerciaux, de gratifications à des travailleurs ou de présents à des personnalités. Leurs dimensions pratiques comme symboliques doivent ainsi être prises en compte. Leur usage souligne la forte capacité des Rouennais à jongler entre monnaie réelle, monnaie de compte et paiement en nature.

*Sources from Rouen from the second half of the 15th century provide information on economic transactions in one of the major cities in the kingdom of France. Thanks to the accounting records, it is possible to determine the significant role played by alternative currencies in the lives of the inhabitants. Alternative currencies took several forms: barter, payroll deductions and payments in kind. They are used in a variety of transactions: in the context of work, commercial exchanges, as a reward for workers or as a gift for prominent people. Both their practical and symbolic dimensions need to be taken into account. Their use underlines the Rouen people's ability to combine real money, account money and payment in kind.*

ALEJANDRA IRIGOIN, Respondentia: The alternative contract for global trade finance in the Early Modern Period

By specifying the specie on which returns were to be repaid respondentia was an efficient instrument to carry trade in which silver was «essential» for the continuation of commerce. As silver was imported as specie, where a multiplicity of means of payments existed and silver was the preferred money, it performed as foreign currency. Without common standards for foreign coins created issues for trade, the pricing of specie, and exchange rates. eighteenth century Europeans alternatively used respondentia or bills depending on the monetary context, casting a doubt on the inherent efficiency of a cashless means of payment. Bills of exchange did not circulate outside Europe where cash had a premium. As the intermediary Europe developed means to regulate the price of foreign coins and exchange rates. Elsewhere respondentia had an advantage over bills; it allowed to hedge against uncertainty and propitiated arbitrage profits.

THIJS LAMBRECHT, JOKE VERFAILLIE, TOM DE WAELE, Lords, Peasants and the remuneration of labour services in the Southern Low Countries, 13<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries

In the Late Medieval and early modern Southern Low Countries, servile work gradually disappeared in most lordships. This contribution researches how and why

unfree labour persisted in a minority of seigneuries. The main argument for the survival of so-called *corvée* labour, is that subjects performing these works received some form of remuneration. From the thirteenth century onward, peasantries were also able to negotiate favourable working conditions. Lords could not claim works during harvest and had to respect reasonable notification intervals. During the performance of the *corvée* labour, peasantries were usually provided food (and drink) in proportionate quantities to the caloric consumption needs of their respective work and status. Compensation of expenses in coin was rather rare, but lords often offered favourable benefits such as fiscal exemptions or use rights to the performing population or even the whole community. Male breeding animals were provided, and access to the lords domain such as hunting and fishing rights, or pastures could also be heeded. In this manner, small farmers could enjoy additional income streams or cut expenses. The existence of an array of rights and benefits to subjects performing labour indicate favourable negotiation terms of the peasant population. The case studies presented showcase a more nuanced historical reality, where peasants successfully (re-)negotiated labour duties with their lords. This paper reconstructs the negotiation process between lords and subjects as recorded in village customs.

CORINE MAITTE, *La part des anges ? Les rémunérations en nature entre truck system et considération sociale*

La part en nature des rémunérations n'est pas un simple palliatif à l'absence de monnaie. L'article montre qu'il s'agit de pratiques de longue durée, enracinée dans la coutume et parfois dans les textes, qu'il s'agisse des contrats de travail ou des statuts corporatifs. Elles ne sont liées ni à la durée du rapport de travail, ni au statut hiérarchique des personnes. Leur signification à la fois sociale, économique et symbolique doit être contextualisé avec soin, ce qui permet une étude micro-historique qui concerne ici les employés des grands ducs Médicis au tournant du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, celui des verriers italiens migrants en Europe à la fin du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle et au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, enfin celui de la manufacture dispersée de Prato entre XVI<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle.

*The in-kind component of remuneration is not simply a palliative for the absence of money. The article shows that this is a long-standing practice, rooted in custom and sometimes in written texts, whether employment contracts or corporate statutes. They are linked neither to the duration of the employment relationship nor to the hierarchical status of the individuals concerned. Their social, economic and symbolic significance must be carefully contextualized. This is possible by a micro-historical study that focuses here on the employees of the Medici grand dukes at the turn of the sixteenth century, the Italian glassmakers who migrated to Europe at the end of the sixteenth century and in the seventeenth century, and the dispersed textile industry of Prato between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries.*



FRANCINE MICHAUD, Alternative currencies and quality of life in late thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Marseille: Negotiating labour in times of turmoil

In Late Medieval Marseille, a commercial hub where market forces largely determined labourers' income, a significant segment of the workforce was paid partly or fully in non-monetized currencies. Hard bargained between employees and employers, these alternative salaries shed light on labour relations in a time of monetary volatility, demographic collapse, and inflationary trends. If apprentices and young workers depended almost exclusively on goods and services for their livelihood, skilled artisans' earnings, especially after the Black Death, could favourably benefit from non-monetary compensation. Work agreements clearly demonstrate that victuals, clothing, artisanal training, and health care were held by both servants and masters as the most valued, necessary means of cashless payment.

LUCA MOCARELLI, Tavola rotonda

Il contributo è diviso in quattro parti. La prima contestualizza il tema delle monete alternative dal punto di vista metodologico e cronologico. La seconda si interroga sulla reale diffusione della moneta metallica ed evidenzia i problemi derivanti dalla presenza di contabilità quasi sempre in moneta di conto. La terza riguarda il come, in un mondo dove le monete alternative erano molto rilevanti, si attribuisse valore alle merci usate negli scambi o per pagare servizi. La quarta sottolinea le conseguenze della presenza di robuste logiche di tipo economico anche nell'età preindustriale. Nella parte conclusiva, dopo aver sottolineato le criticità dell'approccio adottato nella ricostruzione di salari e living standard si propongono delle soluzioni alternative più aderenti alla realtà preindustriale che si vuole indagare

*The contribution is divided into four parts. The first contextualizes the issue of alternative currencies from a methodological and chronological point of view. The second questions the real diffusion of metal money and highlights the problems deriving from the presence of accounting almost always in money of account. The third concerns how, in a world where alternative currencies were very relevant, value was attributed to goods used in trade or to pay for services. The fourth underlines the consequences of the presence of robust economic logics even in the pre-industrial age. In the final part, after underlining the critical issues of the approach adopted in the reconstruction of wages and living standards, alternative solutions are proposed that are more in line with the pre-industrial reality that we want to investigate.*

GIULIO ONGARO, LUCA MOCARELLI, In kind wages between city and countryside: Northern Italy in the eighteenth Century

The paper aims at clarifying the characterisation and the role played by in-kind payments in wages' composition both in the cities and in the countryside in eighteenth century Northern Italy. Case studies mainly from Bologna, Padua, and Milan, and their countryside will be taken into consideration. We will propose some figures to understand which was (approximately) the level and the percentage of the

in-kind part of adult male wages in the cities and countryside, also observing how these figures changed according to the various tasks to be accomplished. We will also analyse possible changes of the values across time and in different areas. We will also characterize the in-kind part of the payments, observing which products and in which amounts the various workers received.

LUDWIG PELZL, JACO ZUIJDERDIJN, Or do you prefer cash? Pensions in kind in pre-modern Germany and the Low Countries

In the later Middle Ages and early modern period, many European hospitals developed into commercial retirement homes that allowed investors to pay for lifelong food and lodging. Their clients consisted mainly of elderly citizens who decided to spend their final years enjoying a pension, often living by themselves or occasionally with a spouse. Corrodies can best be understood as life annuities in kind: food and lodging were provided until the corrodian – or the longest-living spouse of a couple – passed away. Demand was so great that institutions are known to have had waiting lists or to raffle seats among potential investors. We claim that corrodies allowed investors who were looking to secure their livelihood to mitigate the risks that came with financial instruments that paid in currency. Our paper contributes to a historiography that claims that payments in kind should not be considered ‘backwards’ but rather as techniques that offered protection against the whims of the market.

JUDICAËL PETROWISTE, Des poêles, des chaudrons et des couvertures. Payer son impôt par des objets dans le bourg de Najac (1258-1273)

Cet article analyse le rôle des objets dans le paiement de l'impôt dans le bourg de Najac, en Rouergue, grâce à l'étude du premier registre des comptes de cette localité, conduite de 1258 à 1273. Ce document, dont la rédaction accompagne la mise en place d'une fiscalité municipale par le gouvernement communal, dresse en effet chaque année la liste des contribuables défaillants ayant déposé des objets afin de garantir les sommes qu'ils doivent pour leur impôt. Si ces gages sont souvent récupérés par leurs propriétaires dès l'année suivante, une fois leur dette fiscale soldée, certains sont abandonnés au consulat, qui les met alors en vente pour recouvrer sa créance. Cette enquête montre ainsi comment l'introduction d'une fiscalité municipale à Najac a contribué à intensifier la circulation des objets en ville, en sortant des maisons des biens dont un certain nombre finissaient sur le marché de l'occasion. Elle rappelle qu'au-delà de leurs usages pratiques, les objets conservés dans le foyer constituaient aussi des réserves de valeur qui pouvaient être mobilisées en cas de besoin, et servir de véritable monnaie alternative. L'examen des listes dressées par le consulat souligne à cet égard la relative variété des biens utilisés comme gage par les contribuables débiteurs, ainsi que leur qualité très variable. Il fournit par ailleurs des renseignements précieux sur le contenu des maisons de Najac et sur la culture matérielle des habitants de cette petite ville au milieu du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. L'analyse du profil des contribuables qui recourent au dépôt d'un bien

montre aussi leur grande diversité sociale : si certains font partie des franges les plus modestes de la population, beaucoup appartiennent aux couches médianes de la société, et un nombre non négligeable constituent des membres de l'élite urbaine, voire de l'oligarchie municipale. La mise en gage d'un objet n'est donc pas forcément caractéristique d'une situation de pauvreté ou de déclassement. Dans cette société rurale confrontée à des tensions périodiques dans la disponibilité de numéraire, elle est une composante des stratégies économiques des ménages, qui leur permet de différer le paiement d'une dette ou de l'acquitter sans avoir recours à l'argent.

*This paper analyses the role of objects in the payment of taxes in the market town of Najac, in Rouergue, through a study of the first register of accounts of this place, between 1258 and 1273. This document, which was drawn up when the municipal government introduced a system of municipal taxation, lists each year the taxpayers who had defaulted and deposited items to guarantee the sums they owed in tax. These pledges were often recovered by their owners the following year, once their tax debt had been settled. But some of them were left to the consulate, which sold them to recover its debt. This study shows how the introduction of a municipal tax system in Najac intensified the circulation of objects in the town, by taking goods out of people's homes, and putting some of them on the second-hand market. It demonstrates that, in addition to their practical uses, objects kept in the home also constituted stores of value that could be mobilised in times of need, and served as a genuine alternative currency. In this respect, an examination of the lists drawn up by the consulate highlights the relative variety of goods used as collateral by debtor taxpayers, as well as their highly variable quality. It also provides invaluable information about the contents of the houses in Najac and the material culture of the inhabitants of this small town in the mid-thirteenth century. An analysis of the profile of the taxpayers who pledged their property also shows their great social diversity: while some belonged to the poorest sections of the population, many came from the middle strata of society, and some were members of the urban elite, or even the municipal oligarchy. So pawning an object is not necessarily characteristic of a situation of poverty or socio-economic downgrading. In this rural society faced with periodic tensions in the availability of cash, it is a component of households' economic strategies, enabling them to defer payment of a debt or to pay it without having to resort to money.*

THOMAS MAX SAFLEY, Money and its alternatives in early modern extractive industry: The many media of exchange in mercury mining

«Alternatives to money» have a long history in Western extractive industry, extending to the 20th century. Before cash wages became a requirement of law, miners received their earnings in varieties of commodity and fiat moneys, combinations of scrip, cash and kind. This paper examines the use of *Pfennwert*, pennyworths of various goods, as a form of remuneration at the mines of the Holy Roman Empire with particular attention to the mercury mines in Idrija, Slovenia from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It demonstrates that this practice was a rational response to the «ecology of work» – that it, the combination of physical environment, regulatory systems, market forces, social relations and economic institutions – specific to Idrija. This approach to alternatives exposes their role not

only in remuneration but in all aspects of premodern production as well as their persistence in the modern, supposedly monetary, economy.

ALEXANDRA SAPOZNIK, LLUÍS SALES I FAVÀ, Wax, cash and the mass. Making candles affordable in Late Medieval economies

By the later middle ages wax had become an indispensable element in Christian religious observance, used throughout churches, liturgical services and lifecycle events. Wax was therefore both essential and ubiquitous. It was also valuable and easily re-cycled. This paper analyses the use, reuse and barter of wax in circular economies within cathedrals, monasteries and professional guilds in England and Italy. It further considers how the circulation of wax within and outside these institutions could act as a mechanism to cut expenses and potentially increase profits or provide opportunities for religious participation among even the very poor.

MATTHIEU SCHERMAN, Les Salviati et le troc monétarisé: des pratiques courantes au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle entre la Méditerranée et le Nord-Ouest de l'Europe

Les grands marchands-banquiers de la péninsule italienne, notamment les Florentins, sont réputés pour leur savoir-faire comptable et technique. La partie-double qu'ils utilisent afin de tenir leurs comptabilités est une preuve de leur «modernité». Il est donc intéressant de s'interroger sur la pratique qui consiste à faire des affaires en échangeant des marchandises et non en réglant en numéraire ou en utilisant des écritures comptables comme moyen d'équilibrer les comptes, une pratique d'ailleurs de très longue durée dans tous les espaces du commerce et du négoce. Pour analyser les pratiques marchandes et commerciales, la famille Salviati de Florence constitue un observatoire privilégié grâce à la conservation de leur comptabilité, notamment pour leur agence ouverte à Londres en 1445.

*The great merchant-bankers of the Italian peninsula, particularly the Florentines, were renowned for their accounting and technical expertise. The double-entry system they used to keep their accounts is proof of their 'modernity'. It is therefore interesting to look at the practice of doing business by exchanging goods rather than by paying in cash or using bookkeeping entries as a means of balancing the books, a practice that has existed for a very long time in all areas of trade and commerce. The Salviati family of Florence is a privileged observatory for analysing trade and commercial practices, thanks to the preservation of their accounts, particularly for their branch opened in London in 1445.*

RACHELE SCURO, Perle, gioie e pegni. Il ruolo dei preziosi nel mercato del credito e degli scambi nella Venezia cinquecentesca

In epoca moderna la tesaurizzazione di gioielli gemme preziose svolgeva molteplici funzioni che spaziavano dall'ambito culturale a quello socio-economico. In questo testo si analizza il loro uso quali alternativa al contante nel contesto veneziano cinquecentesco, focalizzando l'attenzione sul caso di studio del ghetto ebraico. Lo

scopo è dimostrare le modalità d'impiego di quegli oggetti nel settore del credito e delle forme fiduciarie più avanzate, per dimostrarne l'equipollenza, se non la preferenza, rispetto al ricorso alla moneta metallica. A facilitare tale tendenza vi era un'ampia accessibilità a quella tipologia di oggetti da parte di ampi strati sociali e si mostrerà come se ne avvantaggiarono le donne grazie alle peculiarità del diritto veneziano in ambito dotale e successorio.

In the early modern period hoarded jewels and precious stones performed diversified functions, ranging from the cultural to the socio-economic sphere. This article analyses their use as an alternative to cash in 16<sup>th</sup>-century Venice, focusing on the case study of the Jewish ghetto. The aim is to investigate how those objects were employed in the credit market (and to perform advanced financial business) and to test their interchangeability with metal currency; if not their preferred recourse. To enhance this trend, Renaissance Venice was experiencing widespread access to those items among a large part of the population. How women could profit from those money-equivalent goods, thanks to the peculiarities of Venetian law in the matter of dowries and inheritance, will be also examined.

TIM SOENS, CÉCILE BRUYET, *Alternative food supplies, Alternative currencies? Food deliveries by tenant farmers in the Late Medieval Low Countries*

Why did landlords and farmers in commercialized, monetized economies prefer in-kind payments over cash? In the urbanized core regions of Late Medieval Europe, urban households and institutions often managed extensive estates in the countryside. This phenomenon, primarily viewed as a capital investment – termed «La trahison de la Bourgeoisie» by Fernand Braudel in 1949 – has been predominantly analyzed in terms of monetary returns, impact on wealth inequality, and agrarian development. However, urban landownership also entailed the potential for direct food deliveries to city dwellers. This paper examines the differing roles of land for urban households in two key medieval Low Countries cities, Ghent and Antwerp, investigating the circumstances and agents behind the use of rents-in-kind as an alternative form of currency. We argue that rents-in-kind were not merely converted into cash as cities expanded. For instance, while Antwerp's population grew in the fifteenth century, so did the significance of cereals as currency in lease contracts. Given the volatile and unpredictable nature of grain markets, having a stable, market-independent access to cereals remained a potent symbol of social status and privilege.

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2. *La moda come motore economico: innovazione di processo e prodotto, nuove strategie commerciali, comportamento dei consumatori / Fashion as an economic engine: process and product innovation, commercial strategies, consumer behavior*
3. *L'economia della conoscenza: innovazione, produttività e crescita economica nei secoli XIII-XVIII / The knowledge economy: innovation, productivity and economic growth, 13<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century*





# DATINI STUDIES IN ECONOMIC HISTORY

4

MEZZI DI SCAMBIO NON MONETARI. MERCI E  
SERVIZI COME MONETE ALTERNATIVE NELLE  
ECONOMIE DEI SECOLI XIII-XVIII /ALTERNATIVE  
CURRENCIES. COMMODITIES AND SERVICES AS  
EXCHANGE CURRENCIES IN THE MONETARIZED  
ECONOMIES OF THE 13<sup>TH</sup> TO 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES

The volume focuses on the importance and placement of alternative exchange practices in the 13<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, specifically examining goods and services used as means of payment in barter or in-kind transactions. Despite monetary theory emphasizing credit and real currency, coins or paper money did not prevent in-kind transactions. Barter isn't merely a result of a lack of money, but rather an economic choice with diverse reasons, meanings, and consequences, found in both rural and urban areas. These alternative exchange methods go beyond mere stopgaps and impact all economic activities, from production to consumption.

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