



Trading Diasporas' Role in Trade and Diplomacy

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Experience in East Central Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean
500–1800

Collaborative Project

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This is the second meeting of the workshop series organised by the Department of Medieval Studies, Central European University (Budapest) and the Transcultural Studies Program, and the Institute of Papyrology at the Universität Heidelberg in the framework of the DAAD/MÖB project “Trans-European Diasporas: Migration, Minorities, and Diasporic Experience in East Central Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean 500-1800”. The speakers at this workshop will focus on trading diasporas’ role as transcultural agents with a regional focus on the maritime trade routes across the Eastern Mediterranean and their extensions towards Central Europe and beyond. The participants will seek answers to questions of whether diasporas generated closed ethnic networks or were open to associations with each other. What was stronger: the links among diasporic groups of the same diaspora or among different diasporic groups in one place? How did texts, images, and objects wander across these side routes as well as along the main axes through the mediation of trading diasporas? What role did trading diasporas play in spreading new commodities, techniques, and other innovations? A particular emphasis shall be put on hitherto rather neglected sources, e.g., pottery, tombstones, and the testimonies of material culture.

Unwieldy Diaspora: Hansa Merchants in Bruges and Venetians in Alexandria

Georg Christ (Heidelberg/Manchester)

While research has traditionally focused on conflicts between diasporic groups and their host nations (the local population of their actual place of residence) more recently the role of intermediaries who controlled the interaction between groups has come to the fore. It is often taken for granted that diasporas can be identified as groups that are both economically well connected with their environment and relatively closed in their social and personal connections. It has also been assumed that their status was defined by and in accordance with the authority of their home city (later ‘empire’) and/or tradition. This paper focuses on the relationship between diasporic groups and their towns of origin/hometowns. It analyses diasporas as both representatives and members of an over-arching and/or distant entity and as cosmopolitan entities in their own right. Two case studies will be compared: Hanseatic merchants in Bruges and ‘Venetians’ in Alexandria in the 14th and 15th centuries. It shall be argued that as a constructive element of their own policy-making, diasporic communities tried to monopolize and instrumentalise their status as the representatives of a political entity. Furthermore, I argue that diasporic groups tended to use much less restrictive definitions of (diasporic) identity than prescribed by the home city or tradition in order to include, whenever appropriate, those who would technically be considered outsiders. Contrary to what the official

status and name of the diaspora would claim and insinuate, diasporas tended to develop into largely self-represented and self-constituted cosmopolitan clusters with members of different (proto)-'national' identities. Thus, being or becoming Venetian did not mean the same thing in Venice, Candia, or Alexandria. This led to conflicts over the *Deutungshoheit*, the right to define and interpret 'Venetianness' or 'Hanseatic', and over the diasporic, communal status between cities/centres and diasporic communities/periphery.

Florentine Trading and Banking Diasporas in Central Europe

Krisztina Arany (Budapest)

This paper aims to address the main patterns of Florentine business operators' activity in Central Europe, with particular emphasis on the fifteenth century. A comparative analysis is carried out based on the information of their first appearance in the urban centers of the region, including the main trading and mining centers, centers of royal financial administration, royal and regional lay and ecclesiastic seats, etc. Particular attention will be paid to the main patterns of their settlement, fields of interest, business organization, ambitions, and strategies of economic and social integration, highlighting the main shifts in their interests and activity due to the changing regional social, economic, and legal environment.

The title of the paper refers to Central Europe in general. Within this broader region I use a representative set of information referring to the territory of the medieval Hungarian kingdom resulting mainly from archival research carried out in the State Archives of Florence (the Florentine Catasto of 1427) and in the National Archives of Hungary. The results of the relevant secondary literature on other countries of the region will be applied as comparative material.

Between the Doge and the Sultan: Re-examination of a Group of Gilded and Enamelled Glass Bottles and Fragments

Tanja Tolar (London)

The focus of this paper is twofold: to explore the trading relations between Anatolia, the Eastern Mediterranean, and Venice and to research questions of iconography and its transmission on gilded and enamelled glass from Central Asia to the Mediterranean due to political and economic changes in the area.

I examine a group of blue glass bottles dispersed around the Eastern Mediterranean and address questions of trade relations between Cyprus, Corinth, and the Anatolian regions under the Seljuk dominion. I will explore the possible implications of the

Venetian-Seljuk treaty of 1220 for glass production in Venice and the trade relations between these two political entities. The conclusion will be a reassessment of possible Turkic influence on the enamelled glass revival in the 12th and 13th centuries.

The discussion will be based around two glass objects, a gilded glass bottle for Atabeg al-Din Zangi from the British Museum (OA 1906.7-19.1) and a blue gilded bottle (GL.378) today in the Qatar museum of Islamic Art. The aim of this paper is to explore Oliver Watson's ideas, expressed in: "Another gilt glass bottle" (2007), where he proposes that these objects are the 'missing link' in enamelled glass production between Byzantine and Islamic lands. The paper will explore additional fragments and propose viewing the Turkic invasion of these regions as the major influence in the introduction and development of the technique of enamelling on glass. It will also assess how fragments found in port cities (Paphos in Cyprus, Al-Mina in Syria, Corinth in Greece) speak for the vivid trade in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The Greek Trading Diaspora in Sibiu during the Seventeenth Century

Mária Pakucs-Willcocks (Bucharest)

This paper will outline the presence of Greek merchants in the Transylvania, particularly in the town of Sibiu, in the seventeenth century. Primary sources available consist of trading privileges Transylvanian princes granted to Greeks, legal documents concerning trading disputes between Greeks and locals, and extant customs accounts from Sibiu (1614-1622, 1672-1673, 1682-1692).

Transylvania was practically the first Central European polity where Greek merchants founded trading companies. Of these, Sibiu was the first choice for such a *kompania*. I shall discuss the circumstances in which this trading company was created and its main characteristics. The customs registers reveal the dynamics of the trade carried out by the Greek merchants and also their travel between Sibiu and their homeland (Epirus, Rumelia, and Wallachia). Therefore, a synthesis of the juridical and economic situation of the Transylvanian Greeks in the seventeenth century offers a better understanding of how they became indispensable agents not only in long-distance trade, but also in credit and money exchanging operations.

Rebellion due to the *Natura Alamanorum*? The Protest of the Cracow Burghers in 1311/12

Julia Dücker (Heidelberg)

At the turn of the 14th century, the city of Cracow became the center of severe political fights; Duke Władysław I “Łokietek” of the Piast dynasty, after asserting himself against the Czech kings of Poland, Vaclav II and Vaclav III, tried to defend his rule against his Polish adversaries and to unify the until-then divided country. Piece by piece, he succeeded in establishing his rule in different parts of Poland. In 1311, however, the ambitious Władysław, who strove for the Polish crown, was faced with a violent protest; the German burghers of Cracow, headed by the city’s reeve (*advocatus*) Albert, tried to conclude a pact with Władysław’s Silesian opponents for the surrender of the city. After a heavy siege, the revolt was suppressed and punished severely. Soon, the responsible persons – the German burghers, who had located in Cracow in the 13th century as an “economic community” – were maligned as “enemies of the Polish people” by contemporaries and, on Władysław’s behalf, a firmly anti-German policy was implemented towards the city.

Generally, one tends to explain the events of 1311/12 with simple categories, such as anti-Polish opposition on the one hand and “Polish Chauvinism” on the other. But can we really speak of the Germans burghers as a distinct ethnic and cultural group? Did the German diaspora of Cracow establish an independent municipal community with its own forms of political influence and its own “diasporic identity”? Focusing on such questions, my contribution discusses the political role and influence of German merchants and traders in late medieval Cracow as well as contemporary reactions (mainly of the Polish elite) to the events of 1311/12.

Ethnic Minorities in the External Trade of Late Medieval Hungary – The Case of Transylvanian Romanians and Saxons

Zsolt Simon (Târgu Mureș)

In the Middle Ages there were intense commercial relations among the Hungarian Kingdom and the neighbouring Wallachia and Moldavia. From the Transylvanian side, the trade was conducted through three important towns lying near the commercial roads crossing the Carpathian Mountains: Brașov (in Latin: Corona, in German: Kronstadt, in Hungarian: Brassó), Sibiu (Cibinium/ Hermannstadt/Nagyszeben) and Bistrița (Bistritz or Nösen/Beszterce). All of these towns were multicultural settlements where Germans (Transylvanian Saxons), Hungarians, and Romanians lived.

In this paper I investigate the role of these ethnic groups in external trade, analysing the traders, the trade articles and their value, and, finally, the roles they played in

the customs administration. The main sources for my paper are the remains of two medieval customs registers referring to this trade: that of Sibiu from 1500 and that of Braşov from 1503. Besides these quantitative sources I will take into account all other types of sources concerning trade, but these are less relevant for the topic (privileges and letters of the Hungarian, Wallachian and Moldavian rulers, urban financial accounts).

On the Edge of Town: Mendicant and Pauline Monasteries in the Urban Economy

Beatrix F. Romhányi (Budapest)

Mendicant and Pauline monasteries were on the edge of the towns in both the topographical and legal senses. Built in the suburbs or in the close vicinity of urban settlements they had a special legal status which influenced their possibilities for participating in the urban economy. The mendicant friaries and the Pauline monasteries were deeply involved in urban economy in the late Middle Ages. They owned urban houses, vineyards, manors, and had diverse incomes (alms or rents), some of which came directly from the urban population. In contrast, their special legal status also led to different conflicts with towns; the friars had to balance on the narrow path between their missionary vocation and their economic interests.

The Role of Franciscan Friars in the Social Networks of Dubrovnik Merchants Trading in Medieval Bosnia

Darko Karačić (Budapest)

This presentation seeks to demonstrate that the Franciscan community served as one of the most important organizations connecting the social network of Dubrovnik merchants in medieval Bosnian towns. Dubrovnik merchants attended Franciscan churches while they were travelling and living in medieval Bosnia. In the Franciscan friaries they met other Dubrovnik townsmen and concluded trade agreements with them. When needed, Franciscans offered asylum to Dubrovnik townsmen. Dubrovnik diasporas and town authorities helped Franciscans in the Bosnian Vicariate to construct their friaries and develop their activities in the second part of the 14th and throughout the 15th centuries. It was the Franciscans of the Bosnian Vicariate who, with the help of Dubrovnik townspeople, established the Observant Franciscan friaries on the Dubrovnik commune territories in the 15th century.

Architecture of Minority? Considerations on Franciscan Monastic Life and Building

Leonie Silberer (Heidelberg)

The Franciscan movement started with an act of voluntary minority, when Francesco Bernardone, later Francis of Assisi, dissociated himself from his family and social standing to lead a life among the poor and disadvantaged. Accordingly, the whole concept of apostolic life in absolute poverty and humility, wandering, begging, and preaching was meant to generate a diasporic group. But, in contrast to other diasporic groups, everyone was invited to join the Franciscan movement regardless of birth, social status, or education.

Further aspects of integration can be found: Absolute obedience to the pope and Catholic Church was the key to the order's success. The subsequent institutionalisation of the Franciscan Order brought about the unification of Saint Francis' testament and the clericalization of the order. Accommodation to urban society and structures became necessary for Franciscan settlements.

Architecture was not a part of the initial programme of the Friars Minor, whose monastery was the whole world and whose members just asked for a "house at the river" to live in, as early legends tell. But within the process of the order's expansion and urban settlement the matter of building arose and offered an opportunity to express the order's ideals and differences from churches of the old orders. Early church buildings of great simplicity, like the single-nave hall church, illustrate this ambition. In 1260, regulations were compiled, the Constitutions of Narbonne; deviations occurred – most of them in the following centuries.

Soon integrated into (urban) society and politics, the friars were involved in legal acts, conflicts, and their reconciliation – their monasteries were used for these purposes, hosting sovereigns, secular *amici*, city councils or quarrelling parties in conflict. This usage of the monastery by secular people had a notable impact on the monastic architecture of the Franciscan Order. Most impressive are monasteries with a dual cloister structure, one cloister open to public, the other cloister reserved for the friars' enclosure.

Churches and monasteries in Central and Eastern Europe (north of the Alps) including Germany, Austria, Poland and Czech Republic will be used as illustrations.

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