

Lawrin Armstrong, Ivana Elbl, and Martin M. Elbl, eds., *Money, markets and trade in late medieval Europe: essays in honour of John H.A. Munro* (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2007). Pp. xx + 648. 26 figs. 40 tabs. ISBN 900415633X Hbk. €149/\$201)

John Munro's contribution to medieval economic history since the 1970s has helped to transform the subject by advancing interpretations which have challenged prevailing orthodoxies and also produced the enormous and wide-ranging scholarly output celebrated in this *festschrift*.

The 19 articles in this volume, written mostly by his former students, are not only a tribute to the affectionate loyalty which his generosity as a teacher and colleague inspires, but also to his encouragement to question the received, or fashionable, interpretations which often inhibit new explorations of the subject.

One popular, current interpretation that several of these essays discuss afresh is the geographer's theory of central places, and the related subjects of urban demand and market integration. Through his study of credit transactions, David Nicholas shows the limitations that even so important a town as Ypres had as a central place for the accumulation of capital in the thirteenth century. International fairs, the dispersal of the textile industry in the villages, and the concentration of Flemish trade with England limited the creditors of Ypres mainly to the financing of their fellow citizens. James Masschaele's discussion of English tolls shows that although individually small, they could nonetheless be a burden to peasants marketing produce, while the cumulative effect of numerous tolls on exporters and importers who travelled across country could have a deleterious effect on trade. Even in the fifteenth century Mark Aloisio finds that Sicily's export of grain to Malta, which made these islands prime candidates for market integration, was in fact often disrupted by feudal interference, by rivalries among towns, and by corruption among port officials.

Richard Unger concludes that there was little market integration in northern Europe outside the Low Countries, because warfare and government regulations inhibited exchanges, and because towns were too small and were therefore supplied easily by a small area. Charlotte Masemann's piece on Lubeck's gardens illustrates the latter point by showing how it paid townsmen to grow small amounts of hops and cabbages in their gardens as cash crops rather than relying on more distant supplies. These contributions indicate that, despite the allure of mainly Italian, long-distance trade, and the delights of Martha Carlin's Parisian shops, the case for the integration of markets in this period appears a slender one.

Several articles show, though, that effective central political control could do much to enhance economic development or, conversely, to inhibit it. John Drendel illustrates from Provence how resurgent comital authority in the thirteenth century allowed peasants to escape serfdom. Masschaele credits the English Crown's power over its towns with the limitation of tolls, while even warfare, when directed centrally by English kings, could, as Maryanne Kowaleski argues, enrich rather than impoverish the ports of the west country. Where there was no strong central authority, as in Catalonia, Jeffrey Fynn-Paul illustrates

how inter-urban wars could create huge civic debts which burdened later populations shrunken by plague. Conversely, Ivana Elbl shows how the desire of the rich Portuguese Crown to maximize its profits from Africa led to inefficiencies and distortions of the African market.

As befits a volume dedicated to Munro, money touches many subjects. The Catalan cities collected huge taxes in cash in the early fourteenth century, while access to cash from customs was fundamental to the relative strengths of the English and Portuguese Crowns in the early sixteenth century. Urban control of capital and coin in Italy led to the spread of share-cropping. Two articles discuss usury, while Martha Howell shows how the needs of commerce in Ghent were in tension with older concepts of patrimony and property rights. James Bolton and Guidi Bruscoli illumine helpfully the workings of international finance through the bills of exchange which allowed fifteenth-century Italian firms like the Borromei to buy English exports worth more than their continental imports. The Borromei, though, were ultimately financed by Venetian bullion, while David Nicholas points out that the growth of credit in Flanders was also linked to an increased supply of silver coin. Ian Blanchard shows how the long-term stability of gold prices rested on an equilibrium between the supplies of silver and gold from independent sources north and south of the Alps, and how the restructuring of trans-Saharan trade routes led gold to flow from Europe to Egypt, causing the bullion famine of the early fifteenth century. Martin Elbl demonstrates the Datini firm's involvement in the Venetian trade in copper with Majorca which helped to link northern Europe with Africa.

One or two of the articles are marred by an excessively technical approach, but in its range and diversity the collection is a fine tribute to Munro's work, and the bibliographies, not least that of his own publications, provide most valuable references.

Oxford Pamela Nightingale

254 BOOK REVIEWS

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