The Low Countries’ Export Trade in Textiles with the Mediterranean Basin, 1200-1600: A Cost-Benefit Analysis of Comparative Advantages in Overland and Maritime Trade Routes

by

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Abstract

This paper challenges the conventional wisdom in European economic history that long-distance maritime transport was always more cost-effective than overland trade routes. Thus the majority of historians in the past century have attributed the rapid decline of the medieval Champagne Fairs, governing the textile trades between the Low Countries, northern France, and Italy, to the establishment of an effective and ‘permanent’ direct sea-route between Italy and north-west Europe from the early 14th century (though the first, a Genoese galley, can be dated to 1277). In my paper, I contend that a spreading stain of chronic, continuous warfare throughout western Europe and the Mediterranean basin from the 1290s, leading into the Hundred Years’ War (1336-1453), with a consequent sharp rise in transport and transaction costs in international trade, was instead the major factor in the decline of the Champagne Fairs, in the concomitant decline of the overland continental trade routes associated with them, and with a forced shift to the maritime trading routes between Italy and north-west Europe. During this war-torn, plague-disrupted period of economic contraction, up to the 1450s, the costs of shipping luxury woollens by the maritime route was certainly cheaper than by overland routes; but the relative cost of the maritime route was still higher than the cost of transporting cheap textiles (says) overland in the late 13th century. Indeed, this steep rise in late-medieval transaction costs in international trade had forced the north-western European textile industries to give up the export of the very cheap, light textiles and focus instead on luxury woollens that could better ‘bear the freight’. Subsequently, however, from the 1450s, with the establishment of alternative, more easterly overland routes in areas free from warfare, principally via the Rhine, then with the restoration of relative peace after the end of the Hundred Years’ War, and with the South German silver-copper mining boom, the overland continental trade routes rapidly revived, and with them a series of newer continental-trade based fairs (Antwerp, Frankfurt, Geneva, Lyons). During the later 15th and 16th centuries, these continental trade routes and their associated fair-system were virtually the sole mechanism by which textiles from north-west Europe were exported to Italy and the Mediterranean basin, because, inter alia, the overland distance from the Antwerp Fairs to Venice was only about 20% of the distance by the often hazardous sea routes. The principal textiles involved in this overland, trans-continental trade were: luxury-quality English woollens, medium-quality kerseys, and especially the very cheap, light Flemish says from the revived sayetteries, which had become the principal textile industry of the southern Low Countries. The paper concludes by examining the various factors and forces that led to a fall in transport and transaction costs in the international textile trades, via the overland routes, including river routes, between north-west Europe and the Mediterranean basin from the later 15th to early 17th centuries (i.e. to the eve of the Thirty Years War, which again seriously disrupted the overland, continental routes).

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**Keywords:** Transaction costs; comparative advantage; transportation; maritime trade; ships; warfare; textiles; silver mining; fairs; Italy; Mediterranean; Flanders
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The question that is implicitly posed in this title, on relative transport costs in international trade, should promise the briefest of answers. For is it not self-evident that maritime or seaborne trade was always much cheaper to conduct than overland continental trade? As a student I was taught, and as a professor I have similarly stated, that in pre-modern economies overland transport costs could effectively double commodity prices for bulk goods within 50 - 70 km, while sea transport could deliver such bulk goods as grains, lumber, and metallic ores fairly cheaply over long distances. From such cost comparisons has arisen one of the basic axioms in economic history: that, before the nineteenth-century transport revolution in steam-powered railways, economic development has fundamentally depended upon maritime transport and the exercise of sea-power.1

Much support for this thesis can or should be found in the late-medieval and early-modern Low Countries, whose economic growth, fuelled principally by international trade, outpaced all other regions in northern Europe. In the early-modern era, no one would dispute the proposition that the Dutch hegemony in the European economy was fundamentally based upon sea-power, and especially upon their maritime commerce with both the Baltic and the East Indies. In the southern Low Countries, which had enjoyed a very precocious economic growth from at least the late eleventh century, few would doubt the importance of

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1 I wish to thank SSHRC (410-96-0306; and 410-99-0274) for support in financing the research for this paper.

1 The more careful scholar might qualify that axiom to note the importance of canals in many countries, in North America as much as in Europe, as a necessary precursor to railroads, though in so doing one should emphasize that canals obviously involved water-borne transport. One should also recall that the Nobel-prizing winning economist and economic historian, Prof. Robert Fogel, first made his name in the art of ‘counter-factual cliometrics’ by contending that the ‘net social savings’ derived from having railroads displace canals, or more accurately, by adding railroads to the existing transportation complex was well under 5%: Robert W. Fogel, *Railroads and American economic growth: essays in econometric history* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press: 1964); and see also *The Dimensions of quantitative research in history*, ed. William O. Aydelotte, Allan G. Bogue, and Robert William Fogel (London, Oxford University Press; and Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1972).
maritime commerce with both the Baltic zone and England.²

To be sure, an even more powerful element in their subsequent development, especially in the expansion of the Flemish and Artesian textile industries during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, was the overland trade with the Champagne Fairs of north-east France. Their primary importance was in providing a conduit for a rising flow of Flemish, Artesian, and other northern textiles to Italy and the Mediterranean basin, which was not yet linked to NW Europe by sea. This densely populated, extensively urbanized region, still by far the most advanced zone in the European economy, thus provided the largest export market for northern textiles, especially, with its generally warm climate, for the lighter, coarser and cheaper textiles, which evidently then constituted the bulk of northern textile exports -- Flemish, French, English, and German -- both by volume and value.³


As the textbooks tell us, however, the role of the Champagne Fairs and its transcontinental trade was a transitory one, because of supposedly radical changes in maritime transport. As early as 1277 Genoese and then Majorcan galleys had established a direct sea link to Flanders and England; and by the 1320s, a regular annual galley service, in which the Venetians soon became predominant, had evidently made the Champagne Fairs redundant. The late Raymond De Roover, still the most eminent authority on medieval banking, further argued that an ancillary Italian commercial development helps to explain the post-1320 redundancy of the Champagne Fairs and its itinerant trade: the establishment of branch firms and permanently-stationed factors.

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They transacted trade and finance by a sedentary principal-agent system involving the new four-party bills of exchange, which quickly displaced the two- or three-party lettres de foire, or the instrumenta ex causa cambi, which merchants had long been using at the Champagne Fairs.5

For those who entertain concepts of linear progress, however, the trade-based theses of Herman Van der Wee have provided an unpleasant surprise, especially those who thought that the new sciences of historical demography had made such old-fashioned views on the primacy of international trade as redundant as the Champagne Fairs had become. In his 1963 monograph on The Growth of the Antwerp Market and then more generally in an Annales article of 1970, Van der Wee propounded the thesis that the relative balance between maritime and continental trade, and the relative prosperity of the latter, had played a fundamental role in determining long-waves, or cycles of expansion and decline in the European economy up to the eighteenth century. Thus, the revival, spread, and intensification of overland trade between NW Europe and the Mediterranean from the eleventh century promoted a general European economic expansion that lasted until the early fourteenth century; and the expanding vitality of overland commerce, both north-south and then east-west, contributed to general economic growth through its backward and forward linkages throughout a vast continental hinterland, especially in diverting underutilised resources from the large, generally backward agrarian sector into the more productive industrial, commercial, and financial sectors. Conversely, he argued, the relative shift of international trade from transcontinental to the new maritime routes in the early fourteenth

century ultimately had a negative, depressing impact on the aggregate economy of late-medieval Europe. The consequent contraction in overland, continental trade, beginning with the Champagne Fairs and its arterial routes, soon spread via many more tributary routes into various regional and local trade networks that serviced thousands of towns and villages throughout the vast continental hinterland, thus reducing the demand for transport and commercial services, labour, manufactures, foodstuffs and other goods. Declining consumption in turn reduced investment and aggregate incomes by a reverse multiplier-accelerator effect. To be sure the diversion of international trade flows into new shipping lanes certainly benefited the major participants: the maritime towns of Italy, Catalonia, the Netherlands, the Baltic, and even England; but their impressive gains could not offset the much greater aggregate economic decline in late-medieval Europe's continental hinterlands. Furthermore, this diversion of international trade tended to concentrate wealth and income flows into fewer hands, especially in those maritime towns, with negative consequences: increased hoarding, non-productive expenditures, and excessive consumption of eastern luxury goods, from both the Levant and the Baltic, which were acquired by a steady and deflationary drainage of precious metals from western Europe.6

Some may find Van der Wee's international-trade model, especially in this oversimplified summary, somewhat redolent of the old Pirenne thesis on Mediterranean trade for the early medieval economy,7 and also

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7 In essence, Pirenne’s thesis posited an economic retrogression in early medieval Europe, with a rapid decline in its seaborne international trade, as the consequence of Muslim conquests of Mediterranean sea-lanes; and subsequently, an Italian counter-attack, the revival of both Mediterranean seaborne and overland long-distance trade, which fostered economic revival, urban growth, and general economic development from the early eleventh century. See Henri Pirenne, *Mahomet et Charlemagne* (Paris, 1937); in English translation, *Mohammad and Charlemagne* (London, 1939); Henri Pirenne, *Histoire économique de l'occident médiéval*, ed. Emile Coornaert (Bruges, 1951); A.F. Havighurst, ed., *The Pirenne Thesis: Analysis, Criticism, and Revision*, Heath Series in European History (New York, 1958); William Carroll Bark,
of the more recent Miskimin thesis, on international trade deficits with and consequent bullion outflows to East, for the late-medieval economy.\textsuperscript{8} If those two theses find little sympathy amongst current economic historians, neither has the Van der Wee thesis, though it has suffered more malign neglect than outright scorn. Recently, his Belgian colleague Raymond Van Uytven, has provided one example of the latter by contending that the Brabant land toll registers contradict the view that ‘a shift from continental trade to maritime shipping [was] a cause of the economic decline of the later Middle Ages.’\textsuperscript{9}


But Van Uytven's attack on the Van der Wee thesis may be challenged on three grounds. First and foremost, an international trade model concerning overland commercial flows between north-west Europe and Italy can hardly be tested by one isolated, local set of land tolls, especially when the bases for its numeric data are not fully clear. Second the Brabant land-toll registers commence far too late to provide such a test: in 1406; and they are continuous only from 1433, almost a century after the commencement of the shift to maritime trade that the Van der Wee model has posited. Third, these land-toll registers indicate a rise in overland commercial traffic virtually in accordance with the subsequent part of the Van der Wee model, which contends that a revival of trans-continental trade flows, following new routes, provided the major stimulus for both the rise of the Antwerp market, converting the formerly regional Brabant Fairs into an international entrepôt, and for the renewed expansion and growth of the European economy, especially its continental hinterland, from the late fifteenth to early seventeenth centuries.10

Indeed, the chief strength of the Van der Wee trade model lies in the detailed evidence for this latter phenomenon that he supplied in monograph on The Rise of the Antwerp Market, which itself was partly built upon the prior historical scholarship of his Belgian and French predecessors: Coornaert, Goris, De Smedt, Van Houtte, and Brulez.11 Furthermore, if that prior, fourteenth-century shift from transcontinental to


10 See n. 11 below.

maritime routes, along with the shift from itinerant fair-commerce to ‘sedentary’ branch-firm commerce, had been the manifestation of economic progress, as most earlier historians had argued, how do we explain not only the indisputable revival and expansion of transcontinental trade from the mid-fifteenth to early seventeenth centuries, but more strikingly, the revival of periodic international fairs along those overland routes: the very numerous fairs, and seasonal cycles of adjacent fairs, not only in Brabant itself -- the four fairs of Antwerp and Bergen-op-Zoom but also in Frankfurt, Besançon, Lyons, Geneva, and Cremona.12

The fundamental weaknesses of the Van der Wee thesis, however, lies in the construction of his Annales article; for, in the space of just 16 pages, he obviously could not provide much additional evidence for an international-trade model that spans six centuries.13 But even more serious is the inadequate


13 Furthermore, the data-free econometric model (by his colleague Theo Peeters) that constitutes the remaining nine pages of the article only serves to obfuscate the model and, I fear, to dissuade many historians from taking it as seriously as this seminal article most certainly should be taken.
explanation for the earlier, fourteenth-century shift from transcontinental to maritime trade, whose actual timing is left vague, though it was presumably already underway by the 1320s. He seems to suggest, more in accordance with traditional views than with the logic of his model, that it took place because the Italians found the direct-sea route to Flanders more cost-effective and advantageous, especially with various advances in both ship design and navigation. But most of the supposed cost-savings advances, and especially the advances in naval technology that finally produced the caravel-designs and the full-rigged carracks came a full century after that shift to maritime trade. In any event, Russell Menard has more recently argued that, from the fourteenth to eighteenth centuries, such changes in naval technology had little impact on direct shipping costs, whose changes were much more a function of political and commercial developments, especially in terms of providing relative security. Indeed on this very issue he quoted Michael Postan to the effect that ‘medieval communications, like other trading activities, suffered much more from instability and uncertainty, political in origin, than from high costs of an inefficient transport service.’


16 Michael Postan, ‘The Trade of Medieval Europe: the North’, in M.M. Postan, ed., The Cambridge Economic History of Europe, 2: Trade and Industry in the Middle Ages, 2nd rev edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 203-04 [unchanged from the 1952 edn]. Postan continues: ‘Inefficient the service certainly was, wasteful of manpower and other resources; but so was medieval industry and agriculture....
These issues do play a role in Van der Wee's trade model, in the form of the Hundred Years' War (1336-1453). In his view, even if that conflict had begun much too late to explain the initial shift to maritime trade, it both reinforced and prolonged that shift by so frequently disrupting the major overland trade routes. Van der Wee, however, overlooked an earlier series of wars, more debilitating than any since the Carolingian era, which even more directly disrupted these overland routes, forcing the Italians to establish the safer sea route to north west Europe. This new era of widespread warfare had commenced, in north-west Europe, during the 1290s, with the Anglo-French and Franco-Flemish wars, followed by Flemish civil wars (to 1328). In the south the Angevin-Aragonese wars, embroiling Aragon-Catalonia, southern France, Sicily, Naples, and the Papacy, had begun even earlier but reached their peak just before the truce of 1302. Shortly after, in 1310, Imperial German armies invaded Italy under the banner of Emperor Henry VII whose death in 1313 led to a decade-long civil war in southern Germany, and worse, to a resumption of the long-festering Angevin-Aragonese strife to become the even more ferocious and destructive Guelf-Ghibelline wars (1313-43). They devastated Italy for the next four decades, with almost continuous foreign intervention by Catalan, French, German, and Hungarian armies, and constant devastations from mercenary Free Companies of disbanded soldiers.\footnote{These issues do play a role in Van der Wee's trade model, in the form of the Hundred Years' War (1336-1453). In his view, even if that conflict had begun much too late to explain the initial shift to maritime trade, it both reinforced and prolonged that shift by so frequently disrupting the major overland trade routes. Van der Wee, however, overlooked an earlier series of wars, more debilitating than any since the Carolingian era, which even more directly disrupted these overland routes, forcing the Italians to establish the safer sea route to north west Europe. This new era of widespread warfare had commenced, in north-west Europe, during the 1290s, with the Anglo-French and Franco-Flemish wars, followed by Flemish civil wars (to 1328). In the south the Angevin-Aragonese wars, embroiling Aragon-Catalonia, southern France, Sicily, Naples, and the Papacy, had begun even earlier but reached their peak just before the truce of 1302. Shortly after, in 1310, Imperial German armies invaded Italy under the banner of Emperor Henry VII whose death in 1313 led to a decade-long civil war in southern Germany, and worse, to a resumption of the long-festering Angevin-Aragonese strife to become the even more ferocious and destructive Guelf-Ghibelline wars (1313-43). They devastated Italy for the next four decades, with almost continuous foreign intervention by Catalan, French, German, and Hungarian armies, and constant devastations from mercenary Free Companies of disbanded soldiers.\footnote{The evidence on the economic consequences of such warfare, particularly in rising transport and transaction costs, see Munro, ‘Industrial Transformations’, 110-48; Munro, ‘Resurrection of an Old Flemish Industry’, 35-127; Munro, ‘Industrial Crisis of the English Textile Towns’, 104-42; and sources cited in n. 3 above; and n. 26 below.} They

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Certainly, during the fourteenth century, the maritime routes between Italy and Flanders provided relatively cheaper transport than did those overland routes that continued to function. In the 1390s, an Italian merchant firm reported that the cost of sending quite expensive luxury-quality Wervik woollens from Bruges to Barcelona was 15% of the price (22 gold florins) by sea and 22% of the price by land; and the report also noted that some other merchants had ‘lost all their profit’ by sending their woollens overland. Yet some 80 years earlier, the cost of transporting relatively cheap Norman says, a fairly coarse semi-worsted product, from the Caen sayetteries overland to Florence via the Rhone (then the only feasible route) was only 8.8% of its much lower value, about half the relative cost for those expensive Wervik woollens (each then worth 132 days’ wages for an Oxford master mason).

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20 Armando Sapori, Una compagnia di calimala ai primi del trecento, Biblioteca storica toscana, Vol. 7 (Florence: Olshcki, 1932), 97-99. The Caen says were then priced at 11.5 florins; and the cost of transporting 133 says was 1.01 florin per say (total marketing costs amounted to 2.20 florins per say, or 19.2%). In another account, total marketing costs for 64 Caen says were 2.41 fl. per say, or 9.5% more per say in the smaller shipment. Caen says were then most expensive sold. See also Chorley, ‘Cloth Exports of Flanders’, p. 369. Comparing relative gold values is difficult, except to note that the early fourteenth century was a period of inflation; the late fourteenth century, one of deflation. For other evidence on the relatively low costs of overland transport in 13th-century Europe, see also Bautier, ‘Recherches sur les routes, I: de Paris et des Foires de Champagne’, 99-143; and especially James Masschaele, ‘Transport Costs in Medieval
Thus, since warfare and related forms of violence were hardly confined to land, the costs of maritime transport also rose, though not as much as did land transport costs, during the later Middle Ages. As Irene Katele has argued, the fourteenth century marked ‘a watershed in the history of naval plundering.’ The predominant response was to build much bigger and more extensively, heavily armed ships: with larger complements of specialized crossbowmen, steel-plated body armour even for other sailors, naval artillery (from the 1330s), and more mobile small-arms. The consequence was far more costly naval construction, and thus higher freight rates. Catalan records on shipping costs from 1275 to 1330 indicate that arming merchant ships increased freight rates by 25%; and Sicilian naval records show that freight rates virtually doubled over the fourteenth century.22 The Venetians found their most cost-effective solution in the heavily-armed three-masted great-galley, a speedy hybrid military and commercial vessel that became the exclusive carriers of precious cargoes.23 But even these powerful ships would not risk the Atlantic shipping lanes when menaced

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22 Charles-Emmanuel Dufourcq, L'Espagne catalane et le Maghrib aux XIIe et XIVe siècles: de la bataille de Las Navas de Tolosa (1212) à l'avènement du sultan mérinide Abou-l-Hasan (1331) (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1966), 534-42: shipping costs ranged from £200 Barcelonese for small ships (30-40 sailors) to £400 for galleys (80-120 rowers and 100-150 sailors); and costs of arming such ships against corsairs ranged from £50 to £100 extra, monthly. For Sicily, see Henri Bresc, ‘Course et piraterie en Sicile (1250-1450)’, Anuario de estudios medievales, 10 (1980), 751-57; and Henri Bresc, Un monde méditerranéen: Économie et société en Sicile, 1300 - 1450, 2 vols. (Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d’Athènes et de Rome, no. 262), Rome: École française de Rome, 1986, 1: 350-52.


24 Alberto Tenenti and Corrado Vivanti, ‘Le film d’un grand système de navigation: Les galères marchandes vénitiennes, XIVe - XVIe siècles’, *Annales: économies, sociétés, civilisations*, 16 (Jan.-June 1961), 83-86; and pull-out chart. No Venetian galley fleets were sent to north-west Europe in 1333, 1337-46, 1348-56, 1359-73, 1377-83, 1388, 1391; i.e. up to 1390, galleys went to Bruges in only 16 years. Their galley fleets usually operated in the Mediterranean, but not at all in 1351-54 and 1378-81, during the wars with Genoa. For the Florentines, see also Fryde, ‘Italian Maritime Trade’, 321-26.

25 Wools shipped to Venice, at £2 in shipping costs per sack purchased for £8 sterling; other charges raised total marketing costs to £6 11s 0d ster. per sack (81.9%). British Library, ‘Noumbre of Weyghtes’, also cited in Fryde, ‘Anglo-Italian Commerce’, 355. The Genoese usually employed cheaper carracks; and Fryde ‘Italian Maritime Trade’, 309-10, states that Genoese freight rates for wool were only 5.16% of the price (8s 3d per sack); those for alum and woad, about 8% of their prices. See also Fryde, ‘English Cloth Industry’, pp. 357-58. Eliyahu Ashtor, ‘Catalan Cloth on the Late Medieval Mediterranean Markets’, *Journal of European Economic History*, 17 (Fall 1988), 249-50. But other shipping costs were much higher, according to Unger, *Ship in the Medieval Economy*, p. 169: shipping salt from Portugal to Bruges accounted for 85% of the landed price; and shipping Baltic grain from Danzig to Bruges, about 50% of the landed price, ca. 1400.
which could better sustain these rising transportation and, in general, the complex set of transaction costs.26

The chief objective of this current study, as a sequel to the former, is to examine changes in the Netherlands’ textile industries in the context of changing modes and cost structures of international transport and trade during the later fifteenth and early sixteenth-centuries: industrial changes that followed the revival and expansion of the transcontinental trade routes, and which produced an industrial structure more akin to that prevailing in the thirteenth than in the intervening late-medieval centuries. The genesis of this revival in transcontinental trade, restoring to full vitality the overland links between Italy and the Low Countries, but following newer, more easterly routes, away from the Hundred Years' Wars, lay principally in southern imperial Germany (Bavaria-Austria-Bohemia). Previously an economic backwater in the late-medieval economy, its initial economic growth was partly spurred by a new trade in cheap flax-based textiles. This region had provided a small though receptive market for the Italian fustians industry, which had long produced cheap, light mixed linen-cotton fabrics, though in steadily declining quantities from the early fourteenth century. In the 1380s, many South German towns, finding that warfare had cut off their regular supply of Lombard fustians, began converting their domestic flax-based linen crafts into a fustian industry, exchanging locally mined silver for Venetian imports of Syrian cotton. By the 1420s, this new German fustian industry had displaced its long-declining Lombard rivals, marking the first major revival of such cheap

textiles in international trade. At the now prominent Frankfurt Fairs, South German merchants met Cologne merchants travelling south from the newly expanding Brabant Fairs, along the now much safer Rhine, bearing an important commodity: English woollen broadcloths, which soon proved instrumental in the expansion of both the Brabant Fairs and Rhenish-South German overland trade.27

An even more important catalyst sparking a rapid expansion in this German-based overland trade with the Brabant Fairs was the Central European silver and copper mining boom. By the 1450s, what some historians have called a ‘bullion famine’, marked by plunging mint outputs, produced a very severe and prolonged deflation (with price falls of about 35%), which in turn meant a corresponding increase in the purchasing power of silver.28 The economic response to those conditions was a technological revolution in


both mining and smelting that increased the output of both silver and copper in South Germany and adjacent Central Europe about five- or six-fold by the 1520s. The first stage was an innovation in mechanical engineering: new drainage pumps and adits (downward-slanted tunnels) that eliminated the long-pervasive problem of flooded mine shafts in mountainous Central Europe. The second was an even more important innovation in chemical engineering: the Seigerhütten process, using a lead catalyst in smelting silver-copper ores, to separate these previously inseparable metals. The copper so extracted from what became quite vast ore deposits also had considerable value, as the chief ingredient in making bronze artillery, which had already played a major role in ending the Hundred Years War.29

Virtually the entire era of the Central European mining boom, from the 1460s to the 1540s, coincides with the rise, expansion, and initial apogee of both the English cloth trade and the Antwerp market (see Table 2). Two coincidental monetary changes, both of them coinage debasements evidently inspired by bullion scarcities, helped to ensure that Antwerp and the Brabant Fairs would gain the lion's share of trade in both English woolens and South German metals. First, in 1464-65, the English crown devalued the silver coinage by 20% and gold by 26%, immediately producing a fall in the exchange rate on the pound sterling, with no inflationary consequences.30 The consequent drop in English cloth prices on the Antwerp market made these

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woollens an even more attractive return cargo for Rhenish and South German merchants exploiting growing markets in Central and eastern Europe. Shortly after, in 1466, the Burgundian government undertook a more modest coinage debasement (silver by 13% and gold by 4%), but one that produced a very sharp alteration in the bimetallic ratio at the new Antwerp mint, to become strongly pro-silver, thus diverting South-German silver away from competing mints, a success immediately reflected in burgeoning mint outputs.31

Certainly those monetary changes contributed to a sudden explosion of English cloth exports. From 1461-65 to 1496-1500, London-based exports, principally to the Brabant Fairs, more than doubled, from a quinquennial mean of 20,788 broadcloths to one of 42,746 cloths -- to account for almost 70% of total English cloth exports, prompting a Burgundian observer to compare such imports to an *inundacionis maris immensus*.32 Nothing succeeds like success. Exchanges of English broadcloths for South German silver and

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1464’, and Christopher Challis, ‘Lord Hastings to the Great Silver Recoinage, 1464 - 1699’, in *A New History of the Royal Mint*, ed. Christopher Challis (Cambridge, 1992), 83-178, 179-397; Munro, ‘Bullion Flows and Monetary Contraction’, 97-158, especially tables 7-10 (pp. 141-52); John Munro, *Wool, Cloth and Gold: The Struggle for Bullion in Anglo-Burgundian Trade, ca. 1340-1478* (Brussels, 1973), 155-86, 198-200; Munro, ‘Central European Mining Boom’, 119-84, especially tables 2, 4, and 5 (pp. 156-63). By this debasement, the fine metal content of the silver penny was reduced exactly 20.00% from 0.8991 g. to 0.7193 g., which reduction thereby raised the value of a Tower Pound of silver 25.00%: from 30s 0d. to 37s 6d. sterling (or, per kilogram of fine silver, from £4.634 to £5.793). The reciprocal relationship between a debasement and the corresponding increase in the money-of-account value of the mint-weight of fine silver or gold is expressed by the equation: \[ \Delta T = \left[ \frac{1}{1 - x} \right] - 1 : \] in which \( T \) (traite) is the coined value of the mint weight (Tower Pound) in money-of-account, and \( x \) is the percentage reduction in the fine-metal content of the penny or other link-money for this money-of-account. In August 1464 and in March 1465, Edward IV reduced the fine gold content of the noble from 6.998 g. to 5.184 g, a reduction of 25.92%, which raised the value of the gold coinage (angel-noble and the new ryal or rose noble) by 35.0%, from £16.667 to £22.50 per Tower Pound of fine gold, the equivalent of a 25% debasement, by this formula. See Munro, *Bullion Flows and Monetary Policies*.  

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31 Munro, ‘Bullion Flows and Monetary Contraction’, 97-158, especially tables 4-10 (pp. 134-52); Munro, *Wool, Cloth and Gold*, 155-86, 198-200; Munro, ‘Central European Mining Boom’, 119-84, especially tables 2 - 5 (pp. 156-63); Van der Wee, *Antwerp Market*, 2: 80-84; and sources cited in n. 6, 27 above.

32 In fairness, it should be noted that commercial and monetary disputes had led to a temporary Burgundian ban on English cloth imports in the Low Countries, in 1464-65; Munro, *Wool, Cloth, and Gold*, 155-80; John Munro, ‘Industrial Protectionism in Medieval Flanders: Urban or National?’ in Harry Miskimin, David Herlihy, Avrom Udovitch, eds., *The Medieval City* (New Haven and London, 1977), 229-68. Total English cloth exports rose from a quinquennial mean of 37,447 broadcloths in 1466-70 to one of 62,583 cloths in 1496-1500; and London’s share rose from 55.31% to 68.3%. Data from: Eleanor M. Carus-
copper, along with the concurrent expansion in the Brabant Fairs, attracted merchants from all over Europe, finally including the Portuguese (1501). With their newly acquired Asian spices, they completed the Antwerp tripod and the foundations for its commercial-financial hegemony for the next half century.33

During the early to mid-sixteenth century, textiles and related textile products clearly dominated the commerce of Antwerp and the Brabant Fairs, in all respects, as Table 1 shows: in terms of imports, domestic exports, and foreign re-exports. According to Guicciardini's mid-century survey of Antwerp's commerce, textile products (including dyestuffs and wool, both English and Spanish) accounted for 55% of all imports by value; and the two most important imports were Italian silk products and English woollens, accounting for 22% and 18% respectively (with Baltic grains a close third, at 16%).34 In the export trades, despite the lack of a similarly comprehensive, global survey, various accounts and toll registers of the 1540s indicate that textile products, led by English cloths, both broadcloths and much cheaper kerseys, were even more overwhelmingly dominant.35 Long before this era, of course, English woollen broadcloths had displaced the

33 See sources cited in n. 11 above.


finer Flemish and Brabantine luxury woollens, both at the Brabant Fairs and in most European markets. Within the Netherlands, other domestic woollens, lower-priced imitations from the nouvelles draperies, no longer new, led by Armentières and Neuve-Église, had also superseded these old traditional luxury draperies to achieve as well a large foreign demand and considerable sales at the Brabant Fairs. But, by the mid-sixteenth century, yet a third branch of cloth-making was on the verge of overtaking the nouvelles draperies to become the predominant textile industry of the southern Low Countries. Collectively its members are again known as the draperies légères, in producing far lighter, coarser, and much cheaper worsted or mixed woollen-worsted fabrics; and this branch was again dominated, as in the thirteenth century, by the sayetteries, whose products, if not precisely identical to the medieval says, certainly represented a resurrection of that once popular form of cloth making. Indeed, Hondschooite, a leading sayetterie in thirteenth-century Flanders, whose says were then so prominent in Italian markets, and the only important survivor during the later Middle Ages, surviving on domestic and regional markets, had again, by the later fifteenth and sixteenth century, become the leading Flemish say exporter to Italy and the Mediterranean (see Table 3). According to recent estimates by Soly and Thijs for textile production in the mid-sixteenth century Low Countries, the various worsted or semi-worsted draperies légères, decisively led by a multitude of sayetteries, were then producing about 3.64 million metres of cloth. The few remaining traditional urban luxury-woollen draperies, now led by Mechelen, and the now more important branch of the true-heavy weight woollens industry known as the nouvelles draperies, which produced cheaper and imitation varieties of the traditional luxury woollens, collectively were producing only about 2.07 million metres.37

36 See sources in n. 35 above.

How did these says reach the Mediterranean? Since evidence has already shown that, in the late fourteenth century, the cost of transporting textiles, even very costly luxury woollens, from Flanders to the Mediterranean was cheaper by sea than by overland routes, the now well-established maritime routes should have enjoyed an even greater relative cost advantage in shipping the far cheaper says to their Italian markets in the later fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, despite the revival of transcontinental routes. Those routes, to be sure, would have always retained an obvious cost advantage in transporting the more expensive English broadcloths and refinshed fine linens, silks, brocades, tapestries, and carpets from the Brabant Fairs to inland markets, along the Rhine, South Germany, Bohemia, Hungary, and elsewhere in Central Europe. Nevertheless, the well documented fact that the overland transcontinental routes were used almost exclusively for transporting Flemish says, other products of the various draperies légères, and also English kerseys and even English wools to Italy, is rather astonishing.38

The evidence for such overland transport comes from three principal sources: the voluminous records

of the Hondschoote sayetterie, so thoroughly studied by Coornaert in 1930, and subsequently published by the Belgian Royal Historical Commission;39 the papers of several Flemish exporting firms, notably the Van der Molen, della Faille, and van der Heyden firms, for the 1540s;40 and thirdly, from the same period, the registers for a special commercial levy, a 1% ad valorem tax on all goods exported from the Habsburg Netherlands from 1542 to 1545.41 For exports to southern and Mediterranean Europe, all but one single account in these tax registers record exports uniquely by the land routes; and Brulez, who has examined these registers and sixteenth-century transport the most thoroughly has concluded that maritime exports to Italy in this period were of quite ‘minimal importance.’42 In any event, the other commercial records for both Flemish says and English kerseys confirm that all, or virtually all, of these textiles were sent to Italy by overland routes; and certainly the Mediterranean basin, from Spain to the Levant, commanded by far the greatest share of those aggregate textile exports from north-west Europe.43

Not until well into the next century, when the Thirty Years War (1618-48) made these overland routes so frequently impassable, was a sea route utilized to transport these textiles to the Mediterranean, generally


41 Levy of 1% tax on the value of all merchandise exported from the Habsburg Netherlands from 10 February 1543 to 22 September 1545, in Algemeen Rijksarchief, Rekenkamer, nos. 23,357-364, analysed by J. Goris, Étude sur les colonies marchandes méridionales à Anvers (Leuven, 1925), and by Brulez, ‘L'exportation des Pays Bas’, 461-91.

42 Brulez, ‘Exportation des Pays Bas’, 462: ‘Il est certain, en tout cas, que le rôle de l'exportation par mer vers l'Italie, comparé à celui de l'exportation par terre est, en ces années, d'importance minime.’ The only example of sea-transport was a shipment of 280 wagues of lead from Veere to Genoa in October 1544.

To be sure, in sixteenth century Europe, warfare still seemed to loom large, especially the Franco-Imperial and Ottoman Wars; but such warfare was much more organized and localized, without that chronic, widespread, and debilitating anarchy that so plagued both fourteenth-century and mid-seventeenth-century Europe. If local wars often blocked one route, an alternative safe route was generally available. From Antwerp and the Brabant Fairs, there were two major southbound routes, each with its own set of regional alternatives: (1) the western route, running either via Luxembourg, Trier, Lorraine, and Franche Comté, or via the Rhine and Cologne and Frankfurt, through Switzerland (Basel) and the Alps, across the Saint-Gotthard Pass into Lombardy, terminating at Milan and Genoa; or (2) the eastern route via the Rhineland and Frankfurt to Augsburg-Nürnberg, and Salzburg-Innsbruck, across the Brenner Pass, into Venice.

Unfortunately we still lack sufficient evidence to prove that in the sixteenth-century these overland routes had become cheaper than the maritime routes, not when the converse view remains so deeply rooted in the annals of European economic history. Nevertheless we may, at the outset, deduce from various developments in the sixteenth-century economy that transaction costs had again sufficiently fallen in long-distance trade to permit the Netherlands to be competitive once more in Mediterranean markets for cheaper textiles. The most obvious factor, already cited, was the restoration of relative security along the major trade routes, but perhaps more so on land than by sea. But equally important, when the transaction sector was so subject to scale economies, was the rapid demographic, urban, and commercial expansion in sixteenth-century Europe, especially in the Mediterranean basin, which dramatically widened and deepened markets, providing much a more concentrated, larger-scale, and efficient commerce. markets. Thirdly, international trade in

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44 Coornaert, Draperie-sayetterie d’Honschoote, 247.


46 Van der Wee and Peeters, ‘Modèle dynamique’, though still partially wedded to orthodox views on maritime transport, nevertheless believe that the cost differences had become much narrower, without, however, citing specific evidence. See, however, Van der Wee, Antwerp Market, 2: 325-64.
sixteenth-century Europe benefited from many significant commercial-financial innovations: fully transferable and negotiable commercial bills and other improvements in both public and private finance, which halved interest rates by the 1550s; printed and widely disseminated ‘currents’ for both commodity-price and exchange-rates; the rise of specialized ‘commission’ houses (such as the Van der Molen firm); embryonic joint-stock companies; and large-scale warehousing facilities.\footnote{Van der Wee, \textit{Antwerp Market}, 2: 177-94, 325-64; Van der Wee and Peeters, ‘Modèle dynamique’, 200-28; Edler, ‘Le commerce d’exportation des sayes’, 249-65; Edler, ‘Winchombe Kerseys’, 57-52; Brulez ‘Exportation des Pays Bas’, 461-91; Endrei, ‘English Kerseys’, 90-99; Munro, ‘Industrial Transformations’, 128-38; Munro, ‘Resurrection of an Old Flemish Industry’, 60-95; Van der Wee, ‘Structural Changes in European Long Distance Trade’, 14-33; Van der Wee and Materné, ‘Antwerp as a World Market’, 19-31. See also the documents and analysis in John McCusker and Cora Gravesteijn, \textit{The Beginnings of Commercial and Financial Journalism: The Commodity Price Currents, Exchange Rate Currents, and Money Currents of Early Modern Europe}, NEHA-Series III (Amsterdam, 1991).}

Since maritime commerce also shared in these improvements, the crucial innovations to be cited were those unique to overland transport. First and foremost was the rapid emergence of professional and specialized transport or cartage firms, which promoted the development of the new, larger-scale, lower-cost Hesse wagons (carts), in well organized convoys. These new transport firms offered merchants, both large and small, those selling in nearby or in distant overland markets, fully insured passage for their goods at predetermined, fixed rates; and they also provided an efficient overland postal service. Beginning with the Antwerp-Italy routes, these new modes of commercial transport soon spread to other overland routes servicing France, Germany, and Central Europe. Both Brulez and Van der Wee believe that these major developments in overland transport soon made the continental overland routes both speedier and more reliable than Atlantic shipping routes from north-west Europe into the Mediterranean.\footnote{Van der Wee, \textit{Antwerp Market}, 2: 177-94; Brulez, ‘L’exportation des Pays Bas’, 461-91; Brulez, \textit{De firma Della Faille}; Brulez, ‘Commerce international des Pays Bas’, 1205-21.} But, even without these innovations, as Robert Lopez once observed, Italian merchants were able to reach NE Europe ‘faster by an overland shortcut’, at least when relative security prevailed, than by the sea route.\footnote{Lopez, ‘Trade of Medieval Europe: the South’, 354: That there was little incentive to develop a sea-route before the 1270s, ‘when commercial opportunities in the western Iberian states seemed too modest...
export trade from the Low Countries to Italy, the distance -- from Antwerp or Bruges to Venice in particular -- was no more than 1300 km, less than 20 per cent of the distance by sea between these ports. Furthermore, both in the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries, the shorter overland routes probably offered much greater volumes of commerce to be transacted en route, with far more frequent transactions, at lower marginal costs, than did maritime commerce with north-west Europe.

Finally, if the proof is in the pudding, the final proof for the economic superiority of the overland routes in sixteenth-century Europe must lie in the fact that they commanded such an overwhelmingly dominant share of the commercial traffic between Italy and the Low Countries. Furthermore, paralleling the expansion of the overland continental routes was the sharp decline in Italian galley-service to Flanders and England, which had clearly become an uneconomic form of commercial transport. The last Florentine galley arrived in 1478; and the Venetian galleys, after regular trips for most of the fifteenth century, failed to arrived in 1492, 1496-7, 1499, 1502, 1509-15, 1518, 1521-29, and 1531-32, making their final voyage in 1533.50 Yet equally responsible for that decline was the revolutionary transformation of the much cheaper, more mundane cog-style cargo boats from the mid-fifteenth century, to become the so-called Atlantic-ship or carrack: heavily-armed, full-rigged ships, combining the square sails of northern cogs, for power and speed, with the lateen sails of Arab-influenced caravels, for manœuvrability. In Italian commerce with the Levant, according to Frederic Lane, these new carracks (almost impervious to Muslim corsairs) and other advances in maritime navigation were responsible for a 25% reduction in freight rates by the early sixteenth century; and the Italians were then re-exporting a significant proportion of their northern textiles, especially both English

50 But Fryde also notes that, by the 1480s, the Genoese carrack trade was ‘in catastrophic decline.’ See Fryde, ‘Italian Maritime Trade with Medieval England’, 331; Fryde, ‘English Cloth Industry and the Trade with the Mediterranean’, 362; Lane, Venetian Ships and Shipbuilders, 26-28; Tenenti-Vivanti, ‘Les galères marchandes vénitiennes’, 83-6, and pull-out map.
kerseys and Flemish says, to Levantine markets. Finally we may best appreciate the complementarity between maritime and overland transport in textiles by remembering that English textiles, both broadcloths and kerseys, could reach the Antwerp market, to begin their long journeys, only by sea transport.

### Table 1.

**Values of Imports into the Southern Netherlands c. 1560 in Million of Gulden (Carolus Florins of 40d gros Flemish)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textile Product Imports</th>
<th>Value in Millions of Gulden</th>
<th>Per Cent of Total Import Values</th>
<th>Other Imports</th>
<th>Value in Millions of Gulden</th>
<th>Per Cent of Total Import Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raw Silk and Italian Silks</td>
<td>4.000</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>Baltic grains</td>
<td>3.000</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Woollens</td>
<td>3.240</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>Portuguese Spices</td>
<td>2.000</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish Wools*</td>
<td>1.250</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>French wines</td>
<td>1.150</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English wools</td>
<td>0.500</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>Rhenish wines</td>
<td>0.720</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French woad</td>
<td>0.400</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>Italian/Spanish/ Portuguese wines</td>
<td>0.500</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German fustians</td>
<td>0.240</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>Portuguese salt</td>
<td>0.250</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian/Spanish alum</td>
<td>0.240</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>French salt</td>
<td>0.250</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish-American cochineal</td>
<td>0.225</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>Spanish olive oils</td>
<td>0.200</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Spanish salt</td>
<td>0.175</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>German copper</td>
<td>0.160</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>10.095</strong></td>
<td><strong>54.6%</strong></td>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>8.405</strong></td>
<td><strong>45.4%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Spanish *merino* wools imported chiefly via Bruges

Table 2.

Exports of Woollen Broadcloths from London and All English Ports:*
Decennial Means, 1490-09 to 1560-9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>London: Broadcloth Exports</th>
<th>Index: Mean 1411-20 = 100</th>
<th>Total English Broadcloth Exports</th>
<th>London Exports as a Percentage of Total English Cloth Exports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1451-60</td>
<td>16,291</td>
<td>119.83</td>
<td>36,595</td>
<td>44.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1461-70</td>
<td>18,414</td>
<td>135.45</td>
<td>33,225</td>
<td>55.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1471-80</td>
<td>28,886</td>
<td>212.47</td>
<td>43,489</td>
<td>66.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1481-90</td>
<td>35,708</td>
<td>262.65</td>
<td>52,102</td>
<td>68.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1491-00</td>
<td>39,320</td>
<td>289.22</td>
<td>59,764</td>
<td>65.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1501-10</td>
<td>49,501</td>
<td>364.1</td>
<td>81,037</td>
<td>61.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1511-20</td>
<td>62,761</td>
<td>460.68</td>
<td>88,345</td>
<td>70.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1521-30</td>
<td>67,102</td>
<td>493.57</td>
<td>87,902</td>
<td>76.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1531-40</td>
<td>83,617</td>
<td>615.05</td>
<td>101,682</td>
<td>82.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1541-50</td>
<td>112,665</td>
<td>828.71</td>
<td>126,623</td>
<td>88.98%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Quantities of cloth measuring 24 yds by 1.75 yds per unit, including kerseys reckoned at 3 kerseys per notional broadcloth. A broadcloth of assize was supposed to weigh 64 lb., with an area of 37.095 m² = 782.6 grams per square metre. Great Britain, Parliament, Statutes of the Realm, 4:1, 136-37 (statute 5-6 Edwardi VI c. 6).

Source:

Table 3.
Production and Export of Says from the Hondschoote Sayetterie
in quinquennials means, 1401-05 to 1596-1600

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Hondschoote Drapery Tax Farm represented in £ parisis</th>
<th>Hondschoote Cloth Sales: by tax farm 8d. per cloth in Single Says* Exports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1401-05</td>
<td>54.80 1,644</td>
<td>1406-10 78.00 2,340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1411-15</td>
<td>85.60 2,568</td>
<td>1416-20 117.60 3,528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1421-25</td>
<td>152.80 4,584</td>
<td>1426-30 165.80 4,974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1431-35</td>
<td>172.00 5,160</td>
<td>1436-40 176.00 5,280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1441-45</td>
<td>180.00 5,400</td>
<td>1446-50 278.00 8,340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1451-55</td>
<td>345.60 10,368</td>
<td>1456-60 388.00 11,640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1461-65</td>
<td>404.00 12,120</td>
<td>1466-70 435.20 13,056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1471-75</td>
<td>464.00 13,920</td>
<td>1476-80 424.00 12,720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1481-85</td>
<td>455.00 13,650</td>
<td>1486-90 488.70 14,661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1491-95</td>
<td>399.95 11,998</td>
<td>1496-1500 424.00 12,720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1501-05</td>
<td>588.00 17,640</td>
<td>1506-10 667.20 20,016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1511-15</td>
<td>757.60 22,728</td>
<td>1516-20 980.00 29,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1521-25</td>
<td>1,071.60 32,148</td>
<td>1526-30 1,163.20 34,896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1531-35</td>
<td>1,452.80 43,584</td>
<td>1536-40 1,439.20 43,176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1541-45</td>
<td>1,580.80 47,424</td>
<td>1546-50 1,634.80 49,044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1596-1600 31,583.44 41,184.50 42,761.40 44,547.60 45,453.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table: Drapery Tax Farm and Cloth Sales in Hondschoote

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Hondschoote Drapery Tax Farm</th>
<th>Cloths represented in £ parisis by tax farm</th>
<th>Cloth Sales: Exports in Single Says*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1551-55</td>
<td>2,228.80</td>
<td>66,864</td>
<td>57,387.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1556-60</td>
<td>2,472.40</td>
<td>74,172</td>
<td>67,026.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1561-65</td>
<td>2,946.40</td>
<td>88,392</td>
<td>89,699.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1566-70</td>
<td>2,987.20</td>
<td>89,616</td>
<td>93,057.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1571-75</td>
<td>2,716.00</td>
<td>81,480</td>
<td>82,772.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1576-80</td>
<td>2,224.00</td>
<td>66,720</td>
<td>81,550.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1581-85</td>
<td>384.00</td>
<td>11,520</td>
<td>16,961.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1586-90</td>
<td>494.00</td>
<td>14,820</td>
<td>12,127.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1591-95</td>
<td>724.00</td>
<td>21,720</td>
<td>20,039.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* A fine narrow say measured 28.0 m (40 ells) by 0.7 m (1 ell), with a finished area of 19.60 m², and with a weight of 260.4 grams per sq. metre; a small double say measured 25.725 m (36.75 ells) by 0.875 m (1.25 ells), with a finished area of 22.509 m², and with a weight of 322.4 grams per sq. metre. In the 1540s, at the Antwerp market, Hondschoote single says sold for £0.783 to £0.967 groot Flemish (15s 8d. to 19s 4d. groot Flemish), which represented, in value, 13.42 days’ wages to 18.32 days wages for an Antwerp master mason, then earning 12.67d (1540-42) to 14.00d. groot per day (from 1543).

The Low Countries’ Export Trade in Textiles with the Mediterranean Basin, 1200-1600: A Cost-Benefit Analysis of Comparative Advantages in Overland and Maritime Trade Routes

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