

DIE HANSE
ÜBERLEGUNGEN ZUR ENTWICKLUNG DES HANSEBEGRIFFES
UND DER HANSE ALS INSTITUTION RESP. ORGANISATION

von Carsten Jahnke

Abstract: The Hanse: The development of the concept of the „Hanse“ and the development of the Hanse itself as an institution/organization.

How can we define the Hanse? When was it established? How did it develop institutionally and organizationally? A re-examination of the source material demonstrates that the Hanse did not exist until the mid-fourteenth century. To be sure, the term „German Hanse“ makes its first appearance in 1358 (cf. Behrmann and Selzer), but that fact alone does not constitute compelling evidence that the Hanse already existed as an institution. As an institution, the Hanse saw the light of day first in a diet in Lübeck in June 1379. Prior to that, we can only talk about regional alliances and diets, which met ad hoc to deal with common economic matters. By contrast, from 1380 onwards general diets of the cities of the Hanse began to meet regularly, even if they also dealt with regional conflicts. Consequently, the term „Hanse“ must have developed organically between 1379 and 1418, starting as a loose term applicable to ad hoc gatherings, then being transformed into a name for an institution and then for an organisation. This fact requires us, however, to re-examine the role of the land-locked member towns of the Hanse. They were by no means grumbling subordinates to the coastal towns, for which older scholarship took them, but had a role of their own to play in the organization.

ZWISCHEN METROPOLE, FÜRST UND KÖNIG: DIE VENEDISCHE HANDELSGESELLSCHAFT DER KAUFLEUTE VECKINCHUSEN UND IHR NIEDERGANG

von Mathias Franc Kluge

Abstract: Between metropolis, ruler and king: The Venetian Trading Company of the Veckinchusen and its downfall.

The Venetian Trading Company of the Veckinchusen, a Hanseatic merchant family, is well known in the economic history of Germany in the late Middle Ages. Scholars have paid particular attention to it in part because of the great wealth of surviving documentation (the Veckinchusen are the best documented Hanseatic merchants of the 14th and 15th centuries) and because of their trade in high-risk and unusual commodities, in this they broke with the established business practices of Hanseatic trade and initially generated high profits. But in the end, the company failed and was dissolved under obscure circumstances. This article publishes and analyzes recently discovered sources, that document previously unknown aspects of the company's decline and fall.

DER SPÄTMITTELALTERLICHE BARCHENTHANDEL VOM HEILIGEN RÖMISCHEN REICH NACH DÄNEMARK

von Kilian Baur

Abstract: Late Medieval Fustian Trade from the Holy Roman Empire to Denmark

Fustian – a blended fabric consisting of a linen warp and a cotton weft – was introduced into the Swabian ‚linen-district‘ from Italian centres and production was ramped up massively towards the end of the fourteenth century. Alongside the German word ‚Barchent‘ there are several other words which designate fustian. Two of these – Middle Low German ‚Sardok‘ and Danish ‚sardug‘ – are usually understood to have been linsey-woolsey textiles. However, there are several indications that they, in fact, designate fustian. For instance, both are mentioned in connection with the largest German fustian production centres Ulm and Augsburg. The fact that these terms are equivalent allows us to follow fustian from production in Southern Germany to consumption in Denmark.

Fustian was exported from Swabia, where it was produced, to virtually every significant trading hub in the Holy Roman Empire, but the Frankfurt fairs were the epicentre of distribution, being predestined for this role by virtue of their central location in Europe. From here fustian was shipped directly to Cologne, Erfurt and Leipzig. From Cologne, fustian was shipped chiefly to the Low Countries, although some was certainly sent to Lübeck. Erfurt and Leipzig feature alongside Cologne as sources of fustian in Lübeck. The volume of the trade in fustian is unknowable, since reliable data are only available from Cologne. Even so, we know that an annual average of 25,800 fustians were traded there between 1452 and 1480.

The accounts of Duke Frederick I of Schleswig and Holstein and the Danish queen Christina of Saxony cast some light on use of fustian at noble and royal courts and its availability in the north of the Holy Roman Empire. Many fustian sellers mentioned in these accounts were also active in the cattle trade, and this would seem to be a major commercial link between the Low Countries and Lübeck on the one hand, and Schleswig, Holstein and Denmark on the other. However, it is not possible to identify the origin of any particular piece of fustian found in the sources with any confidence. Moreover, it is also possible that not only wholesale merchants, but also peasants imported fustian into Denmark. When Erik of Pomerania forbade the peasants of Zealand 1422 from trading, fustian was listed among the prohibited goods. The volume of this peasant trade is unknown, because it has left virtually no trace in the written records. The fairs in Scania might have played an important role in the fustian trade, as they did in the case of other textiles, but no more than a handful of sources mention fustian in Scania at all.

von Lena Mühlig

Abstract: German Merchant Guilds on Bornholm.

Considering its pivotal position in the Baltic, one might expect the island of Bornholm to be more prominent in Hanseatic historiography. This article aims to redress this unhappy situation, examining the island's role in late medieval Hanseatic trade and focussing on the organisation and privileges of German merchants there.

After briefly reviewing relevant scholarship and source materials, the article sketches the historical context of trade. During the two centuries in which the archbishop of Lund almost without interruption was the sole ruler of Bornholm, the island left only few traces in the historical record, aside from reports on wartime raiding and looting. The Bornholm bailiffs did not consistently honor German privileges in Denmark concerning the return of shipwrecked goods. Nor were all Hanseatic towns treated equally, as the privileges would require.

The main part of the article examines the relationship between a selected number of Hanseatic towns and Bornholm, drawing on sources transmitted on merchants' or shippers' guilds in Greifswald, Anklam, Stettin (Szczecin) and Kolberg (Kołobrzeg) which traded with the island. A number of privileges, specifically granted to Greifswald's merchants, have survived. Greifswald's merchants also had a guild house and a chapel in Rønne, as would also seem to be the case for Kolberg merchants in Nexø. Interestingly, at least part of the endowment of the church of Nexø was paid in salt, which was one of Bornholm's most important imports. In return, traders from Bornholm visited Kolberg. For Stettin and Anklam there are only few indirect references which indicate they had guilds active on Bornholm. The Prussian towns clearly played a prominent role there, although no information about guilds or privileges exists. Servants of the High Master and citizens of several Prussian towns, especially Danzig, are documented in several of the island's fishing villages. Their activity is represented in a number of letters referring to goods on the island belonging to deceased merchants. While the Greifswald guild had its own privileges on Bornholm, granted by the archbishop of Lund, the Prussians do not seem to have had one, although at the end of the fourteenth century they do refer to their „ancient“ customs privileges. This was likely to have been an attempt to arrogate other towns' rights. In the case of shipwrecked goods, they seemed to rely on privileges granted by the king of Denmark to all Hanseatic merchants and rights in Scania granted by the archbishop, albeit with varying success. In any case it is clear not all Hanseatic merchants were treated equally in Bornholm. Nonetheless, merchants and shippers from a surprisingly large number of Hanseatic towns were active in the Bornholm trade.

DAS BERGENER KONTOR IM MITTELALTER

von Arnved Nedkvitne

Abstract: The Bergen Kontor in the Middle Ages.

Stockfish production in Northern Norway and its export via Bergen was the first part of the Norwegian economy to be internationalised. In Norwegian historiography it has been a moot point whether this trade became economically important in a north European and Norwegian context during the „commercial revolution“ of the High Middle Ages (ca. 1100–1300), or during the next „commercial revolution“ of the 16th century. In this article the English customs accounts from 1303 and later are used to argue that this great expansion took place before the Black Death. The English customs accounts are combined with the Pfundzollbücher from Lübeck to argue that the quantities handled in this trade were halved after the Black Death because the population in the stockfish producing regions was also halved. The German Hanse did not initiate the export of stockfish, but Hanse merchants greatly expanded its volume between 1250 and 1320 and made its organisation more complex between 1250 and 1400.

The Bergen Kontor as a political organisation has to be viewed in the context of its relationship to the Norwegian state. In the period 1282–1560 Hanse merchants insisted that all state legislation concerning them had to be included in privileges accepted by the Kontor. Before and after this period no one contested the state's power to legislate on all foreign merchants during their stay in Bergen. In Bergen there were roughly 1000 German „winter residents“ who stayed in the town all year. During the Bergen fair (July–September) this number roughly doubled, „summer guests“ and sailors included. All of them were armed. The Kontor militia commanded by the aldermen was able to take military control of the town if required. State power in Bergen was weak between 1319 and 1560 not only because of the Hanse but also because the Dano-Norwegian state gave a low priority to the situation in Bergen. The Kontor practiced extraterritorial jurisdiction in cases where its own members were involved. The „winter residents“ controlled the Kontor organisation and used it effectively against „summer guests“ from Hanse towns, Norwegian domestic traders and competitors from England and Holland to defend their credit system. After ca. 1560 the Kontor was subjected to the control of a stronger state, but continued to exist until 1766.

How did Norwegians react to the German presence? Domestic Norwegian merchants in Bergen and state officials there found it problematic. But new research shows that thousands of stockfish-producing households saw the trade as a source of economic welfare, and food security in case of local crop failures, in a region which, after all, was at the northern fringe of Europe. In Finnmark no grain could be grown and had to be imported in exchange for fish. Its population expanded in the late Middle Ages, whereas it contracted elsewhere in Norway.

ZUR TÄTIGKEIT DER PROKURATOREN VOR DEM LÜBECKER RAT GEGEN ENDE DES 15. JAHRHUNDERTS

von Harm von Seggern

Abstract: ‚Procurators‘ before the Lübeck town council at the end of the fifteenth century.

A systematic inspection of the Lübeck „Niederstadtbuch“ for the years 1478–1495 turned up 419 appointments of „procurators“, i. e. persons authorized to represent a party during a hearing or trial before the town council (which, under Lübeck law, acted as a court of law). In this article, I want to establish what importance this group had for the practice of law in late medieval Lübeck. I begin by summarizing the relevant provisions of Lübeck law which regulate the representation of a party to a suit (II). Then I will analyze selected appointments of procurators in the Niederstadtbuch (III). As it turns out, procurators were most often appointed as executors of wills left by non-residents of the city who wills contained no bequests relating to property in Lübeck (IV). The last section deals with a frequently appointed procurator named Wigand Multer, who came from Danzig (V). He was retained to deal with a number of cases from Baltic towns also subject to Lübeck Law like Wismar or Reval. Lübeck’s function as a court of appeal („Oberhof“) is evident.

Amongst others, he appeared by order of Ludeke Biskendorp, a merchant from Danzig, in a case against Godschalk Remmlinkrode from Reval. Remmlinkrode was a prominent merchant, having participated in an embassy in 1494 dispatched to the Great Tsar Iwan III to negotiate about the closing of the Hanseatic Kontor in Novgorod. Godschalk Remmlinkrode was arrested in there and died still in captivity. From letters concerning the administration of his estate, we know that he had received some fine woollens from Wolf Blume, a merchant from Frankfurt on the Main, but had not yet paid for them. Unfortunately, Remmlinkrode’s business relations with Blume find no mention in the „Niederstadtbuch“. The main conclusion of the article is methodological: the „Niederstadtbücher“ are legal sources which concern themselves solely with what was relevant to the case before the court. Using these records for economic history thus requires legal analysis first.

HANSEGESCHICHTE ALS REGIONALGESCHICHTE:
DAS BEISPIEL DES KIELER HISTORIKERS WILHELM KOPPE
(1908–1986)

von Oliver Auge und Martin Göllnitz

Abstract: Hanse history as regional history: The example of the Kiel historian Wilhelm Koppe (1908–1986).

Current research on the Hanse has shifted significantly to reflect modern trends, picking up network theory and global history in particular, both of which are intimately involved in modernity. On the one hand, one can view this shift as a critical reaction to older scholarship, and on the other it marks the transition from parochial German to international research. In accord with this approach, Hanseatic trade is viewed as having been global, as far as was possible in the middle ages and the early modern period. However, Hanseatic trade, based as it was on commercial networks, remained limited to regional core areas.

At a very early stage, this dichotomy was highlighted in Wilhelm Koppe's research. Koppe's studies on trade between Stockholm and Lübeck and especially his work on Hanseatic merchants' networking in Reval, Soest and Frankfurt constituted a clarion call for the regional perspective in Hanseatic history.

Curiously, Koppe's work is not on the radar screen of contemporary Hanse or network research. One reason would seem to be the prominence of Koppe's own dissertation supervisor, Fritz Rörig, in Hanseatic research. As long as Rörig was alive, Koppe was never able to step out of his mentor's shadow. However, after Rörig's death, his character and methodology came under attack. Koppe was deemed guilty by association, since he was, to an extent, following in Rörig's footsteps. Despite Koppe's allegiance to a considerably older scholarly tradition, and especially his deep entanglement in the 'scientific' projects sponsored by the Nazi regime, he was nonetheless a highly productive innovator in the field of network research long before it (once again) became sexy in Hanseatic scholarship.

Moreover, he was an early advocate of a regional approach to Hanseatic history. The chair of regional history at the University of Kiel traces its roots to these trends and is dedicated to a regional approach to Hanseatic history, even if Koppe's legacy is equally a blessing and a curse.

AUSSICHTEN STABIL WECHSELHAFT
DIE SUCHE NACH DEM CHARAKTER
DER HANSE IN STÄDTISCHEN ÜBERLIEFERUNGEN DES HOHEN
UND SPÄTEN MITTELALTERS

von Nico Nolden

Abstract: Outlook: Stable, Unsettled

The Search for the Nature of the Hanseatic League in Urban Traditions of the High and Late Middle Ages

Recent Hanseatic research has achieved novel insights regarding associations of medieval merchants and towns in North Europe. Earlier scholars had blithely imagined the „Hanse“ to have been, from the beginning, a supra-regional community of merchants or even a league of cities. Part of the responsibility for this outmoded conception lies with the biased selection of documents by the nineteenth-century editors of the *Hanserezeise*, as Huang and Kypta have recently demonstrated. Starting in the 1990s, scholarship has focussed on the terminology of medieval documents, in order to clarify when – and in which stages – the „Hanse“ emerged as a specific, identifiable entity, be it in the context of loose associations of merchants or more organized urban structures. A young scholars' workshop in Lüneburg (2012) wrestled with this problem, focussing on the documentary evidence for the internal self-perception of Hanseatic merchants and towns and their perception by outsiders. Given that merchants' associations were originally designated by a very diverse collection of terms in the Hanse's trading area, did an archetypal „Hanseatic“ appellation emerge? This, of course, immediately triggered the question of whether the editors of urban sources understood these ancient designations correctly and reproduced their meaning accurately when summarizing documents in modern German. This is particularly important, since Huang and Kypta have shown that, in formulating their modern German summaries of medieval documents in the various Hanseatic editions, the editors assumed constitutional structures to have existed and anchored this assumption in their summaries, thus suggesting an unwarranted interpretation of the source to later scholars. This article summarizes the results of the workshop, and places them in the context of current research.