
Changes in the Baltic Zone in the XIII-XVI Centuries

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The purpose of this article is to indicate the dynamics of economic development¹ in the "Baltic Zone" using a synthetic indicator. Following J. Topolski in this, it is assumed that such an indicator must be simple and operate with data series which will characterize the economic growth of the area under study.² The attempt to provide a statistical description allows us to obtain information in terms of the magnitudes and proportions of the economic changes occurring in this area.

The term "zone" is employed to describe a territory consisting of several regions whose economies were all dependent on a common external factor. The distinguishing feature of the Baltic zone — and this is reflected widely in the literature on the subject — lay in supplying western and southern Europe with raw materials from agricultural and forest regions of the Baltic basin.³ As is well

¹ On the theory of economic growth, cf. S. KUROWSKI, *Historyczny proces wzrostu gospodarczego*, Warszawa 1963, p. 13. S. KUZNETS, *National Product since 1869*, New York 1946. W. KULA, *Problemi e metodi di storia economica*, Milano 1972, chapter VIII.

² J. TOPOLSKI, *Croissance economique de la Pologne du X^e au XX^e s.*, « *Studia Historicae Oeconomicae* » 2, 1968, p. 3 ff.

³ For recent literature on the subject, cf. A. MĄCZAK, H. SAMSONOWICZ, *La zone baltique; l'un des elements du marché européen*, « *Acta Polonica Historica* », XI, 1965; H. SAMSONOWICZ, *Późne średniowiecze miast nadbałtyckich*, Warszawa 1969, p. 109; A.

known, the changes in this area took place, above all, during a 300 years period, from about the mid XIIIth century to about the mid XVIth century. During this period, the Baltic zone attained its final position as an important centre of European production, making it possible for early forms of capitalism to develop in the advanced countries of western Europe.⁴ The rapidity and chronology of the changes, however, remain open to discussion for various reasons, in particular because, in contrast to later periods,⁵ the sources which would allow a reasonably precise estimate of the relevant coefficients of change do not exist. Studies of Baltic trade which are based on statistical evidence drawn in particular from customs registers, provide information about only a few cities, such as Gdańsk, Lubeck, Revel, and even then for only short periods.⁶ But unfortunately this is too small a sample to enable any calculation of growth trends for the entire zone. Coefficients are required then which would fulfill the following conditions:

- 1) show sufficient representativeness over the period of 300 years;
- 2) allow possibilities for comparison within this period; 3) and have adequate reference to documentary evidence.⁷

MAĆZAK, *Między Gdańskiem a Sundem*, Warszawa 1972, p. 6; M. MAŁOWIST, *Wschód a zachód Europy w XII-XIV w.*, Warszawa 1973, p. 41; A. ATTMAN, *The Russian and Polish Markets in International Trade 1500-1650*, Göteborg 1973; P. JOHANSEN, *Umriss und Aufgaben der hansischen Siedlungsgeschichte und Kartographie*, «Hansische Geschichtsblätter» 73, 1955. Cf. also J. COX RUSSEL, *Medieval Regions and their Cities*, Newton Abbot 1972, p. 97, 235 (the Lubeck region).

⁴ M. MAŁOWIST, *op. cit.*, pp. 257 ff., and 379. Also, by the same author *The Economic Development of the Baltic Countries from the 15th to the 17th centuries*, «The Economic History Review», 2nd ser. XII, 1959.

⁵ A. MAĆZAK, *Między Gdańskiem a Sundem*, p. 18 ff. P. JEANNIN, *Les comptes du Sund comme source pour la construction d'indices généraux de l'activité économique en Europe (XVI^e-XVIII^e s.)*, «Revue Historique», 1964, p. 470.

⁶ In the older literature cf. W. STIEDA, *Revaler Pfundrollbücher und Quittungen des 14. Jb.*, Halle, 1887. Also J. SCHILDHAUER, *Zur Verlagerung des See- und Handelsverkehrs im nordeuropäischen Raum während des 15. u. 16. Jb.*, «Jahrbuch für Wirtschafts-geschichte», 1963, 3/4. By the same author, *Der Seehandel Danzigs im 16. Jb. und die Verlagerung des Warenverkehrs im Nord- und Mitteleuropäischen Raum*, *Ibid.* 1970/3. W. STARK, *Lübeck und Danzig in der zweiten Hälfte des 15. Jb.*, Weimar 1973. H. SAMSONOWICZ, *Handel zagraniczny Gdańska w II poł. XV w.*, «Przegląd Historyczny», 1958, 2. By the same author, *Le commerce maritime de Gdańsk dans la première moitié du XVI^e s.*, «Studia Historiae Oeconomicae», IX, 1974.

⁷ J. TOPOLSKI, *Croissance...*, p. 10.

The changes occurring in the development of the zone can be considered from the perspective of the territories making up the « geographical unit of economic and social activity and organization ».⁸ In practical terms, this requires not only evidence of the extent of commercial contacts, but also a determination of which countries tailored their economies — that is their industrial and agricultural production and socio-political systems — to the needs of Baltic trade. It should be emphasized however that the zone had no fixed boundary. Its activities were determined by too many factors, yet while, within the zone, certain countries can undoubtedly be given their modern geographical, or historical names this does not constitute a precise definition. Apart from the frequent changes in boundaries, and the impossibility of drawing a fixed line of demarcation, political units did not always and everywhere correspond to a unified economic region. Nonetheless, there is no alternative when describing the limits of the zone, and therefore, we must name the regions which at various moments constituted the Baltic zone, and which correspond approximately to geopolitical units. The Swedish lands, or more precisely the entire Scandinavian peninsula, including the coast of Norway were one part. Their need for imports — agricultural products and salt — was connected with a well developed export of butter, meat, skins, fish, and, later, wood and especially metals such as copper and iron (osmund). The importance of trade in forming the country's internal economy, in the case of both the breeding and hunting of animals, and of the development of large industries, is frequently emphasized in the literature on the subject.⁹ Likewise, there is no doubt as to the influence of Baltic trade in shaping developments in Finland,¹⁰

⁸ J. COX RUSSELL, *Medieval Regions* . . . , p. 15. On the subject of contacts between zones created by towns, cf. L. GAMBÌ, *I valori storici dei quadri ambientali*, «Storia d'Italia», Torino 1972, vol. I, p. 56. By the same author, *Da città ad area metropolitana*, *ibid.* V, 1, p. 367 ff.

⁹ J. HAMMARSTRÖM, *Finansförvaltning och variehandel 1504-1546*, «Studier i de yngre statshushålling, Uppsala 1956, p. 5 ff. A. PAHLAM, *Marknaden och marknadsliv. Ett bidrag till den svenska handels historia*, Stockholm 1957, p. 18 ff. A. KUMLIEN, *Stockholm Lübeck und Westeuropa*, «Hansische Geschichtsblätter», 1952. FR. BRUNS, *Die Lübecker Barenfabre und Ihre Chronistik*, Berlin 1900, p. LXV. For Scandinavia, cf. A. V. BRANDT, *Die Hanse und die nordischen Mächte im Mittelalter*, Köln 1962, p. 16.

¹⁰ G. KERKKONENEN, *Bondesegel på Finsku vikel*, «Skrifter utgivna av Svenska Litteratursällskapet i Finland», nr. 369, Helsingfors 1959. V. NIITEMAA, *Finland. Det*

where the development of the coastal economy determined the nature of economic activity in the hinterland. The role of Livonia in the system of Baltic commerce is also self-evident.¹¹ Although this region was an important centre for the production of flax, hemp, and tallow, it was also the meeting point between its vast Russian hinterland and the countries of Western Europe. Above all, though by no means exclusively, these contacts were dependent on the trade in furs, the supplying of which provided the bases of the economic activity of the boyars and peasants over an area which reached as far as the White Sea.¹² The close ties linking Poland and Lithuania with the Baltic, especially through the basins of the rivers Dvina, Niemen, Vistula and Oder, are well documented.¹³ Parts of the Ukraine (Kievan Russia) and Galicia may also be included in the zone, since the southern extent of the Baltic zone is open to discussion. It is not clear at what moment the boundary of the Baltic zone extended south to include Małopolska, Silesia, Bohemia, Hungary and even Thuringia and Upper Saxony, but it is evident that Brandenburg, Mecklenburg, Pomerania, Prussia and Mazovia were closely connected with the Baltic trading routes.¹⁴

The differences between these regions were enormous, not only in terms of size, but also in their level of economic and cultural development. Around the mid XVth century Denmark, Holstein and the area around Lubeck had a population density of about

nordiske syn på forbindelsen mellem Hansestaederne og Norden, Århus 1957, p. 123 ff. J. JAakkola, *Finlands handel och sjöfart under tidigare medeltiden*, «Nordisk Kultur» XVI B, Stockholm, 1933. Cf. J. AHVENEINEN, *Der Getreidehandel Livlands im Mittelalter*, Helsinki 1963.

¹¹ For this and other matters concerning east-west trade, cf. the collection of essays A.V. BRADT, P. JOHANSEN, H. VAN WERVELU, K. KUMLIEN, H. KELLENBENZ, *Die Deutsche Hanse als Mittler zwischen Ost und West*, Köln-Opladen, 1963, pp. 19, 39, 79. M. MAŁOWIST, *Wschód a zachód...*, p. 92.

¹² A. ATTMAN, *The Russian and Polish markets...*, p. 23. A.L. CHOROŠEVIČ, *Torgovlja Velikogo Novgoroda v XIV-XV w.*, Moscow, 1963, p. 43 ff. By the same author *Znachenie ekonomiceskich svjazej s Pribaltikoj dla razvitija severozapadnyh russkich gorodov v konce XV nacale XVI v. Tezisy dokladov i soobščeni*, Riga 1966, p. 6 ff. V.N. BERNADSKIJ, *Novgorod i novgorodskaja zemlja v XV v.*, Moscow 1961.

¹³ Cf. note 3.

¹⁴ M. MAŁOWIST, *Wschód a zachód...*, p. 98. H. SAMSONOWICZ, *Późne średnio-wiecze...*, p. 117. A. MĄCZAK, *Między Gdańskiem a Suddem*, p. 5. A. ATTMAN, *The Russian and Polish Markets...*, pp. 56, 93.

20 inhabitants per km². In Poland, the density was about 14, in Sweden a little above 1, in Finland about 0.4 and in the Novgorod region of Russia reached 2 inhabitants per km². Generally speaking, then, the Baltic zone straddled two demographic regions: the first, including Denmark, northern Germany and Poland, contained from 14 to 18 inhabitants per km², the second, comprising Sweden, Finland, Russia and Lithuania, contained from 0.1 to 2 inhabitants per km². It is worth adding that a third demographic region of Europe — northern Italy, the Rhineland, and the Netherlands — contained between 20 to 60 inhabitants per km².¹⁵ It is also necessary to emphasize that demographic changes differed from country to country, as can be illustrated by the following table.

TABLE I

TRENDS OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE
(The population of 1300=100) (16)

Year	Northern Germany	Poland	Norway	England
1300	100	100	100	100
1400	80	150	66	70
1500	123	250	76	90

Despite these differences, however, what linked the various countries of the Baltic zone were the economic characteristics which they had in common. The main sources of information for the economic functioning of the zone are provided by the statistics relating to the commerce organized by the large towns, which in the case of the Baltic between the XIIIth to the XVIth centuries, were of course the towns of the Hanseatic League. Changes in the scale of commercial activity in Lubeck, Rostock, Stralsund

¹⁵ J.C. RUSSELL, *Medieval Regions* . . . , p. 235. H. SAMSONOWICZ, *Europa i Polska w epoce Kopernika*, «*Ekonomista*», 1973, nr. 4, p. 795.

¹⁶ Cf. B.C. URLANIS, *Rosi naselenija v Evropie*, Moscow 1941. K. LUNDEN, *Om gardtal og folktal i Norge ca. 1340 og ca. 1665*, «*N. Historik Fidskrift*», 1969, p. 89. J. BELOCH, *Die Bevölkerung Europas im Mittelalter*, «*Zeitschrift für Socialwissenschaft*» 1900, III, p. 420. J.C. RUSSELL, *Recent Advances in Medieval Demography*, «*Speculum*» 40, 1965, p. 84. By the same author, *Late Ancient and Medieval Population*, Philadelphia 1958. I. GIEYSZTOROWA, *Badania nad historią zaludnienia Polski*, «*Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej*» 1963, pp. 3-4, tab. 6. H. SAMSONOWICZ, *Europa i Polska* . . . , p. 796.

and Gdańsk can then be used to reconstruct the general trends in the development of the Zone.

To obtain reasonably standardized numerical coefficients it is necessary to use similar sources, such as the details of Hanseatic conferences, grants of commercial privileges, correspondence, or commercial contracts.¹⁷ These documents allow us to establish the number of references to different countries, and the number of different places mentioned within a given country, and these will reflect the commercial interests of the four towns in question. It can be assumed that the number of times a country is mentioned corresponds in a simple relation to the intensity of the commercial contacts between the four towns and that country, while the number of places referred to within a single country suggests the scale of interest and the degree of penetration. Of course, in this last instance, allowance should be made for the differences in the size of the different states, and also for the fragmentary nature of the source material which can only provide incomplete and artificial conclusions. The varying sizes of the different states are hard to compare, and it is impossible to arrange these references in a more precise cartographic fashion. It is obvious that the closest ties with the Hanse were maintained by the populations of the coastal regions — Finland, Livonia, Prussia, Pomerania and Mecklenburg. Nonetheless, a compilation of the number of times the names of certain countries appear, if considered diachronically, rather than synchronically, can provide a picture which helps to explain commercial policy, as well as the orientation and intensity of economic activity in the lands trading within the Baltic zone. This method demands a fuller explanation, for it does not merely involve a study of the scale of trade carried on by four arbitrarily selected Hanseatic towns. It is clear that their trade extended far beyond the area discussed below. Reference to their commerce with a given area is simply the starting point, and makes possible a study of the frequency of their commercial contacts, as well as of the

¹⁷ *Hansisches Urkundenbuch*, vols. I-XI, ed. by K. Höhlbaum, K. Kunze, W. Stein, Halle, Leipzig, München, 1876-1956. *Hanze Rezesse*, Abt. I, II, III, ed. by K. Koppman, G.V. d. Ropp, D. Schäfer, Leipzig 1870-1892.

features of what one might term the saturation of a certain area by large-scale commerce. Obviously trading contacts, no matter how frequent, between merchants and a single town, have quite different economic effects from contacts with a variety of centres in a single country or region. The way in which such references to commercial contacts are arranged then can, but need not necessarily, show the trends in the development of the economic and political ties of the coastal towns. The wider and more frequent contacts of the four cities under consideration indicate the existence of ties with an area identical with the zone defined above.

The countries lying in the basin of the North Sea have not been mentioned here. For example, during the entire period Jutland was part of the Baltic zone, but to simplify this study only a reconstruction of the changes occurring in the southern and eastern areas of the zone has been attempted. Thus, in the comparative tables, Sweden does not appear either, though there can be no doubt as to its role and importance in the trade between the Baltic and western Europe.

The material has been arranged in a table which shows, in periods of fifty years, the number of times there are references to contacts with a given country (column A), and the number of places within that country which are mentioned during the same period (column B).

The table requires some explanation. It contains information on contacts with Italian, Turkish and Greek merchants, and until the XVth century these were maintained through Antwerp, Cologne, Lwów, and Nuremberg.¹⁸ It is difficult, therefore, to include Italy or the Ottoman lands in the list of countries whose economies were closely tied to those of the Baltic zone. Further, the figures suggesting a definite weakening of trade with Novgorod (beginning with the first half of the XVth century) and the growing importance

¹⁸ M. MALOWIST, *Le commerce du Levant avec l'Europe de l'Est au XVI^e s.*, « Melanges F. Braudel » I, Toulouse 1973, p. 349. R. DOEHRD, *Études Anverçoises*, vol. I, Paris 1964. L. CHAREWICZOWA, *Handel średniowiecznego Lwowa*, Lwów 1925, p. 77 ff. W. v. STROMER, *Oberdeutsche Hochfinanz, 1350-1450*, *Vierteljahrschrift für Soz. und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, Weisbaden 1970, Beihefte 55.

TABLE II

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BALTIC ZONE

	1250-1300		1301-1350		1351-1400		1401-1450		1451-1500		1501-1530	
	A*	B*	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
Finland	0.1	3	0.3	4	0.5	4	1.4	4	1.2	4	6.6	7
Novgorod	1.5	3	2.4	5	9.0	7	6.5	5	5.2	6	6.3	6
Suzdal	0.2	2	0.1	1	0.7	3	0.6	3	3.0	2	3.3	3
Livonia	1.1	5	3.2	7	14.8	8	34.0	13	29.0	22	43.3	18
Galicia	0.08	2	z.3	6	0.5	5	0.08	2	0.3	4	0.4	1
Lithuania	—	—	0.2	1	0.8	4	2.0	9	9.0	11	20.3	15
Poland	0.4	7	1.0	18	3.6	32	4.1	25	7.6	26	27.3	37
Mazovia	—	—	0.2	4	0.2	11	0.9	12	0.8	10	0.6	13
Gdansk Coast (without Gdansk)	0.3	2	0.9	4	3.4	8	3.5	14	5.3	14	10.3	24
Prussia	0.4	3	0.8	2	1.2	6	0.6	6	5.4	14	31.4	12
Pomerania	0.3	2	0.5	3	3.4	14	7.7	24	10.3	22	27.0	27
Mecklemburg	0.2	1	0.2	1	1.4	2	0.3	2	2.6	9	6.0	13
Brandenburg	0.4	8	1.2	10	1.3	11	4.6	14	7.9	14	7.0	13
Saxony	1.2	8	1.3	8	3.9	11	6.7	11	15.6	22	22.1	19
Thuringia, Misnia Lusatia	0.1	4	0.3	6	1.2	6	1.4	6	2.7	9	7.9	13
Silesia	0.06	1	0.1	3	0.9	6	0.7	4	0.9	4	0.3	4
Bohemia, Moravia	0.02	1	0.02	2	0.4	2	0.2	2	0.3	4	0.3	2
Bavaria, Swabia	0.02	1	0.5	2	0.1	3	0.5	3	1.8	6	9.4	6
Hungary	0.02	1	0.02	1	0.2	2	0.2	2	0.3	3	0.2	3
Italy and parts beyond western Europe	—	—	—	—	0.8	4	0.6	5	1.5	6	3.3	6
Turkey, Tartary	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.2	?	2.0	?
Greece												
Moldavia												

A* No. of contacts yearly.
B* No. of places mentioned.

of the Muscovite state, and disruption of trade with Livonia which was probably connected to the political changes involved in the growth of Muscovy and the union of Poland with Lithuania are of interest. Lithuania was originally on the periphery of the Baltic zone, but in the XVth century it began to assume a more prominent role.¹⁹ On the whole the places referred to in Lithuania were in the northern parts of the Grand Duchy, Lithuania proper, and to a lesser extent the north-western areas of Byelorussia. Polish trade with the Baltic increased dramatically on two separate occasions;

¹⁹ Cf. W. STEIN, *Vom deutschen Kontor im Kowno*, « Hansische Geschichtsblätter » 1916, p. 228 ff.

first, during the reign of Cazimir the Great in the mid-XIVth century; secondly, from the second half of the XVth century, most probably in connection with the development of the grain trade. The figures also suggest a transitional weakening of the role of the Gdańsk coast (excepting Gdańsk itself) in the early XVth century which was undoubtedly connected with the crisis of the Teutonic Order. There is also a growth in the importance of Stettin and its environs, beginning with the second half of the XIVth century, and a slow (and in relation to trade contacts with other countries delayed) increase in trade contacts with Mecklenburg. A greater integration of the more distant German regions, Misnia, Lusatia, Thuringia, and southern Germany, is also evident during the XVth century. The figures relating to Bohemia undoubtedly reflect the Hussite crisis in the first half of the XVth century.

In order to clarify these figures, it is desirable to place them on a map. To facilitate the process, we have done this for three separate periods: the first 1250-1300, the second 1401-1450 and the last 1501-1530. The figures on the maps show the number of trading contacts yearly. The intensity of the contacts is expressed by the number of towns and villages mentioned in each of the given countries. Four categories of countries have been arbitrarily selected, as a result of the number of cities and villages mentioned in each. Because of the increasing number of sources for later periods, the evidence for all three selected representative periods has been arranged as follows:

Category	1250-1300	1401-1450	1501-1530
I	less than 2 places	less than 4 places	less than 4 places
II	2-3 places	4-6 places	4-7 places
III	4-5 »	7-11 »	12-18 »
IV	7-8 »	12-25 »	19-37 »

One can hazard the conclusion that the countries in Category I were not a part of the Baltic zone; Category II contains countries only minimally participating in the economic processes characteristic of the zone; Category III represents countries that were heavily

involved, while Category IV represents the nucleus which determined the economic nature of the zone.

Poland, Brandenburg and Lower Saxony had the most developed network of contacts with the coast in the first period. In the second, this area of close contacts clearly grows, and although contacts with Saxony diminish, ties with Livonia, Mazovia and Pomerania increase dramatically. Furthermore, Lithuania also appears on the scene as a region with various ties with the Baltic. Finally, the third period convincingly sees those countries producing grain (Poland, Pomerania, Saxony) become established as those with the closest ties. Thuringia is added to the second category of countries as is Upper Saxony, which was participating in Baltic trade on this scale for the first time. Other studies and monographs on the subject also confirm the conclusions in a general way.²⁰

This material can be used to create another cartographical series, delineating the limits of the contacts of the Baltic coastal cities together with their fluctuations during the 300 year period in question. Such a table is based on the references to the most distant commercial contacts of Lubeck, Rostock, Stralsund and Gdańsk.

The most distant places referred to for the three periods are as follows. In about 1250, Karelia, Old Ladoga, Novgorod, Smolensk, Vitebsk, Brest, Vladimir in Volhynia, Radom, Krakow, Kalisz, Włocław, Misnia, Erfurt, and Nuremberg; in about 1400, Abo, Viborg, Ladoga, Tver, Moscow, Smolensk, Mohyłow, Oszmiana, Drohiczyn, Lwów, Sanok, Lewocza, Brzeg Śląski, Prague, Erfurt, and Nuremberg; and finally for 1530, Aland, Turku, Abo, Ladoga, Starina (near Tver), Moscow, Smolensk, Mohylew, Ratno, Kamieniec, Jassy, Košice, Budapest, Pressburg, Moravia, Prague, Regensburg, Ulm, Augsburg and Constance.

The picture obtained in this way is certainly imprecise, but it does show certain interesting territorial shifts. The first line, for about 1250, (the crosses on the map indicating places appearing in the sources) completely encloses Livonia, Prussia, Mazovia,

²⁰ Cf. note 3, as well as the last syntheses of Hanseatic history, especially PH. DOLLINER, *La Hanse*, Paris 1964, p. 261 ff.

Pomerania, Brandenburg and Mecklenburg, but contains only part of Galicia, the Novgorod territories, Smolensk, Małopolska, Silesia and Misnia, and reaches Nuremberg in the south. By 1400, the boundary is extended to include the Finnish coast, the Novgorod region of Russia, part of Tver and Muscovy. It includes Lithuania proper, a larger area of Galicia than previously (with Lwów), and all of Poland. It encloses a part of Hungarian Slovakia (Lewocza) and all of Bohemia. The boundaries of 1530 increase the area of the Finnish coast somewhat, and enclose three new territories, Podolia and Moldavia (Kamieniec and Jassy), Hungary (Košice, Budapest, Pressburg) and Moravia, and southern Germany on the upper Danube (Augsburg, Ulm, Regensburg).

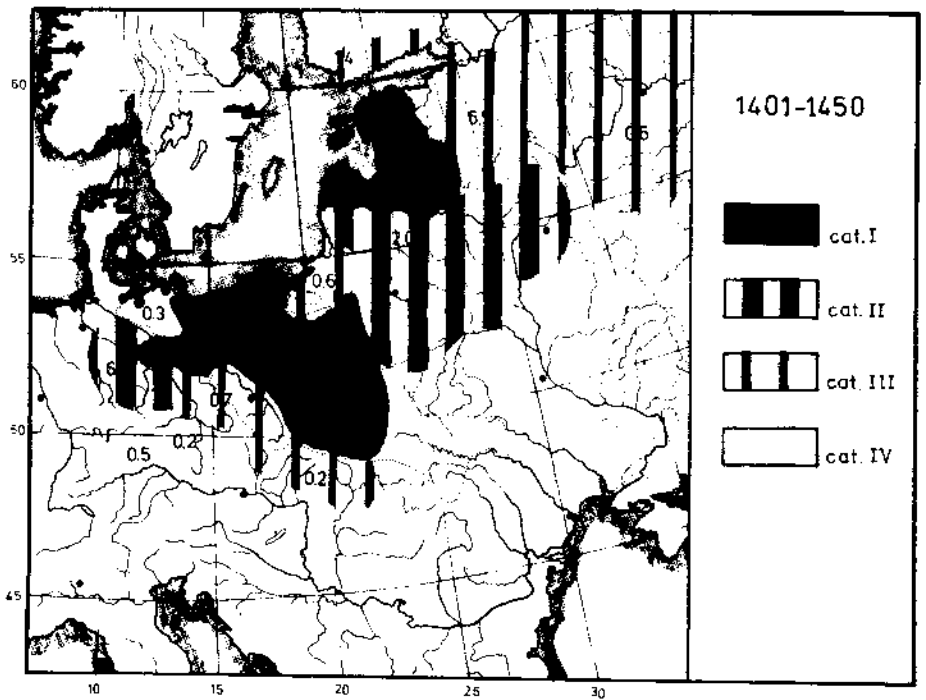
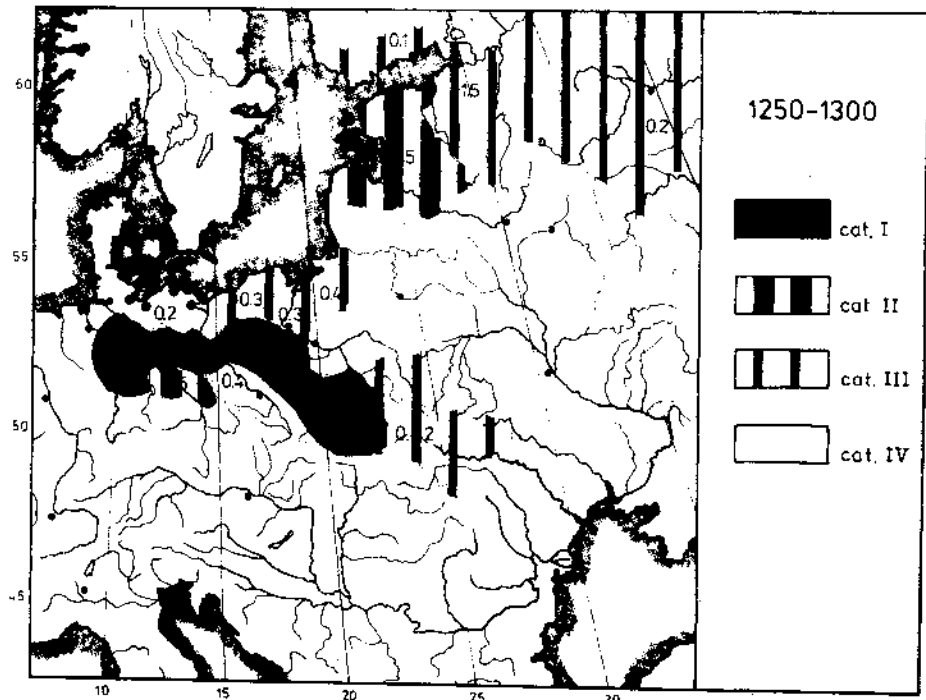
Differences in the geographical extent of the trade were obviously tied to changes in the nature of commerce, to varying commodities, differing patterns of organization, and changing balances of trade, on which there is considerable literature. This literature is based largely on the evidence from the Baltic customs, either in the Sound, or from various duties under the names of *Pfahlgeld* and *pundage*.²¹ The findings can be summarized as follows. According to P. Johansen,²² the question of the Baltic balance of trade is unclear for the XIIIth century, the period when the importance of the Hanseatic towns was established, based on the export of grain and furs, which was already developing on a large scale. There can be little doubt that during the period of the closest trading contacts with Flanders, the XIVth century, the balance of trade was unfavourable.²³ A change only developed as a result of the heavy export of grain in the second half of the XVth century, though it is not yet clear how far trade along the land routes (which has been studied less thoroughly) complemented and how far it differed from the sea trade.²⁴ It would seem that on the east-west axis, commerce by land

²¹ Cf. A. MAĆZAK, *Między Gdańskiem a Sunde*, p. 63.

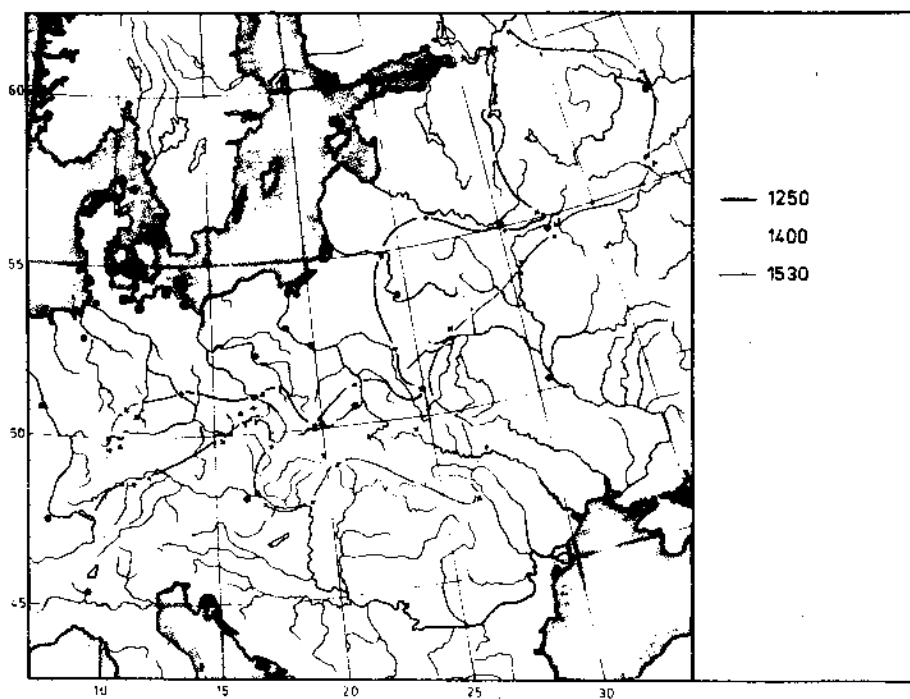
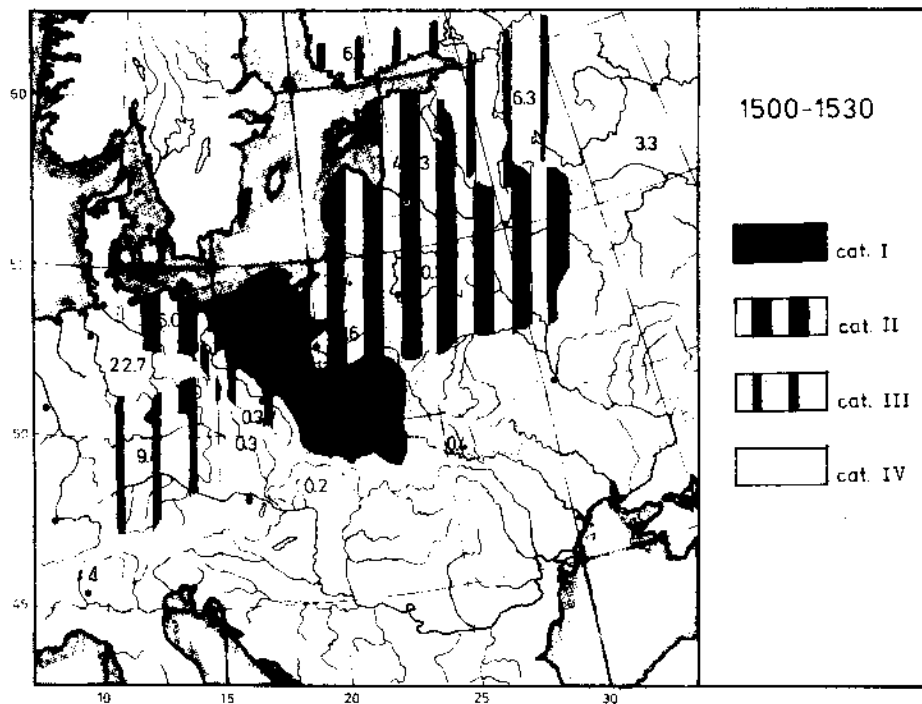
²² P. JOHANSEN, *Die hansische Russlandhandel nach Nowgorod in kritischer Betrachtung*, « Die Deutsche Hanze als Mittler zwischen Ost und West », p. 39 ff.

²³ H. SAMSONOWICZ, *Późne średniowiecze* . . . , p. 130.

²⁴ H. SAMSONOWICZ, *Über Fragen des Landhandels Polens mit Westeuropa im 15.-16. jh.*, « Neu Hansische Studien », Berlin 1970, p. 311.



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was much the same as the trade by sea. Instead of grain export, there was the export of cattle and Lithuanian furs, in exchange for which cloth was imported. On the other hand, on the southern routes the situation was the reverse: in exchange for spices and eastern luxury goods, cloths, and especially currency, was exported, and in this region, the balance of trade was decidedly unfavourable. Statistics concerning commerce by land, unfortunately, are even less complete than those for the sea routes, but on the basis of material from Gdańsk, chiefly from the extant port books, it is possible to estimate the value of exports against imports in the XVth and XVIth centuries.²⁶

TABLE III
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EXPORTS TO IMPORTS IN GDANSK

Year	Ratio of Exports to Imports	Year	Ratio of Exports to Imports
1407-23	100 : 220	1492	100 : 80
1424-32	100 : 320	1510-30	100 : 70
1436-42	100 : 350	1535	100 : 66
1460	100 : 300	1640-43	100 : 60
1470	100 : 170		
1475	100 : 140		

To complete this picture of the changes in the balance of trade in Gdańsk, the following table indicates the export of grain through the port in the XVth and XVIth centuries.

The trade of Gdańsk obviously cannot be taken as an index of the trade for the entire Baltic zone, and one must accept that at present it is impossible to devise appropriate indicators for the whole region. However, it is possible to use a substitute indicator, the accuracy of which is probably not great, but which at least can offer an approximation of the historical reality. For each chronological period, it is possible to collect references to the goods

²⁵ F. LÜTGE, *Strukturwandlungen im Ostdeutschen und osteuropäischen Fernhandel des 14.-16. Jh.*, München 1969. R. RYBAŃSKI, *Handel i polityka handlowa Polski w XVI stuleciu*, Vol. II, Tables and Statistical Materials, Warszawa 1958. E. WESTERMANN, *Zum Handel mit Ochsen aus Osteuropa im 16. Jh. Materialien und Gesichtspunkte*, «Zeitschrift für Ostforschung» 22, Jg. 1973, H. 2, p. 234.

²⁶ H. SAMSONOWICZ, *Półwiec średniowieczny*, p. 131. By the same author, *Le commerce maritime de Gdańsk*, p. 56.

TABLE IV

THE EXPORT OF GRAIN FROM GDANSK ²⁷

Year	Approximate Amount in Last	Index (1492=100)
1470	2200	21
1490	9500	93
1492	10200	100
1530	14000	137
1557	21000	205
1565	44600	437
1575	25300	248
1595	31200	305
1615	32600	319
1635	48100	471
1646	43400	425

mentioned in customs books, privileges, complaints and Hanseatic petitions, and it is necessary to gather these references from several years, and even decades. For the three representative periods already chosen, this has been done as follows:²⁸

Period	Years	No. of References
I	1227-1278	240
II	1392-1414	907
III	1486-1500	1329

For each period, the number of references differs greatly, growing with the volume of surviving source material. Therefore in each case, only relative values were calculated. Some of the references were to goods which circulated in both directions, such as beer, horses, fish, and sometimes foodstuffs. These constituted from 5 to 11% of the total. More often, however, the sources allowed for a distinction between products entering the zone, and those leaving it. The tables presented below obviously do not indicate the magnitude of the trade, but they do suggest the relative interest in various commodities, and therefore point to tendencies characteristic of the economy of the Baltic zone.

²⁷ Cf. above. Also A. MĄCZAK, *Między Gdańskiem a Sundem*, p. 71. Cf. also M. BOGUĆKA, *Handel zagraniczny Gdańska w I poł. XVII w.*, Wrocław, 1970, p. 8 ff.

²⁸ *Hansisches Urkundenbuch*, Vols. I, V, XI.

TABLE V

EXPORTS FROM THE BALTIC ZONE
(as a percentage of total no. of references)

Commodity	1250	1400	1500
grain	9.1	4.7	9.2
furs	7.5	11.7	15.5
wood	2.9	2.0	3.0
forest products (tar, ashes, wax, honey)	1.6	2.4	2.6
metals (iron, copper, lead)	8.7	4.2	4.3
yarn, flax, hemp	2.5	3.1	2.7
foodstuffs	3.3	3.3	6.3
other	7.8	3.2	3.8
Total	48.8	42.3	53.7

TABLE VI

IMPORTS TO THE BALTIC ZONE

Commodity	1250	1400	1500
cloth	12.0	17.1	14.3
salt	3.7	7.8	7.2
wine	7.5	4.3	4.5
colonial goods	6.6	4.8	5.1
herrings	2.5	9.1	6.1
other	9.1	2.4	1.8
Total	41.4	45.5	39.0

RATIO OF EXPORTS TO IMPORTS
(based on the number of references)

1250	1400	1500
100 : 84	100 : 105	100 : 72

Despite the narrow base of source materials, some interesting conclusions emerge from these tables. For 1500, the proportion of references to exports and to imports is much the same as the ratio of exports and imports at Gdańsk, as is given above. It is rare for a comparison of proportions obtained in this way to give such close results, and these can, then, be regarded as at least significant. The same can be done for the year 1400 on the basis of completely different sources, from a different country, Livonia. An analysis of the bills of the Revel merchant, Hildebrand Veckinhusen, for the early years

of the XVth century²⁹ leads to the following conclusion. The proportion of cloth among imports to Livonia was about 65% of the total value, while salt was about 2%, colonial goods and wine were about 30%. Correspondingly, from Table VI, for the year 1400 cloth represents 38% of the references to imports, salt 17% and colonial products and wine 20%. The proportions in this case are different, and it is possible only to arrange the various goods according to importance. In the case of exports, however, the figures offer a much closer approximation. In Veckinhusen's bills, the value of furs constitutes about 66% of all exports and wax 30%. In Table V, furs represent about 30% and wax about 17% of the total number of references. Thus, one can conclude that the tables above do roughly correspond with the shape of economic reality during the period. From other sources³⁰ it is evident that in the XIIIth century grain played an important role in Baltic trade, and it was probably this export of cereals from the southern coast of the Baltic which created the conditions that allowed for the emergence of the Hanseatic towns. The crisis of the XIVth century which affected the Baltic coastal areas, caused, among other things, a fall in grain production.³¹ Production only began to rise again, quite quickly, in the second half of the XVth century in the different conditions of the European economy of that time. It would seem from this that the favourable balance in Baltic commerce was dependant on the export of grain, and Johansen's thesis can probably be accepted for the entire Baltic zone in the XIIIth century.

As early as the XIth-XIIth centuries the export of furs, wax, yarn, hemp, and in the XIIIth century, wood was of considerable importance. The large imports of cloth, however, evened out the balance of trade, and salt, imported from western France, also

²⁹ This is based on *Die Handelsbücher des Hansischen Kaufmannes Veckinhusen*, ed. by M.P. Lesnikov, Berlin 1973.

³⁰ F. RORIG, *Wirtschaftskräfte im Mittelalter*, Weimar 1959, p. 190 ff. M.M. POSTAN, *The Trade of Medieval Europe: The North*, «The Cambridge Economic History of Europe», Vol. II, Cambridge 1962, p. 120. B. ZIENTARA, *Einige Bemerkungen über die Bedeutung der pommerschen Exports im Rahmen des Ostseegetreidehandels im 13. und 14. Jh.*, «Hansische Studien», Berlin 1961, p. 397.

played an important role in this respect,³² as did wine, colonial products such as spices, southern fruits, sugar, oil, and other such items. Herrings were imported from Scania as late as the mid-XVth century but towards the end of the XVth century about 75% of the herring imported into the Baltic were from Holland.³³ The magnitude of the changes, as well as the proportionate share of the various commodities, might of course in reality or at a particular time have been different from that which has been presented here. It seems unlikely, for example, that in 1400 the value of imports only minimally exceeded the value of exports. Nonetheless, the trends in the structural changes of the Baltic zone's trade are probably reflected correctly. The structure was formed during the XIIIth century in conditions of favourable economic development, and its importance only changed as a result of a large-scale crisis. The attempts of the developed countries to emerge from this crisis opened up a new stage in economic relationships, which led to the profound changes of the modern era. It is difficult to overestimate the extent to which these conditions influenced economic growth in the West. Could the beginnings of capitalism in the Netherlands and England have been possible without a Baltic zone which had precisely the form which we have described here? There can be no doubt that Baltic trade had a decisive influence on the forms of socio-political relationship in Poland, Sweden, Finland, Russia, Germany and Denmark. There can also be no doubt that the growth and development of the Baltic zone was an important factor in the creation of an economically integrated, modern Europe.³⁴

³¹ B. ZIENTARA, *Agrarkrise in der Uckermark*, Berlin 1968.

³² A. AGATS, *Der Hansische Baienhandel*, Heidelberg 1904, p. 3 ff.

³³ H. SAMSONOWICZ, *Le commerce maritime . . .*, p. 52.

³⁴ Cf. M. MAŁOWIST, *Croissance et regression en Europe XIV-XVII s.*, Paris 1972.