Mediterranean Ports and Trade in the XVth and XVIth Centuries

1.

Over the centuries, the Mediterranean has always been a centre of civilisation, a channel through which navigation techniques, know-how about shipping routes, types and forms of business, products and production techniques, migrations and economic development ventures, institutions, consumer behaviour and patterns, knowledge, outlooks and ideals have all been handed down. It has been a functional, dynamic system which has affected the history of the peoples involved and has propagated modernisation processes and mechanisms without totally erasing the characteristics of individual cultures.

The changes facing each of these peoples, driven by that "dynamism peculiar to the sea", have engendered, within the general system, a variety of models and attitudes which have confirmed the unity of Mediterranean society between the fifth and the fifteenth centuries, although there have been clear-cut breaks and differences from one century to another. Periods of transition, when maritime activity spread more slowly, were followed by others when maritime activity was more intense. But even in the periods when it appeared less pervasive, maritime activity performed its role of connecting different worlds and different cities, enabling the achievements of civilisation not only to spread but also to grow. This activity was at its height between the twelfth and the fifteenth centuries, because this was the period when the peoples who lived in the Mediterranean area[1] began to move towards common lifestyles and common ways of thinking.

2.

Two maritime centres reigned supreme in the period between 1485 and 1535: Genoa and Venice. Genoa had been forced to live by the sea and on the sea because of the geography of its territory. The Genoese had become sailors because of the "arid nature and the hardness of the rocks" of their land; their history inevitably tied to the sea. However, as Gabriella Airaldi has recalled, " maritime powers and maritime civilisation do not just appear out of the blue; they grow and develop". Although the Genoese built their fortunes at sea, these great sailors of the future did not come from a single social class.

[1] J. E. Ruiz Domenec, "El sueño de Ulises. La actividad marittima en la cultura mediterranea como fenomeno de estructura", in *Le genti del Mare Mediterraneo*, Preface by L. De Rosa, (Naples: Pironti, 1981), vol. I, pp. 49-52.

It was the opportunities the sea offered - opportunities which were not to be found on land – which drove men from different occupations to join a ship where they learned a sailor's trade and acquired international-level technical skills.[2] A sailor could, however, still be a merchant or a banker.[3]

As regards, Venice, her very existence stemmed from the sea. For the Venetians, shipping had not been just a last resort, and then a sailing enterprise, an economic unit which combined capital and labour to produce a service, maritime transport; shipping was also the opportunity to involve every family in the city, for there was not a single family which did not have at least two members directly or indirectly involved in shipping, as Jean-Claude Hocquet reminds us.[4]

3.

As well as the Genoese and the Venetians who, between the end of the fifteenth century and the first half of the sixteenth century, dominated Mediterranean trade, other ships and other Western nations, to varying degrees, made their own contribution to the Mediterranean trading system. On the southern coast of France, Marseilles was a great Mediterranean port trading with Italian, Spanish and African ports; its relations with the East, however, had weakened progressively until the 1530s, to such an extent that it was the Italians who supplied most of the French market with oriental products in the early sixteenth century. However, after France signed the Capitulations with the Ottoman Empire in 1535, Marseilles became the principal beneficiary of the opening up of Eastern trade.

The more general customs privileges included in the Capitulations were added to those obtained by the Mamluks, which the Ottomans confirmed after they conquered Egypt.[5]

For Marseilles, free access to the Ottoman ports did not mean the immediate acquisition of the trade monopoly or quasi monopoly with the East. Venice and Genoa continued to obtain supplies along the coasts of the Ottoman Empire, where Alexandria, Beirut, Constantinople, Izmir, and Tripoli in Syria were efficient points of arrival for the caravans from distant China or for ships from the coasts of Malabar or Eastern Asia. In the 1530s, 1540s and 1550s, the spices the Italians brought to the French market still cost between 20% and 25% less than those the French brought, and they were of a better quality.[6]

[2] G. Araldi, "Marinai, etnie e società nel Mediterraneo medievale. Il caso di Genova", in *Le genti del Mare Mediterraneo, op. cit.*, pp. 59 *et seq.*

[3] G. Pistarino, *Gente del mare nel Commonwealth genovese*, pp. 226 *et seq.*

[4] J. C. Hocquet, "Gens de Mer à Venise: diversité de statuts, conditions de vie et de travail sur les navires", in *Le genti del Mare Mediterraneo, op. cit.*, pp. 103 *et seq.*

[5] L. De Rosa, "Le capitolazioni franco-ottomane tra politica ed economia nell'età di Carlo V", in *Nuova Rivista Storica*, anno LXXXV, fascicolo I, 2001, pp. 71-72.

However, the French trading organisation slowly improved and increased its business with the East, which reached its apex in 1543 and then declined to its lowest point in 1551, reaching the 1536 level again in 1560.[7]

4.

The three most active ports on the Spanish Mediterranean coast were Barcelona, Valencia and Malaga. Barcelona was the busiest, because of its connections with Genoa and with other Western Mediterranean ports, such as Naples and Palermo, and with some North African ports. Valencia was the second most important port, again because of its traffic with Genoa, whereas Malaga was significant because, with its shipyards to equip the fleet and to cast pieces of ordnance, it was the base for the Spanish Mediterranean fleet. Malaga was also a centre for copper and cereal trading.[8] Spanish trading in the Mediterranean, however, had gradually declined as Atlantic trading increased. And so Malaga, together with Carthage, had gradually become the Atlantic traffic's main Mediterranean logistical base. During the reign of Charles V, Barcelona had had to use its shipyards to build galleys for the state, and fortified ports had been built all along Spain's Mediterranean coast to defend the country from the threat of pirate attack, and, at the same time, to ensure support should the Spanish Navy be involved in battles, as it was at Tunis and at Angel.[9]

Francisco Sevillano Colom has reconstructed the attacks the pirates made on Majorca every year in an attempt to occupy and plunder the island. He has illustrated the defensive system that Majorca was forced to organise at sea and on land to withstand the attacks, because, from the early sixteenth century onwards, pirate attacks left "little room for a peaceful development of trade and shipping", not only in the Balearic Islands but also on Spain's eastern coasts.[10] The situation grew worse with the fall of Rhodes in 1522, when the pirates, having abandoned all restraint, flung themselves into the conquest of the Western Mediterranean. The fight against Turkish, Algerian and Barbary pirates, as well as against the Turkish Navy, marked a large part of the commercial and economic history of the Mediterranean in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, before and after Lepanto, despite Charles V's exploits at

[6] R. Gascon, "La France du mouvement: les commerces et les villes", in P. Chaunu–R. Gascon (eds.), *Histoire économique et sociale de la France. L'Etat et la ville*, vol. I, (1450-1660), (Paris, 1977), p. 242.

[7] J. Billoud, *Histoire du commerce de Marseilles*, (Paris, 1951), vol. II, (Le XVIe siècle depuis 1515), p. 263.

[8] H. Kellenbenz, *Los Fugger en España y Portugal hasta 1560*, (Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y Léon, 1999), p. 471.

[9] J. M. Delgado Barrado–A. Guiméra Ravina (eds.), *Los puertos espanoles. Historia y Futuro (siglos XVI-XX)*, (Madrid: Fundacion Portuaria, 2000), p. 18.

[10] F. Sevillano Colom, "Navegaciones Mediterraneas (s. XI-XVI). Valor del puerto de Mallorca" in *Navigazioni mediterranee e comunicazioni continentali (secoli XI-XVI)*, Introductions by M. Mollat-Ch. Verlinden, (Naples: Pironti editore 1982), pp. 70-71.

Tunis, Tripoli and La Goletta, and despite the peace treaty signed with the Turks in 1549.

5.

Pirates such as Barbarossa and Dragut Reis extorted money mercilessly from the undefended Spanish and Italian coasts. But the West had to cope with the Ottoman power's increasing expansion both in Europe and in the Mediterranean. The reorganisation and the reinforcing of the Ottoman Navy had been stepped up during the Sultanate of Bajazet II (1481-1512) in order to defend and lay in stores for the Empire, which by now stretched beyond Anatolia, and to eliminate piracy which overran the eastern basin of the Mediterranean. But as the fleet expanded and became stronger,[11] its objectives changed. The new sultan, Suleiman, very soon regarded the newly fitted-out fleet as a useful tool to conquer territories in the Aegean, the Mediterranean, the Red Sea and, if necessary, in the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean too. And so, with the defeat of the Mamluks, the Ottomans became the chief naval power in the Eastern Mediterranean, while the French and the Spanish competed for supremacy in the West, and the Portuguese aimed to control the Indian Ocean. The Ottoman policy of maritime conquests began in 1522 with the occupation of Rhodes,[12] and continued in the following years.

6.

It was in this context that Venice had to operate. The Venetian Republic was just beginning to recover from the massive costs borne in the Italian wars when, at the end of the fifteenth century, it was involved in a war with the Turks, which ended with a declaration of peace in 1503. Only a few years later, Venice found herself mixed up in another Italian war, where she risked losing her possessions on the mainland. Between 1509 and 1517 the war was costly, bloody and of uncertain outcome, but thanks to the concurrence of various circumstances, it was able to end with a declaration of peace. It was not until 1525, with the Battle of Pavia and the Congress of Bologna, that Venice saw her rights on the mainland recognised once and for all, together with her independence, which had been seriously endangered during the Italian wars.[13] These events largely explain why, for more than twenty years, there was no Venetian presence in the port of Alexandria, where from the fifteenth century

[11] For the size of the Turkish fleet, see V. Magalhaes Godinho, "Venise: les dimensions d'une presence face à un monde tellement changé. XVe-XVIe siècles", in Beck-Manoussacas-Pertusi (eds.), *Venezia centro di mediazione tra Oriente e Occidente (secoli XV-XVI). Aspetti e problemi*, (Florence: Olschki, 1977), pp. 32 *et seq.*

[12] P. Brummett, *Ottoman Seapower and Levantine Diplomacy in the Age of Discovery*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), pp. 89 *et seq.*

most of the trade with the Indies was centred. Venice's trade with the Egyptian port had been completely cut; only two or three times had Venice managed to let out on contract the galleys for Alexandria, three per voyage, whence they had returned fully loaded. But the five years which followed the Turkish conquest of Egypt (1517-1522) were disastrous for Alexandria. The persecutions and the executions to which the Turks subjected the defeated Mamluks made it impossible to maintain regular trade relations between the Red Sea and the Indian ports. Alexandria was no longer important as a spice port. It began to make a recovery after the Turks changed their attitude towards the surviving Mamluks in 1552, and decided to use them for their abilities.[14] And so, from year to year, trading with India began again and increased, and Alexandria returned to how it was during the best years when it operated as a huge emporium for Eastern products. In 1526 and 1527 the two voyages that the Venetians made to Alexandria were "exceptionally favourable and clearly superior to the Syrian voyages".[15] Unfortunately, the second war between Venice and the Turks (1537-39)[16] interrupted trading with Alexandria again. Trading was slowly resumed after the war, but it was not until 1560 that it reached a substantial level.[17] However, except for the period during the war, Venice had continued to trade in spices. Almost every year Venice fitted and contracted out two or three galleys for Beirut and the other Syrian ports. These were places where the caravans arrived from the Persian Gulf which, as well as spices, brought cotton, sugar, silk, and sometimes wheat and salt, in such quantities that often the galleys could not load all the goods piled up on the wharfs. Since Venice was involved in this trade, she refused King Emmanuel of Portugal's proposal that she should stock up on spices in Lisbon.[18] For much of the sixteenth cen-

[13] On these matters cf. G. Luzzato, *Storia economica di Venezia dall'XI al XVI secolo*, (Venice: Centro internazionale delle arti e del costume, 1961), pp. 244-250.

[14] M. Winter, "The Re-emergence of the Mamluks following the Ottoman Conquest" in T. Philipp-U. Harmann (eds.), *The Mamluks in Egyptian Politics and Society*, (Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 89 *et seq.*

[15] G. Luzzatto, *op. cit.*, p. 255.

[16] D. Goffmann, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe*, (Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 145.

[17] G. Luzzatto, *op. cit.*, p. 255.

[18] Venice had refused because, on the one hand, she had taken into account that Lisbon could be reached more easily from the Atlantic ports and the North Sea ports than from Venice, and, on the other hand, because she feared losing her position of holding almost a monopoly in Alexandria at that time. Another reason for Venice's refusal was that Portuguese competition was almost negligible in the markets in which Venice was interested i.e. the Central-European markets. Furthermore, transport costs from Lisbon to Antwerp and then from Antwerp to Central Europe would have had to be added to the cost of spices in Lisbon. Consequently the difference in price between imports from the East and imports from Lisbon, and hence the difference in profits, would have been trifling. Lastly, Venice had refused because the German merchants who came to Venice bought silk and cotton there and, when the opportunity arose, were keen to buy pepper and other spices, leaving in exchange silver and copper from their mines, as well as the fustian they produced (cf. G. Luzzatto, *op. cit.*, p. 242).

tury, it did not seem that the Portuguese sea-way to the Indies had affected Venetian intermediation in the matter of spices. Such intermediation greatly increased later, when Portugal was united with Spain, and became involved in the wars with the Dutch and the English.

During all those years Venice was very careful to keep a permanent diplomatic delegation in Constantinople at the Sultan's court. Between 1507 and 1598 Venice was represented by 33 *baili*, and between 1502 and 1595 Venice sent temporary ambassadors to Constantinople 27 times.[19] And the *bailo* was not merely a diplomat; he was also the head of the colony's internal administration; he acted as the supreme judge in all the lawsuits and criminal trials that involved Venetians. But above all he was responsible for defending Venetian trade, ensuring that the ports functioned well and the warehouses were well maintained, and was responsible for the loading of the ships and the type of goods transported. He also had to ensure *consilium et favorem* for all Venetians and had to protect them from fraud and damages.[20]

The establishment of the Ottoman power had consequences for a great trading nation like Venice. Something had changed in its trading with the East. With the peace treaty of 1503 and the pledge to pay the sultan 10,000 ducats annually, she had indeed regained various localities on the Dalmatian and Albanian coast, but she had had to relinquish Scutari and Negropont for ever, as well as the two important naval bases, Corone and Modone. Furthermore, before Constantinople and Caffa fell, Venice had a very prestigious trading position in the Black Sea. Venice's Romanian galleys sailed through the Bosphorus every year and then split up in the Black Sea. Some went to the ports on the northern shores of Asia Minor, from Bursa to Trebizond, where they loaded cargoes of Eastern products straight from the caravans which arrived there after having followed the Silk Route; others went to the ports of Tana and sometimes Caffa on the Crimean coasts[21] to stock up with wheat, since Caffa was one of the most important ports for cereals.[22] However, after 1484, when in about thirty years the Black Sea changed from being a mainly Italian lake into a Turkish lake, this trading practically stopped. Local merchants, by now subjects of the Sultan, and under his protection, gradually partially replaced the Genoese and the Venetians.

[19] C. Villani-Gandossi, *Contribution à l'étude des relations diplomatiques et commerciales entre Venise et la Porte ottomane au XVIe siècle* in *idem, La Méditerranée aux XIIe-XVIe siècles. Relations maritimes, diplomatiques et commerciales,* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1983), IV, p. 24.

[20] *Idem, Les attributions du baile de Costantinople dans le fonctionnement des échelles du Levant au XVIe siècle, Ibid.*, VII, pp. 238 *et seq.*

[21] G. Luzzatto, *Storia economica di Venezia dall' XI al XVI secolo, op. cit.*, pp. 176-177.

[22] J. Heers, *Genova nel Quattrocento,* (Milan: Jaca Book, 1983), p. 211.

7.

Like Venice, Genoa in the short to middle term felt the effects of the fall of Constantinople and the way the new powerful Ottoman Empire had absorbed "the small Slav, Greek and Turkoman principalities in the Black Sea, the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean".[23] The Genoese colonies in the Black Sea which had survived the 1453 crisis fell one by one after the demise of the Great Comneni of Trebizond's Greek Empire,[24] and after Caffa, destroyed by a long economic crisis, fell under Turkish rule in 1475. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, only three islands testified to Italian presence in the Eastern Mediterranean: Rhodes belonging to the Knights, which the Ottomans occupied – it is said – in 1522; Chio, in the Aegean Sea, which belonged to Genoa and came under the Sultan's rule in 1566; and Cyprus, which came under Venetian rule in 1498 and was occupied by the Turks in 1571.[25]

The loss of the Eastern colonies affected the Genoese economy, but its trading and financial business was saved because Genoa had been ready to increase its interests and its trade in the West, especially in Spain and Portugal, where some Genoese had lived and worked for generations, with trading houses, family businesses and individual operators, and where they used the ports not only for their local trading and financial activities but also to sail to and trade with Flanders and England. The Genoese "nation" was so numerous in Spain that already in 1473 Genoa herself had petitioned Pope Sixtus IV to appoint a Genoese bishop at Seville to protect Genoa's interests.[26] Seville seethed with Italian merchants – from Genoa, Florence, Lucca, Lombardy and Piacenza – who lived in different areas of the town according to the goods with which they dealt.[27] There were Italian merchants in Cordoba, Cadiz, Malaga, Granada and Lisbon too.[28] In 1503 the Venetian ambassador to France wrote that "one third of Genoa" was in Spain and that there were 300

[23] G. Pistarino, *I signori del mare*, (Genoa: Civico Istituto Colombiano, 1992), p. 329.

[24] R. L. Carghelli, "Trebisonda, l'impero dimenticato", in *Il Veltro*, March-August 1979, pp. 37-60; S. P. Karpov, *L'impero di Trebisonda, Venezia, Genova e Roma 1214-1461*, (Rome, 1986), pp. 71 *et seq.*, 141 *et seq.*

[25] G. Pistarino, *op. cit.*, pp. 389-390.

[26] G. Pistarino, *op. cit.*, p. 403.

[27] Among the many Italian families who had settled in Spain were the Spinosas, the Centuriones, the Vivaldis, the Lomellinis, the Adornos, the De Maris, the Di Negros, the Italianos, the Pinellis, the Boccanegras, the Grimaldis, the Cattaneos, the De Leones, the Dorias, the Gabrieles, the Gentiles, the Giudices, the Lercaros, the Marchiones, the Pallavicinos and the Piccamiglios.

[28] On the Italian presence in Portugal between the late fifteenth century and the first half of the sixteenth century cf. C. M. Radulet, "La comunità italiana in Portogallo e il commercio orientale nella prima metà del Cinquecento", in G. Motta (ed.), *Mercanti e viaggiatori per le vie del mondo*, (Milan: F. Angeli, 2001), p. 36 *et seq.*

"Genoese houses" in Spain which owned "various and great riches".[29] But the Genoese presence was just as important in the Kingdom of Naples and in Sicily where, in the early sixteenth century, they bought many feudal titles, taking prestigious aristocratic names. These purchases, however, were not made for reasons of prestige. They were investments of capital earned in Spain and in Italy, from which they expected considerable profit, and were also a means of joining of the country's ruling class and of recovering the capital the sovereigns owed them.[30]

Spain and Portugal were not the only countries in the Western Mediterranean where the Genoese lived and worked; they were to be found in north-western Africa, in particular in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia,[31] in lands where, although not in such great numbers as in the Iberian Peninsula, they were operating even before the East fell under Turkish rule.[32] Trade with these African countries was not all in cash: it was partially barter, and Elihu Ashtor claims that barter became increasingly important between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[33]

However, while increasing her investments in Spain and Portugal, and using some of them to finance Atlantic ventures in the Canary Islands[34] and in the Americas, Genoa continued to trade in the Eastern Mediterranean. Genoese merchants traded on Chio until 1566, and were still operating in Caffa in the early sixteenth century. There are records of Genoese trade between Chio and Tyre during the years between 1520-21 and 1534; Genoese trade was being carried out in 1525 at Corfu; and Genoese merchants were captured by the Turks in the Aegean archipelago in 1527. A series of documents, discovered by G. G. Musso, record Genoese trade at Candia, Tripoli in Syria and at Beirut. The Genoese traded at Pera in 1531.[35]

[29] R. Lopez, "Il predominio economico dei Genovesi nella monarchia spagnola", in *Giornale storico e letterario della Liguria*, vol. XII, n. 2, 1936, pp. 3-18, and now in *Su e giù per la storia di Genova*, (Genoa, 1975), pp. 253-276.

[30] G. Pistarino, *op. cit.*, pp. 412-413.

[31] R. Lopez, "I Genovesi in Africa occidentale nel Medioevo", in *Studi sull'economia genovese nel Medioevo*, (Turin, 1936), pp. 1-62; and the sources quoted in Pistarino, *op. cit.*, pp. 413-414.

[32] G. Pistarino, *op. cit.*, pp. 416 *et seq.*

[33] E. Ashtor, "Pagamento in contanti e baratto nel commercio italiano d'Oltremare (secoli XIV-XVI)", in E. Ashtor, *East-West Trade in the Medieval Mediterranean*, ed. by B. Z. Kedar, (London: Variorum Reprints, 1986), III, pp. 391-393.

[34] The Genoese colony on Grand Canary developed gradually during the first half of the sixteenth century. They exported Canary products and imported manufactured goods and indispensable goods, and they were involved in the production and refining of sugar which they then exported to Europe. Cf. M. Lobo Cabrera, *Los mercaderes italianos y el comercio azucarero canario en la primera mitad del siglo XVI*, in *Aspetti della vita economica medievale*. Atti del Convegno di Studi nel X Anniversario della morte di Federigo Melis, Florence-Pisa-Prato, 10-14 March 1984, (Florence, 1985), pp. 270 *et seq.*

[35] G. Pistarino, "I Genovesi nel Levante fra il tramonto di Costantinopoli e l'Impero ottomano" in *Aspetti della vita economica medievale*. Atti del Convegno di Studi nel X Anniversario della morte di Federigo Melis, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-123.

8.

Genoa was present on a large scale in the Iberian economy,[36] but Venice was indirectly present in the German economy. Venice had strong relations with the Germans, especially with the Nuremberg merchants. In the German *Fondaco* were to be found all the big names of the Nuremberg aristocracy, as well as the big names of Southern Germany, from Augsburg, Ravensburg, Memmingen, Konstanz and St. Gallen, to list only the most important towns.

German trade in Venice was strictly controlled by the Venetians. The *Fondaco* acted both as a control authority and as a tax assessment authority for the Germans who were allowed to trade only with countries north of the Alps, whereas "trade beyond the Adriatic remained in the hands of the Venetians".

Ironmongery from Styria and Nuremberg poured into the *Fondaco*, together with brass articles, probably from Aachen and Belgium, vitriol, quick-silver and cinnabar from Germany, and linen cloth from Konstanz. The *Fondaco* was where products from the East brought by the Venetians met with products from the Austro-German area. Thus, by means of the *Fondaco*, the products the Venetians imported spread to the towns and rural parts of Germany and Austria, and the German products, through the Adriatic, reached the ports of the Dalmatian coast, and thence the Greek ports and the Black Sea ports, as well as the Syrian and North African ports.

From the time of Frederick III (1440-1493) onwards, however, until the late fifteenth century, the Hapsburgs tried to redirect German trade from Venice to Trieste, by intensifying relations with their hinterland. This move became more obvious during Charles V's reign. Between the late fifteenth and the early sixteenth century, there was a colony of merchants from southern Germany who lived in Trieste. In 1520 the Hapsburgs authorised these merchants to load and unload cargo on the quayside, which the Venetians had refused to allow them to do. Thus, the Adriatic and the routes that led off from it were thrown open to them. In 1518 they had obtained permission from Joanna of Castile and her son Charles to trade with the Kingdom of Naples, paying the same taxes as the Venetians, the Milanese and the Florentines. In 1520, these privileges were reconfirmed by the Viceroy of Naples, Raimondo de Cardona. And so the German merchants could come to Southern Italian ports to stock up on saffron, gall-nuts, oil and other Mediterranean products.

The Kingdom of Naples was flourishing economically at that time. After the nation recovered from the damage caused by Charles VIII's arrival in Naples, and most of the fleet had been repaired after it was destroyed in 1494 to prevent it falling into the hands of the French, the Kingdom of Naples' entry into

[36] Cf. C. Verlinden, *The Beginnings of Modern Colonization. Eleven Essays with an Introduction*, translated by Y. Freccero, (Ithaca-New York: Cornell University Press 1970), pp. 113 *et seq.*

the Spanish sphere of influence, firstly under Ferdinand the Catholic and then under Charles V, had given a huge boost to exports, especially of corn, oil, wine and silk, which were the mainstays of its prosperous economy. The low taxation which the Kingdom of Naples enjoyed until the 1530s did the rest.[37] And Naples resumed the role it had enjoyed as a great international trading centre in the Mediterranean in the second half of the fifteenth century,[38] a role through it had performed with continuous trading with the Muslim world. As a result of the free-trade policy begun by King Ferrant of Aragon, the port was largely frequented by foreign merchants, as well as by Germans, Venetians, Florentines, Genoese and by merchants from Dubrovnik. Woollen cloth was one of the most important trading products. Naples was the city where cloth from all over the known world could be found. Ashtor has found documentation which shows that both low-cost and high-quality cloth from Florence, England, Flanders, Majorca, Perpignan, Languedoc and Valencia were to be found in Naples.[39] Much of this cloth was sold at the Salerno Fair which was held twice a year. Catalan, Genoese, Venetian and French ships, sailing to and from the East, all put in to Naples to load or unload goods.

Other Germans, including the Fugger,[40] traded with Seville and Lisbon, dealing in jewels and leather, but above all aiming to control the local mineral resources, including mercury, over which the Fugger had a trading monopoly.[41]

9.

The fact that Venice had become weak during the years she was at war with the Turks had encouraged the arrival of ships from Dubrovnik in the port of Alexandria. There was already a considerable number of them in 1484,[42] but they continued to increase in the years that followed. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Dubrovnik fleet consisted of about one hundred ships, amounting to a total tonnage of 12,000 cartloads (18,000 tonnes). The presence of the Dubrovnik fleet had been reinforced with the opening of a consulate in 1514.[43] The fleet came to load spices, which it then delivered to various Mediterranean ports, from Sicily to mainland Italy, and from the South of

[37] L. De Rosa, *Il Mezzogiorno spagnolo tra crescita e decadenza*, (Milan: Mondadori-Il Saggiatore, 1987), pp. 12-15.
[38] Cf. E. Ashtor, *Levant Trade in the Middle Ages*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 500.
[39] *Ibid.*, pp. 501 *et seq.*
[40] H. Kellenbenz, *Los Fugger en España y Portugal hasta 1560, op. cit.*, pp. 18 *et seq.*
[41] J. M. Kulischer, *Storia economica dell'età moderna*, (Florence: Sansoni, 1955), p. 302.
[42] Cf. G. Luzzatto, *op. cit.*, p. 185.
[43] A. Di Vittorio, *Tra mare e terra. Aspetti economici e finanziari della Repubblica di Ragusa in età moderna*, (Bari: Cacucci, 2001), p. 12.

France to London. The Dubrovnik fleet would then export oil, wood, silver, lead and textiles from these ports. The Dubrovnik spice trade, however, stopped in the 1520s, after the Venetian ships returned to the port of Alexandria. As the Turkish historian Inalcik has reminded us, "Venetian supremacy in the East did not end until after the 1570-73 war".[44] In the Ottoman Empire, Venetian trading was considered essential for the upper classes, for people belonging to court or government circles, because they wanted the fine woollen cloths, the paper, the luxury products, the silver and the gold that the Venetians exported to the Empire.[45] For this reason, when there were no political or military conflicts, the Ottomans recognised all the privileges that Venice had been granted in the past,[46] so that Venice was thus able to control the spice market in the Egyptian and Syrian ports", and, on payment of 25,000 ducats, Venice obtained a monopoly for alum. Aleppo, Cairo and Damascus continued to be important trading centres for the Venetians.[47] However, for about a hundred years the Ottomans had been looking for a way to break free from their trading dependence on Venice. The building of a road linking Florence to Ancona in the second half of the fifteenth century, the increase in shipping between Ancona and Dubrovnik, the building of a road linking Dubrovnik to Bursa and Istanbul had all been devised to encourage trade between Florence and Dubrovnik, both rivals of Venice. But it was not until the sixteenth century, when an increasing number of Ottoman, Greek, Jewish, Armenian and Turkish merchants travelled along that road with silk, spices, sugar and cereals that the road began to worry the Venetians who tried to impede its being used by spreading the rumour that Ancona was about to accept Ottoman protection.[48]

10.

Dubrovnik's rise was also due to the unification of the Balkans – Serbia, Macedonia, Bulgaria and European Turkey – brought about by the Ottomans, and to the customs relief they were granted. Customs relief had boosted local production and increased continental trading and exports, especially maritime exports where the Dubrovnik merchants played a decisive role. This gave a further boost to the Dubrovnik merchant fleet's growth. In the mid-sixteenth century, the Dubrovnik fleet was supplemented by a considerable number of

[44] H. Inalcik, "An Outline of Ottoman-Venetian Relations", in Beck-Manoussa-Cas-Pertussi (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 96.
[45] H. Inalcik, *op. cit.*, p. 87.
[46] The capitulations in Venice's favour were broadened and renewed in 1446, 1454, 1479, 1482, 1503, 1513 and 1521. Those of 1540 were further extended to the Arab lands and to Bosnia, but not to Trebizond and Caffa. Cf. H. Inalcik, *op. cit.*, p. 90.
[47] H. Inalcik, *op. cit.*, p. 88.
[48] H. Inalcik, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-86.

large sailing-ships, many of which had a tonnage of between 400 and 600 cart-loads. This growth did not stop. In the 1570s, the fleet numbered some 250 vessels with a total tonnage of 50,000 cart-loads, and with a crew of more than 6,000: this was a fleet not only for Balkan trade but also for international trade. As far as international trading was concerned, the Dubrovnik fleet had benefited from the crisis, which had led to a reduction in the number of vessels in the Venetian fleet; there were fewer large ships than in the preceding century, and the repeated incentives offered to ship-builders were evidence that capital to be invested in building big ships was becoming increasingly limited.

The Dubrovnik fleet had specialised in the sense that the small ships sailed between Italy's eastern ports and Dubrovnik, and were almost the only ships to be seen in the Adriatic, apart from the Venetian ships and those of Venice's possessions in Dalmatia, whereas the large ships sailed east to the ports of Eastern and Western Greece, the Black Sea and Alexandria, and sailed west to Sicily, the Tyrrhenian Sea, France and Spain, and even as far as England. During their voyages, they would trade in whatever goods were available: they carried cereals from Greece and the Ionian Islands, and wine and grapes from Crete[49]. During the wars of 1463-1479, 1499-1503 and 1537-1540 between the Ottoman Empire and Venice they acted as intermediaries for trade between Venice and the Ottoman Empire.[50] But it was not only on the high seas that Dubrovnik made a name for itself: merchants from Dubrovnik controlled the Balkan domestic markets. Three or four hundred merchants visited the main towns every year with the aim of monopolising their trade, in competition with the Jews who had been banished from the Iberian Peninsula, and with the Turkish Muslim merchants. Caravans driven by Dubrovnik merchants would cross Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Croatia, Herzegovina, Serbia, Bosnia, Montenegro and Albania before reaching Dubrovnik, and would return along the same route.[51]

The Turkish conquest had contributed to the formation of a vast trading area with at its centre Constantinople, which had become a city with a population of some 300,000, busy supplying an empire that stretched from the Danube to the Nile and from the Euphrates to the Adriatic. Both Mamluks and the Turks had encouraged foreign merchants to live and operate in their lands because they were convinced that, being of different nationalities, foreign merchants would compete with one another.[52] After 1496 Italian merchants reappeared in the ports of the East to renew the relations they once had, and the Turks welcomed

[49] I. Tadic, "La côte occidentale des Balkans et ses liaisons maritimes et continentales (XI-XVI siècles)", in *Navigazioni mediterranee e connessioni continentali, op. cit.*, pp. 107-109.
[50] H. Inalcik, *op. cit.*, p. 88.
[51] S. Goldenberg, "Contacts entre certains pays danubiens et le monde méditerranéen de la fin du XVe siècle au début du XVIIe siècle", in *Navigazioni mediterranee etc., op. cit.*, p. 147.
[52] G. Pistarino, *I signori del mare, op. cit.*, pp. 420-421.

them, except in times of war, provided they paid a tax of 2%, later increased to 5%, of the value of the goods transported.[53] Relations continued. And despite the presence of merchants from Dubrovnik, Eastern Europe continued to show interest in Italy; for example, "many students from Transylvania" continued "to attend Italian universities".[54] It must, however, be admitted that the change had been profound.

11.

Italy had traded previously with three Eastern European states – Transylvania, Walachia and Moldava – all of which had ended up under Turkish rule. Of the three, Transylvania appeared to have come off best, being subjected, like Hungary, to a regime of servitude which was less oppressive than that of the other two states. Since it bordered on Hungary, Transylvania could maintain all its foreign connections. None of these states, however, had a coastline. And, until the Black Sea became a Turkish lake, Italian ships coming from the Mediterranean had put in at the port of Braila at the mouth of the Danube. But with the Turkish occupation, this had stopped, and in 1520 Turkish by-laws had officially reserved Braila for ships from the Black Sea ports, such as Samsun, Sinop, Kilija, Caffa, and Trebizond, as well as from Istanbul. And yet, in its better days, there had been between 70 and 80 ships in the port of Braila, unloading goods which were sold there and then to merchants from Moldava, Walachia and Transylvania, in other words to Romanians, Greeks, Turks, Armenians and Italians.[55] As Turkish sovereignty became established, the goods which were unloaded usually came from Istanbul, which was the main clearing port for trade between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

To avoid Turkish intermediation, merchants had to resort to an alternative route to the West: the Danube and its numerous tributaries came to their aid. These river routes fed an efficient communications network that became even better if connected to the road grid which went across individual countries. And that is how, for example, the Romanians, who were used to stocking up on certain products directly from the Genoese, and later from the Venetians, arranged to buy them in Italy after the Turkish occupation, even though the goods had to be transported over long roads which were steep and/or winding in places. Great trading routes crossed Moldava, Walachia, Transylvania and Hungary, linking them on one side to Poland, and Central and Western Europe, and on the other side to the Balkan Peninsula and, after the road forked, to Istanbul or

[53] S. Goldenberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 134-135.
[54] G. Goldenberg, "Notizie del commercio italiano in Transilvania nel secolo XVI", in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Anno CXXI (1963), Disp. II, p. 255.
[55] S. Goldenberg, "Contacts entre certains pays danubiens et le monde méditerranéen de la fin du XVe siècle au début du XVIIe siècle", in *Navigazioni mediterranee etc., op. cit.*, pp. 134-135.

Italy. Along the roads there were caravanserais and warehouses where the caravans could rest and load and unload merchandise.[56]

Goods purchased in the West reached the ports of Braila or Galati, and from there, via the small town of Iasi in Romania, travelled to Leopoli and Krakow in Poland; from Braila goods could go to Brasov and, from there, to Cluj in Transylvania, then to Budapest and finally to Vienna. From Vienna merchants continued through Styria to Zagreb and Ljubljana. From Budapest they followed the Danube down to Pecs, and then the river Drava and the river Sava, passing through Zagreb, Ljubljana and Gorizia[57] before reaching Venice. Merchants from Cluj often travelled to Venice and Milan on business; and Italian merchants called at Cluj on their way to Sibiu and Brasov in Romania "to buy or sell goods or on other business", often travelling through Walachia.[58] Goldenberg has provided several examples of these Italian and Romanian journeys and trades, especially Florentine.[59] The Balkan route ran from Budapest to Novi Sad and then to Sarajevo and Novi Pazar. From Novi Pazar, one branch went to Scutari and another to Skopje, where it branched off, on one side to Monastir (or Bitola) and Lake Ocrida before ending up at Durazzo on the Adriatic, and on the other side to Thessaloniki. However, from Dubrovnik, the route ran to Istanbul via Pristina, Sofia, Plovdiv and Edirne. This route was the most important of all for Balkan and South-Eastern European trade. The road followed the ancient Thrace way which, by means of a series of roads, reached the Danube, and continued to Buda, Vienna and Southern Germany.

12.

This trading was influenced by several factors. Some were positive, such as the granting of privileges by the sovereign of the country in which merchants went to trade,[60] political stability, a positive economic outlook in the local ruling class, security during the journey and adequate road maintenance. But there were negative factors too: wars, social and political conflict, revolutions, and natural catastrophes such as, for example, the plague which ruined many Mediterranean countries between the second half of the fifteenth and the first half of the sixteenth century[61].

[56] *Ibid.*, p. 134.
[57] S. Goldenberg, *Contacts, op. cit.*, pp. 136-137.
[58] G. Goldenberg, *Notizie, op. cit.*, pp. 262-275.
[59] *Ibid.*, pp. 262-275. Cf. *Idem, Contacts entre certains pays danubiens, op. cit.*, pp. 134 *et seq.*
[60] The Venetians made trade agreements with the Turks, obtaining particular privileges, in 1516, 1521 and 1534. *Idem, Notizie, op. cit.*, p. 140.
[61] Cf. J. N. Biraben, *Les hommes et la peste en France et dans les pays européens et méditerranéens. Tome* I. *La peste dans l'Histoire*, (Paris: Mouton, 1975), pp. 108-110, 121-122, 125 *et seq.*; J. T. Alexander, *Bubonic Plague in Early Modern Russia. Public Health and Urban Disaster*, (Baltimore-London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1980), p. 16; L. Del Panta, *Le epidemie nella storia demografica italiana (secoli XIV-XIX)*, (Turin: Loescher, 1980), pp. 116-137.

Banditry raged, especially on the most important roads, and was so widespread that, from the early sixteenth century, it was decreed that offenders in the Ottoman Empire should meet with capital punishment.[62] Insecurity during Mediterranean voyages has been mentioned. Trading in the Adriatic, however, was not only disturbed by Turkish, Algerian and Barbary pirates and privateers, but also, from the 1520s and the 1530s, by the Uskoks from Senj, a small town which the Turks and emigration had almost completely emptied.[63] Made up of people of different nationalities and different ethnic origins, the Uskoks operated in the Adriatic, raiding ships and plundering Ottoman merchants and their goods, thereby complicating Venice's relations with the Turks. But there were also frequent attacks on Christian merchants.[64]

In conclusion, with or without Turkish intermediation, by means of rivers, the great new roads and the network of existing roads, Mediterranean Europe was linked to Balkan and Central and Eastern Europe, and so merchants and goods from Western Mediterranean regions travelled to Walachia, Transylvania and Moldava. At the same time, Armenian merchants seeking Eastern products went as far as Asia Minor and, following the way from Istanbul to Ormuz, linked the main Mediterranean trading routes with those of Persia, increasing trade which involved merchants from Romania, Hungary, Saxony, Greece, Poland, Italy, Turkey, Dubrovnik and Armenia.[65] The Jews made an important contribution to trading. In 1516, they were concentrated in the new ghetto in Venice. Their settlement, which until then had been opposed,[66] was legalised permanently, and they poured their considerable capital into the Venetian economic circuit. With their diaspora, they increased Venice's commercial activity in Egypt and in Asia Minor.[67]

[62] S. Goldenberg, *Contacts, op. cit.*, pp. 137-138.

[63] The term Uskoks indicated a profession, not a nation. Cf. Wendy Bracewell, *The Uskoks of Senj. Piracy, Banditry, and Holy War in the Sixteenth-Century Adriatic*, (Ithaca-London: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. XIII, 41-47.

[64] *Ibid*, p.4.

[65] S. Goldenberg, *Contacts, op. cit.*, pp. 137-138.

[66] D. Jacoby, "Les Juifs à Venise du XIVe siècle", in H. G. Beck-M. Manoussa-Cas-Pertusi (eds.), *Venezia centro di mediazione tra Oriente e Occidente (secoli XV-XVI), op. cit.*, pp. 164-170, 184, 187, 198 *et seq.*

[67] A. David, *To Come to the Land. Immigration and Settlement in Sixteenth-Century Eretz-Israel*, (Tuscaloosa-London: The University of Alabama Press, 1999), pp. 12 *et seq.*