
North-Western Slavs in Baltic Sea Trade from the VIIIth to the XIIIth Century

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Twenty years have passed since the publication of Archibald R. Lewis's work on shipping and commerce in Northern Europe from 300-1100. He was one of the first English-language historians to examine Slav participation in Baltic trade in this period, although because of his lack of knowledge of Eastern-European languages he could not analyse the problem in detail.

During the next two decades our knowledge was considerably broadened by the researches of archaeologists and historians from Scandinavia, the two German states, the Soviet Union and Poland. Since only some of this work has been published in languages known to the average Western European or American reader this short paper may be of some help¹ to them.

The Slavonic peoples of the Middle Ages living in the Baltic region belonged to two distinct branches: the eastern and western. My study is centred on the southern Baltic area between Jutland and the Vistula delta which was inhabited by various Slavonic peoples (Polabians, Vagrians, Obodrites, Veletians, Pomeranians

¹ A. R. LEWIS, *The Northern Seas: shipping and commerce in Northern Europe A.D. 300-1100* (Princeton 1958).

and Rugians) belonging to the western branch. Their dialects differed only slightly and were close related to the Polish dialects of neighbouring Silesia, Greater Poland (*Wielkopolska*) and Kuyavia. During the Middle Ages the eastern Pomeranians merged with the Polanians of Great Poland, Kuyavians and others to form a Polish nation; the others were either absorbed into the neighbouring Saxon and Brandenburgian duchies or else were semi-independent under the sovereignty of the German and Danish kings.

Many authors end their survey of early mediaeval trade in Northern Europe with the XIth century, when a certain decline took place in long-distance commerce. A more distinct change in economic conditions in this area occurred about a century later, as a result of the replacement of native traders by German merchants from the newly founded Hanseatic towns. In my paper I have therefore traced the history of the North-Western Slavonic trade centres until they were submerged into foreign colonies or lost their former importance in the XIIIth century.

Between the VIIth and VIIIth century, after a temporary setback as a result of the "migrations of the nations" a new network of trade relations slowly began to emerge. Although the old "amber route" from the boundaries of the Roman empire to the mouth of the Vistula was nearly completely severed by the advance of the Slavs and the Avars, contacts between the southern and northern shores of the Baltic Sea continued. The trade routes linking Western Europe with the Baltic region grew in importance.

The sea trade between the Merovingian state and the Northern-European countries was operated mostly by Frisian merchants. It is probable that their ships (*cogs*) appeared on the Baltic Sea as early as the beginning of the VIIIth century. Their field of activity was centred above all on Denmark, south-eastern Sweden and Old Prussia, because on the north-Slavonic shores they met with strong competition from traders coming by land

from the Rhineland. Archaeological records show that the Frisians began to penetrate Pomerania for the first time in the middle of the VIIIth century.²

Contacts between Sweden and the Finnish and Balt peoples were already well developed in the VIIth century. The discovery of early Arabian coins and a Buddha sculpture at Helgö in Uppland seem to indicate that some trade contacts with the East were established before the Scandinavian penetration of the Russian interior.³

In the course of the VI-VIIIth century the north-western Slavs participated only to a small extent in European trade and their role was more modest than that of their Scandinavian neighbours. Long-distance trade remained for the most part in the hands of foreigners. The Slavs of the Baltic Sea coast had at their disposal only primitive canoes unsuitable for the open sea. Commercial relations with Scandinavia were conducted by non-professional Danish, Swedish and Gotlandish traders, and contacts with Western Europe by professional Frisian sea-going merchants and Franconian or Jewish traders reaching the Baltic shores by land.

Commercial exchanges between the north-western Slavs and foreign countries were conducted by a rising group of proto-feudal lords, who were able to collect sufficient quantities of goods for sale and had enough means to buy foreign commodities. There are no indications that any currency was in use at that time; the exchange was probably done only by means of barter.⁴

² H. JANKUHN, *Der Fränkisch-friesische Handel zur Ostsee im frühen Mittelalter*, "Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgesch." vol. 40 (1953), pp. 204-222; J. ZAK, *Studia nad kontaktami handlowymi społeczeństw zachodnio-słowiańskich ze skandynawskimi od VI do VIII w.n.e.: A study of the commercial contacts between West Slavonic and Scandinavian societies in the period from the VIth to the VIIIth century*, (Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 1962), pp. 254, 269-285, 294-302.

³ W. HOLMQUIST, *Die Ergebnisse der Grabungen auf Helgö, 1954-1974*, "Prähistorische Zeitschrift", vol. 51, nr. 2 (1976), pp. 152-160.

⁴ J. ZAK, *Studia...*, pp. 264-265; K. ŚLASKI, *Die Organisation der Schifffahrt bei den*

During the IXth and Xth centuries great changes occurred in the economic structure of the Baltic region. One was the rise of the first trade centres with a stable population. Some of those markets, like Dankirke near Ribe in Jutland, Helgö west of Stockholm, Haithabu (Hedeby), in Jutland and Staraja Ladoga on the Finnish-Russian border were established during the VII-VIIIth centuries. It is possible that an open settlement dating from the VI-VIIIth century situated near the Kołobrzeg salt springs in Pomerania also held a (periodical) market, where salt was bartered for other goods. The excavations of Ulrich Schoknecht at Menzlin (German Democratic Republic) have proved the existence of a trade centre with a mixed population of Slavs and Scandinavians on this site in the VIII-XIth century.⁵

Carolingian sources mention an important trade centre, called Reric by the Danes, situated on the territory of the Obotrides. Its Slavonic name is not known, nor its exact site, although some evidence points to Mecklenburg, and some to Oldenburg (Holstein in the German Federal Republic). The merchants settled in Reric paid a tribute to king Göttrik of Denmark. In 808 the Danish monarch destroyed this Slavonic trade centre, taking these merchants with him and settling them in Haithabu (Hedeby). It seems however that the market continued to exist because in the following year the duke of the Obodrites, Dražko, was murdered "*in emporio Reric*" by the Danish king's men.

Along the southern coast of the Baltic Sea further settlements appeared which even in the IXth century already had some urban character, as for instance Ralswiek on Rügen, Wolin and Szczecin at the mouth of the Oder, Kędrzyno and Kołobrzeg. Their population were engaged in trade and crafts, as well as

Ostseeslawen vom 10. bis zum 13. Jahrhundert, "Hansische Geschichtsblätter", vol. 91 (Köln-Wien 1973), pp. 1-11.

⁵ V. I. RAVDONIKAS, *Staraja Ladoga I*, "Sovetskaia Archeologija", vol. 11 (Moskva 1949), pp. 7, 40-42; U. SCHOKNECHT, *Menzlin, eine frühstädtische Siedlung des 8.-10. Jahrhunderts*, in: II Internationaler Kongress für Slavische Archäologie. Berlin 1970, Bd. II, pp. 262-267 (Berlin 1973).

agriculture. Sometimes their origins lay in earlier times, like the fortified proto-urban settlement of Kędrzyno (Koszalin province) which was established near an earlier stronghold. A similar settlement in Kołobrzeg was constructed some miles up river from the VIth or VIIth century hamlet near the salt flats. The site of Gdańsk was probably inhabited in the IXth century but the origin of the proto-urban, fortified settlement can be dated to the last quarter of the following century.⁶

A noticeable increase in trading activities in the North-Western Slavonic countries took place during the IXth and chiefly the Xth century and was reflected in the greater number of hoards of treasure, which have been found in all countries of the Baltic region, including coins and jewels, often in the form of silver slivers and bars. Both were used in Northern Europe instead of currency, and were weighed on portable scales.

In the history of long-distance trade in this area there are roughly three phases: 800-970, 970-1100 and 1100-1250, covering a period when the native element played an important part. The last date is only a rough guide because the decline in the commercial activity of the Slavonic traders did not occur everywhere at the same time.

The first period (800-970) was marked by a growing influx of coins to the Slavonic markets of the Baltic region from the Moslem states of the Near East: Arabia, Bagdad, Persia and later from the Samanite states. Merchants from these countries brought the silver to the markets of the Khasars and Volga-Bulgars. Travelling traders from Gotland, eastern Sweden and sometimes also Denmark acted as brokers, dealing with Moslem merchants whom they met at the markets. Most of the oriental

⁶ ANNALES REGNI FRANCORUM, ed. G. H. Pertz, *Scr. Rer. Germ.* (Hannover 1868), an. 808, 809; L. LECIEJEWICZ, *Die Entstehung der Künstestädte zwischen Oder und Weichsel im Lichte der letzten Forschungen*, "Acta Visbyensia" I (Upsala 1965), pp. 47-53; L. LECIEJEWICZ, *Miasta Słowian północno-połabskich: Towns of the North Polabian Slavs* (Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków) 1968, pp. 47-58.

silver was brought by the Scandinavians to the ports of the southern Baltic coast, and from there slowly penetrated the hinterland. The rather scanty amount of Scandinavian jewellery in western-Slavonic hoards however also indicates some direct trade contacts with Russian markets, like Staraya Ladoga and later Novgorod and Pskov. We must take further into account a route leading from the Dnieper region down the Pripet' and Muchavec rivers to the Bug and Vistula.

Some of the Arabian dirhems found in treasure hoards from this period were brought from the Spanish Moslem states by Jewish traders. A IXth century Arabic writer, Ibn Khordadbeh, mentioned in his work that the latter travelled by land and sea "through the countries of the Franks and the Slavs" to the Khazar capital Itil and even to Bagdad. Some descriptions indicate that Moslem merchants from the Near-East also penetrated as far as the Baltic region, while there was possibly also a group of Russian brokers, travelling along the Dnieper-Bug route.

Although some Ummayyad and early Abbasid coins could have reached the Baltic shores in the VIIIth century, the earliest hoards to include silver from Moslem countries, which were found in Grzybowo and Kretomino in Pomerania (Poland), Penzlin, Kreis Waren, Prerow and Rugard on the islands of Darss and Rügen (German Democratic Republic) were buried in the first quarter of the IXth century. On the Slavo-German border and in Greater Poland (Wielkopolska) hoards with oriental silver date from about 850 and in eastern Pomerania only a century later.⁷

We must now turn to North-Western Slavonic trade bet-

⁷ T. LEWICKI, *Handel Samanidów ze wschodnią i środkową Europą* (Samanide trade with eastern and central Europe), "Slavia Antiqua", vol. XIX (1972), pp. 1-18; R. KIERSNOWSKI, *Pieniądz kruszcowy w Polsce średniowiecznej* (The metal currency in mediaeval Poland) (Warszawa 1960), pp. 112-113; L. LECJEJEWICZ, *O pierwszych kontaktach Słowian północno-zachodnich ze światem arabskim* (The first contacts of the North-Western Slavs with the Arabic world), in: *Studia ku uczczeniu K. Tymienieckiego* (Poznań 1971), pp. 213-227 and Map 1 on p. 217.

ween 800-970. Thanks to the studies of Jan Żak the best known trade contacts are those with Scandinavia. During the IXth and the first half of the Xth century this exchange of goods was still modest, the Slavs trading in turned amber beads, pottery and salt. The articles were produced chiefly by craftsmen from Oldenburg in the Vagrian territory, Wolin and Kołobrzeg in Pomerania, while the salt came from salt flats in the Veletian territory (Golchen) and from Kołobrzeg. Slavonic goods have been found in Jutland, Halland, Skåne, the island of Bornholm, Uppland and the Norwegian province of Vestfold.

Goods of Scandinavian provenance found in the Slavonic provinces included: bronze jewelry from Bornholm and Upland, combs and chessmen from Uppland, pieces of caparison, bronze jewelry and swords from Jutland, steatite vessels from Norway, oriental coins and silver jewels. Not all of these crossed the Baltic Sea as a result of commercial activity; chessmen, amulettes, or jewels for example may have been brought as gifts, and arms could have been taken from the enemy.⁸

Trading contacts with the Balt and Finnish peoples are not easy to establish, because the economic level of both parties did not differ much. Old Prussian jewelry has been found not only in the adjacent area of Pomerania (e.g. in Skowarcz or Opalenie) but also further to the west (Stojkowo near Kołobrzeg, Wolin). Some of the articles exported to Prussia from the Rhineland, e.g. swords or glass, were brought there as result of commercial transactions with Polish-Pomeranian neighbours, acting as brokers.⁹

One of the more important goods exported to north-Rus-

⁸ J. ŻAK, *Der westslawische Import in Skandinavien im 9. bis 11. Jahrhundert*, in: II Internationaler Kongress... Bd. I. (Berlin 1970), pp. 25-30; J. ŻAK, "Importy" skandynawskie na ziemiach zachodnio-słowiańskich od IX do XI w. (Scandinavian "Imports" into the western Slav Lands from IX-XIth century), (Poznań 1967), pp. 112-114, 150-160; CH. WARNKE, *Die Anfänge des Fernhandels in Polen* (Würzburg 1964), pp. 87-96.

⁹ K. ŚLASKI, *Stosunki Prusów z innymi ludami nadbałtyckimi w VII-XII w.* (The Prussians' relations with other Baltic peoples in the VIIth to XIIth centuries) "Rocznik Olsztyński", vol. V: 1963 (Olsztyn 1965), pp. 17-18.

sian harbours was amber, collected and worked in eastern Pomerania (e.g. in Kołobrzeg or near Słupsk and Gdańsk). Raw amber was mentioned by Ibn Hauqual and Muhammed Muquaddesi among products brought in the Xth century from northern countries to the market of Bolgar on the Volga river. Nevertheless it is impossible to say if it came from Pomerania or from Prussia. The same authors also describe wax as a much desired commodity. We know from the report of the Jewish merchant Ibrahim ibn Jakūb from Tortosa in Spain, who visited the land of the western Slavs in about 965 that Poland abounded at that time with bees and honey, and it is therefore quite possible that some of the wax sold on oriental markets was a product of the Slavonic coastal provinces on the Baltic Sea.

Products made by Russian craftsmen appear in finds of the Xth century on the whole southern coast of the Baltic Sea. We may mention spindle whorls of roseate schist, manufactured in Wolhynia, eggs of glazed earthenware (e.g. from Karnice near Łobez in Poland, Weisdin, Brandenburg-Neudorf, Görke in the German Democratic Republic) and crystal and carnelian beads produced in North-Caucasian countries (known e.g. from Szczecin, Kołobrzeg and other places). Cowrie shells and a silk fabric found at Wolin had come from the Far-East through the mediation of Russian or Scandinavian traders.¹⁰

There are some traces of trade between the North-Western Slavs and Great Moravia, such as blown glass beads found at Wolin, Bardy, Świelubie and Kołobrzeg in Pomerania or a pick axe encrusted with bronze from the same region. Norwegian steatite vessels found at Wolin and at Opole in Upper Silesia

¹⁰ CH. WARNEK, *op. cit.*, p. 58; RELACJA IBRAHIMA IBN JAKUBA... Wyd. T. Kowalski, Monumenta Poloniae Historica-MPH nova series I, Kraków 1946, p. 147; L. LECIEJEWICZ, *Początki nadmorskich miast na Pomorzu Zachodnim* (The beginnings of the coastal towns of West Pomerania) (Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 1962), pp. 161, 177; J. HERRMANN, *Austausch und Handel*, in *Die Slawen in Deutschland*, Red. J. Herrmann (Berlin 1970), p. 111.

point to the importance of the Oder as a water route, joining southern Poland and Moravia with the Baltic Sea.¹¹

Trade with Western European countries, which dated back to the Roman Empire, grew more intense with the reign of Charles the Great. In 805 he established the markets of Schessel and Bardowiek as barter places with the Polabians and the Obodrites. He also issued at the same time an order prohibiting the export of swords and coats of arms to Slavonic countries.

No less important than the sea route from the mouth of the Rhine, across the Jutland Peninsula to the port of Haithabu (Hedeby) used mostly by Frisian merchants, was a land route from Bardowiek, and later Hamburg, through Oldenburg or Old Lubeck, Mecklenburg, Wolin or Szczecin to the mouth of the Vistula and the Prussian market of Truso, situated near the present-day town of Elbląg. This track was used by traders coming from Spain, France and the towns of the upper and middle Rhine.

Merchants from Western-European countries purchased furs, wax and also horses from the Obodrite lands. Ibn Hauqal noted that beaver skins were imported to Spain from the Slavonic countries on the Baltic Sea. The importance of the slave trade is mentioned by various sources, like Ibrahim ibn Jakūb and Adam of Bremen.¹²

The list of goods brought to the southern Baltic coast from Western Europe was quite varied. Despite the ban on armaments various kinds of weapons were exported from the Franconian

¹¹ L. LECIEJEWICZ, *Investigations concerning early mediaeval Kotobrzeg*, "Archaeologia Polona", vol. V (1962), pp. 132, 135, fig. 2.; L. LECIEJEWICZ, *Początki...*, pp. 166, 167, fig. 59, 177-179.

¹² CAPITULARIA REGUM FRANCORUM, vol. I, ed. A. Boretius, *Mon. Germ. Hist. II* (Hannover 1883); J. HERRMANN, *op. cit.*, pp. 108-109; T. LEWICKI, *Świat słowiański w oczach pisarzy arabskich* (The Slav world as seen by Arab writers), "Slavia Antiqua", vol. II (1949-50), p. 363; VITA ANSKARIJ AUCTORE RIMBERTO, rec. G. Waitz, *Script. Rerum Germ. ad usum scholarum*, ed. 2 (Hannover 1876), cap. 15, 36; ADAMI GESTA HAMMABURGENSIS ECCLESIE PONTIFICUM-ADAMUS BREM., rec. G. Waitz, *SS. Rer. Germ.*, ed. 2. (Hannover 1876), lib. IV, cap. 18.

empire to the Slavonic territories either directly or through the agency of Scandinavian traders. Swords produced in the Rhineland or in Passau on the Danube have been found near Werle (German Dem. Republic), Szczecin, Lubiatowo and Żydowo in Pomerania (Poland).

Millstones of basalt lava produced near Mayen in Germany have been found at Oldenburg and elsewhere on the Slavonic-Saxon border. The North-Western Slavs also purchased fine woollen cloth brought by Frisian merchants, while their noble ladies enjoyed glass vessels and beads, bronze and silver jewelry from the Rhineland. A beautiful knife-helve in the shape of a female figure found at Wolin was very likely produced by a craftsman from Mainz, Worms or elsewhere in the Rhineland.

Western-European coins are extremely rare in Slavonic findings prior to the Xth century, so we may assume that most of the trade with those countries was conducted by barter. One must also remember that the "import" of an article was not the same as direct exchange, for many goods left their producer for one broker after another before reaching their eventual purchaser.¹³

Trade further afield remained largely in the hands of foreigners until the mid Xth century. Sea trade was to a great extent conducted by professional Frisian merchants, who either came directly from their own country or elsewhere settled in Hedeby (Haithabu) or Birka. Dealers from South-Western Europe headed to use the land routes eastwards. Scandinavian non- or semi-professional traders had a growing share in the sea-trade on the Baltic Sea. Gradually however this business was also taken over by Russians and other Slavs. According to the accounts of Adam of Bremen their ships undertook journeys to the Swedish port of Birka (Björkö) for instance.¹⁴

¹³ J. HERRMANN, *op. cit.*, pp. 109, 112, 240, 262, fig. 111; L. LECIEJEWICZ, *Początki...*, p. 160, fig. 55, 162.

¹⁴ On trade routes see: D. ELLMERS, *Frühmittelalterliche Handelsschiffahrt in Mittel-*

The next phase in Baltic trade may be roughly placed between the last quarters of the Xth- and the XIth century. In this period centralised monarchies were established in Scandinavia and Poland, and somewhat earlier among the Czechs and Russians. The rise of these early feudal states affected the further development of foreign trade. The Scandinavian kings succeeded in limiting the activity of the Vikings, making the seas safer for the traders. The Piast dynasty united all the Polish provinces, including Pomerania, where a bishopric was created at Kołobrzeg in 1000. A new fortified economic centre was founded in about 980 at Gdańsk, which took an active part in the Baltic trade, eclipsing the older Prussian market of Truso. From then on the Polish traders acted partly as brokers for goods from Bohemia, Moravia, Hungary and Byzantium, some of which were then reexported to Scandinavia and Prussia. In the East the rise of the Russian state also led to changes, because it halted the journeys of Swedish traders to eastern markets, and took over this lucrative business for its own subjects.

The rise of early feudal states in the Baltic region favoured the further development of towns. Close to the older, fortified centres arose new suburbs inhabited by a population engaged in various crafts and trade. Markets situated outside the town-gates brought together the urban and rural producers for barter.¹⁵

Foreign trade was already to a great extent based on transactions with coins or silver bullion weighed on scales. Many such implements have been found in the Slavonic lands: the site of Schwertz on the Oder (East Germany) alone yielded 17 specimens. Pieces of linen were used as currency in domestic trade,

und Nordeuropa (Neumünster 1972), pp. 21-23, 239, 250; ADAMUS BREM., lib. II, cap. 10 and 19; IV, cap. 1, 18; lib. I, cap. 62 (on Slavonic ships in Birka).

¹⁵ J. KAMINSKA, A. ZBIERSKI, *Ville de Gdańsk du haut moyen-âge à la lumière des recherches archéologiques*, "Archaeologia Polona", vol. V (1962), pp. 148-168; J. HERRMANN, *Frühe Städte und Handwerkersiedlungen*, in: *Die Slawen in Deutschland* (Berlin 1970), pp. 187-194.

and Helmoldus mentions this system in Rügen in the mid XIIth century. It is probable that marten and squirrel skins served the same purpose. In domestic trade however barter was still used on a large scale.

Long distance trade still remained the preserve of the upper class, but it seems probable that at least some transactions among the North-Western Slavs had already become semi-professional. In the bigger Slavonic towns settlements of foreign merchants were established. Adam of Bremen, who was writing about 1075, remarked that a number of Saxons and "Greeks", probably Russians of the Orthodox faith, were living at Wolin. On the other hand, Slavonic craftsmen and probably tradesmen settled in Danish towns.¹⁶

At the turn of the Xth century Baltic trade reached a peak which lasted about three generations. The general commercial trends remained the same but some changes occurred in contacts with particular countries. The interchange with Northern Europe prospered and now included a much more varied assortment of merchandise than before. Apart from the older Slavonic harbours of Oldenburg, Ralswiek on Rügen, Mecklenburg near Wismar, Wolgast in the Eastern Germany, Wolin and Kołobrzeg, new ones were established at Rostock, Usedom, Demmin (Eastern Germany), Szczecin and Gdańsk (Poland). Salt was still exported, but since Denmark imported it now from Lüneburg, the produce of the salt-flats of Kołobrzeg and the Kruszwica-region went to eastern Sweden and Gotland.

¹⁶ Monetary problems have been discussed by: S. TABACZYŃSKI, *Quelques aspects principaux de la circulation monétaire dans les villes polonaises haut du moyen-âge*, "Archaeologia Polona", VII (1964), pp. 165-179; J. SZTETYŁO, *Pieniądz pozakeruszcowy* (Non-metallic currency), in: *Słownik Starożytności Słowiańskich*, vol. IV, part. 1 (Wrocław-Warszawa-Gdańsk 1970), pp. 90-93; S. SUCHODOLSKI, *A propos de l'intensité de l'échange local sur les territoires polonais au X-XIe siècles*, "Wiadomości numizmatyczne XXI (1977), nr. 1, pp. 1-11; IBRAHIM IBN JAKUB, *op. cit.*, p. 146 and 3; HELMOLDI, *CRONICA SLAVORUM*, SS. rer. Germ. in usum scholarum, 3 ed. of B. Schmeidler (Hanover 1937), lib. I, cap. 38; ADAMUS BREM., lib. II, cap. 19.

Slavonic exports to the North included bronze jewelry, silver temple-hoops produced at Kołobrzeg and Wolin, ferrules for knife-sheaths (found only on the islands of Bornholm and Öland) and pottery. Many of the vessels found at Lund, Dalby and elsewhere in Skåne had pottery marks, similar to those used by Pomeranian craftsmen of this period. A certain quantity of Czech, Hungarian and Southern-German coins reached the Scandinavian markets through Polish and other Slavonic dealers.

Goods brought from Scandinavia to the southern Baltic coast were also the same as in the previous period. However XIth century findings include more weapons: swords and sheaths, battle-axes with broad blades, and spear-heads. Most were found on Polish territories: in Greater Poland (Wielkopolska), Kuyavia, Gdańsk-Pomerania, and northern Masovia, and had in all likelihood come from Sweden mainly from Uppland and Gotland, via the harbour of Gdańsk.

English coins have been discovered from the last decade of the Xth and first quarter of the XIth century but seldom later. It is unlikely that they indicate a direct commerce with the British Isles. Some were perhaps brought by Obodrite or Veletian seafarers participating in Viking raids on Great Britain. Most of the coins reached the southern Baltic coast by way of trade with Jutland, the Danish Islands, Skåne and to a lesser extent with Swedish territories too. Coins produced in the mints of Norway and of Lund are rather scarce in archaeological finds of this period, unlike the so called "half bracteates" from Haithabu (Hedeby).

Between 970 and 1042, in Jan Žak's view, about 76% of all Scandinavian goods imported to the Slavonic countries were brought on the Baltic Sea. Later this trade diminished, partly in consequence of wars which led to the destruction of Haithabu (Hedeby) by Obodrites in 1043 and Norwegians in 1066 and of Wolin by king Magnus of Denmark and Norway in 1043, and partly because of changes in the trade -routes. Gdańsk now

rose to first place before Wolin, accounting for about 27% of commerce with Scandinavia.¹⁷

During this period important changes occurred in the eastern trade. From the end of the Xth century the flow of coins and silver from Moslem countries to the Baltic region slowly began to ebb for many reasons, among them social and economic changes in the Near-East, the decline of the Sassanid state and the disruption of trade routes by Turkish nomads.

Russian traders acted now as brokers in trade with the Volga-Bulgars, bringing articles from the East and their own products to the Baltic markets. Adam of Bremen mentioned Russian people living at Wolin, which in old Russian tales is described as "glorious and rich". One tale relates of a seaman called Solovei Budimirovic who sailed to Russia "from the blue sea of Wolin". In Vadim B. Vilibakhov's view the hero of the legend could have been a Pomeranian trader for Budimir, his father's name, bears a close resemblance to a Polish-Pomeranian name, Bandzimier. Adam of Bremen refers to a trade route, from Wolin to Novgorod which took fourteen days and nights.

Many of the Russian and oriental articles found in the Slavonic coastal provinces and even in the interior of Poland came by this route, e.g. silver jewelry, beads of glass, coloured eggs of glazed earthenware, glass rings and a glass bracelet found at Kołobrzeg.¹⁸

¹⁷ K. SLASKI, *Udział Pomorza nadwiślańskiego w wymianie dalekosiężnej od VII do XI w.* (The part played by Vistula-Bank Pomerania in long distance trade from VIIth to XIth century) "Pomorania Antiqua", vol. IV (1974), pp. 97-121; J. ŻAK, *Importy...*, pp. 96-99, 153-154, 156; J. ŻAK, *Kontakte zwischen Skandinaven und Westslawen des 9.-11. Jahrhundert. nach Chr. im Lichte der archäologischen Quellen*, "Offa", vol. 32: 1975 (Neumünster 1977), pp. 48-53; J. ŻAK, *Zachodniosłowiańskie kabłączki skroniowe w Skandynawii* (Western-Slavonic temple hoops in the Scandinavian countries), in: Liber Josepho Kostrzewski... dedicatus (Poznań 1968), pp. 418-429; M. STENBERGER, *Slavische Funde auf Öland*, in: *Studien zur Europäischen Vor- und Frühgeschichte* (Neumünster 1968), p. 286 and 26.table.

¹⁸ V. B. VILIBAKHOV, *Bylina o Solovie Budimirovice v Svete geograficeskoj terminologii*.

There are some modest traces of trade contacts with southern neighbours which occur among archaeological finds of the coastal area, such as Czech, Hungarian (Vossberg, Usedom and Polish (Althöfchen Kr. Schwerin) coins, Byzantine coins, a glass pendant (Kołobrzeg), fragments of a robe of red and gold brocade (Gdańsk); Czech crystal beads (Kołobrzeg).¹⁹

Much more positive traces exist of commercial contacts with the German Empire and other Western-European countries. At the end of the Xth century an influx of coins from various German mints began and they soon were in the majority in the hoards of this period. Even though some of this silver may have come from trade with Danes and Swedes, the large quantity of these coins must indicate close commercial contacts with the territories of the German empire.

Slav exports to the West consisted of the same goods as in the previous phase, slaves and natural products. It is true that Poland was already a Christian state and its feudal lords could no longer sell their own liege subjects to foreign traders. Pagan war captives, such as Prussians or Pomeranians could be sold, but the kings of Poland often preferred to settle them on crown lands. The slave traffic flourished in the still pagan Obodrite, Veletian and Pomeranian lands, where internal wars offered many opportunities for taking prisoners. The price for a young man was 300 g. silver; for this sum one could buy a good horse.

Western-European merchants supplied the North-Slavonic markets with various products from the more developed crafts

Iz istorii russkoj narodnoj poezii, "Russkij folklor" vol. XII (Leningrad 1971), pp. 226-229; V. B. VILINBAKHOV, *Frühmittelalterliche Verbindungen der Ostseeslawen zur Rus*, "Jahrbuch für Geschichte der USSR und der Volksdemokratischen Länder Europas", vol. 9 (Berlin 1966), p. 236; J. KAMIENSKA, A. ZBIERSKI, *op. cit.*, p. 161, fig. 8, 162; L. LECIEJEWICZ, *Początki...*, pp. 179, 180.

¹⁹ T. and R. KIERSNOWSCY, *Wczesnośredniowieczne skarby srebrne z Pomorza* (Hoard of silver in Pomerania in the late Middle Ages-inventory) (Warszawa-Wrocław 1959) nr. 192-193; L. LECIEJEWICZ, *Początki...*, p. 179.



Obs.: Localities marked with a cross represent abbeys. Bigger towns are underlined.

of their homelands. Such commodities included a late-Carolingian dish found at Kołobrzeg, a glazed Rhenish dish from Wolin, fragments of glass beads and vessels found at Kołobrzeg and Gdańsk, German, French and Italian coins etc. Some of the imported goods such as fine garments and Frisian cloth, mentioned by Adam of Bremen, wine, ointments etc. left few, if any traces.²⁰

With the turn of the XIth century began the next phase in the development of trade among the North-Western Slavs. Feudal states emerged in the course of the XIth and XIIth centuries, but their rulers became vassals of stronger neighbours.

²⁰ L. LECIEJEWICZ, *Początki...*, pp. 158-160, 168, 179; K. JAZDZEWSKI, J. KAMINSKA, B. GUPIENCOWA, *Le Gdańsk des X-XIII s. Archaeologia Urbium: Pologne*, Fasc. 1 (Warszawa 1966), tables XIII and XVI; J. HERRMANN, *op. cit.*, p. 108, 111; ADAMUS BREM. lib. IV, cap. 18.

The principality of the Obodrites enjoyed a short-lived importance under Henry I (1087-1127), but later, after losing its western area including Lübeck and Oldenburg, became a fiefdom of the duke of Saxony as the dukedom of Mecklenburg. All Pomerania had been conquered by Boleslaw III of Poland, but the western principalities of Demmin and Szczecin (with Kolobrzeg) came in 1186 under the sovereignty of the Danish kings, who had already conquered the island of Rügen in 1168.

The consolidation of feudalism was connected with changes in economic and social conditions. The earlier Slavonic towns owed their prosperity chiefly to trade and crafts which mainly supplied the needs of a local elite. Now trade between rural and urban settlements acquired increasing importance. In bigger towns markets were held once or twice a week, and the products met not only the demands of the upper class, as before, but of ordinary country folk too.

The feudal rulers succeeded by degrees in depriving the local town elite of its former independence, which made the Pomeranian or Veletian towns virtually free republics. This, together with the development of latifundia probably brought about the emigration of many of the upper class to their estates in the course of the XIIth century, leaving trade more and more to foreigners.

As a result of the growing importance of domestic trade many small, unwallled settlements were established which were centres for crafts and for the local distribution of goods. Their origin was often due to the existence of an administrative seat, parish church, monastery, convenient cross roads or ford etc.

The feudal landowners favoured the development of crafts and trade. The market itself and the roads leading to it were under the special protection of the sovereign. An important factor in domestic trade was the institution of the *taberna* or tavern, belonging to the ruler or — later — to a local lord. The tavern-keeper had the privilege of dealing with food products and drinks; he probably also collected the taxes due to the ruler.

During the XIIth century barter was replaced — although not completely — by cash deals. The foundation charter of the bishopric of Pomerania dating from 1140 included a tribute paid to the bishop in money. At the same time, if not earlier, the old monetary system based on weight began to give way to currency of fixed nominal worth. The Slavonic rulers tried to introduce their own coins with compulsory circulation following the West-European example, and by the second half of the XIIth century most owned well-organised mints. The increase in internal circulation was very likely the principal reason why the hoarding of coins and bullion died out, and we know of few treasure hoards which had been hidden in the XIIth century.²¹

One is often told that, after the second half of the XIth century, there was a progressive decline in long-distance trade in the Baltic region, but this is only partly true. With the development of crafts and growth of the local market the importance of long distance trade diminished, but nevertheless this kind of commerce continued to answer a demand which could not be satisfied by the production of the Baltic area alone.

The few written sources for the XIIth century, which have survived, give some information on the nature of long-distance trade. A biography of the Swedish martyr St. Botvid, who lived in the first quarter of the XIIth century, mentioned that when he wanted to carry the Gospel to the Slavs on the southern coast of the Baltic Sea, he was advised to join merchants from Gotland who travelled this route very often. Horbordus, one of the biographers of the apostle of Pomerania, bishop Otto

²¹ S. EPPERLEIN, *Deutscher, böhmischer, polnischer und dänischer feudalistischer Staat im Kampf um die Gebiete zwischen Elbe und Oder im 11. Jahrh.*, in: *Die Slawen in Deutschland*, pp. 289-302; E. M. ENGEL, *Die militärisch-politische Expansion*, *ibidem*, pp. 315-344; L. LECIEJEWICZ, *Miasta...*, 145-146, 198-212; R. KIERNOSWSKI, *Pieniądz...*, p. 426 ff.; S. TABACZYŃSKI, *op. cit.*, pp. 173-175; POMMERSCHES URKUNDENBUCH, vol. I, 2 edition by K. Conrad (Köln-Wien 1970) - Pomm. U. B., nr. 30: 1140; HERBORDI, *Dialogus de vita S. Ottonis, episcopi Babenbergensis*, rec. J. WIKARIAK, K. Liman, *Mon. Pol. Hist. S. N.* Vol. VII, 3 (Warszawa 1974), *passim*.

of Bamberg, related that the missionaries who came to Kołobrzeg in the year 1124 did not find many of the town's citizens at home, because they were on trade journeys to "outlying islands", probably meaning Gotland, Öland and the Danish islands.

Another writer of the XIIth century Helmoldus, vicar of Bosau in Vagria, stated that foreign merchants were obliged to pay a tax to the temple of the god Svantevit at Arkona to get permission to deal on the markets of the island Rügen.²²

Commercial contacts between the North-Western Slavs and foreign countries underwent some changes in the course of the XIIth century although their general trend remained the same as in the previous period. The destruction of Old Lübeck in 1138, and the subsequent foundation of a new Saxon town with the same name between 1143-1159, had a major effect on the fate of the Baltic. For the first time the German presence, until now limited to merchant colonies situated in the midst of Slavonic or Scandinavian surroundings, obtained a convenient base for further expansion.

As early as the last quarter of the XIIth century the function of supplying the Baltic peoples with Western-European commodities was to a great extent taken over by the new Lübeck, merchants from the Frisians and replacing native traders. They did not, however, exclude the latter from trade completely, as often been asserted. We do not lack evidence of commercial activity among the Slavonic people. Under the terms of a Lübeck tariff from about 1220 the latter paid higher duties on their goods than Scandinavian, Livonian or Russian traders. A charter of duke Vislav I of Rügen from 1224 contained prohibitions on goods conveyed to Lübeck by ships of Slavonic freighters from this island.²³

²² VITA S. BOTVIDI, ed. E. G. Geijer and J. H. Schröder, *Scriptores Rerum Suecicarum Medii Aevi*, vol. II (Upsala 1878), pp. 379-380; HERBORDUS, *op. cit.*, lib. II, cap. 39; HELMOLDUS, *op. cit.*, lib. II, cap. 108.

²³ E. M. ENGEL, S. EPPERLEIN, *Die Entstehung der hochmittelalterlichen Städte im Gebiet*

The XIIIth century brought the growth of local commerce and some changes in the composition of foreign trade. Goods imported to the Baltic and the land of the North-Western Slavs no longer consisted mainly of luxury goods, but also of those in common use. The dispersal of all kind of goods was facilitated by a growing number of markets which arose even in small localities. Some were held once (Old Lübeck, Oldenburg) or even twice a week (Szczecin), and others were permanent. A charter for the Cistercian abbey of Doberan in the duchy of Mecklenburg, dated 1189 but very probably from the beginning of the XIIIth century, mentioned: "traders, shoemakers, hagglers and other craftsmen who could daily bargain on the market". These people probably lived close to the market.²⁴

Compared with the previous period, the range of goods exported from the Slav area on the southern Baltic coast did not vary much. The slave trade flourished until the second half of the XIIIth century. Helmoldus relates that refugees fleeing in about 1170 from German invaders were captured by Pomeranians and sold to Polish, Lusatian and Czech buyers.

Most exports consisted of raw materials. Flax and hops were mentioned in the tariff of Lübeck among the products sold by Slav traders. Wax was in demand on West-European markets. The abbey of St. Michael at Bamberg in Bavaria had been granted about 1187 an annual tribute of this product by the rulers of Pomerania. Beaver and fox furs as well as the skins of goats and cows, which are mentioned in a tariff of the town of Szczecin in about 1255, had probably also been exported to Western Europe earlier.²⁵

zwischen Elbe und Oder, in: *Die Slawen in Deutschland*, pp. 364-366; MECKLENBURGISCHES URKUNDENBUCH MECK. U. B. I. (1363), nr. 273: 1220-26; POMM. U. B., nr. 224: 1224.

²⁴ L. LECIEJEWICZ, *Miasta...*, pp. 117-119; HELMOLDUS, *op. cit.*, lib. I, cap. 84; HERBORDUS, *op. cit.*, lib. III, cap. 4; POMM. U. B., nr. 30: 1140 "decimam fori... Sithen."; MECK, U.B. I, nr. 148; 1189.

²⁵ J. BRANKAČEK, *Studien zur Wirtschaft und Sozialstruktur der Westslawen zwischen*

During the XIIth century a marked increase in fish exports took place, due to the spreading of the Christian faith and its customs of fasting. At the beginning of the XIIth century Gallus Anonymus mentioned the import of salt fish from Pomerania to Great- and Little Poland as a custom of long standing. Herbordus, biographer of bishop Otto of Bamberg referred to the cheapness of fish in Pomerania, where a cart load of excellent, fresh herrings could be bought for a single denarius. Helmoldus' chronicle recorded numerous foreign traders attending the big fishing expeditions of November off the coast of Rügen island. The herrings they bought were then exported either salted or as bloaters. A document from 1198 refers to red herrings transported in bundles from Gdańsk to the interior of Poland. The Cistercian abbeys of Lubiąż and Trzebnica in Silesia were allowed (1211 or 1214) to bring a fixed amount of herrings from the Baltic Sea coast free of any excise. Tariffs from the first half of the XIIIth century indicate that this fish was conveyed from the Bay of Szczecin up the Oder and Warta rivers, and from Gdańsk by land to Kuyavia and on to Upper Silesia and even Moravia.²⁶

Another export from Kołobrzeg and perhaps the salt flats of Mecklenburg, was salt, mentioned in the oldest Pomeranian

Elbe, Saale und Oder aus der Zeit vom 9.-12. Jhd. (Bautzen 1964), p. 121 ff.; HELMOLDUS, *op. cit.*, lib. II, cap. 6; MECK U.B. I, nr. 273: 1220-26; POMM. U.B. I, nr. 108: 1187-89; II, nr. 113: 1255; E. ASSMANN, *Die Stettiner Zollrolle des 13. Jahrhunderts*, "Hansische Geschichtsblätter", vol. 71 (1952), p. 50 f.

²⁶ GALLI ANONYMI, *Cronicae et gesta Ducum sive Principum Polonorum*, rec. K. Maleczyński, MPH. Ser. N. vol. II (Kraków 1952), lib. II, cap. 28; HERBORDUS, *op. cit.*, lib. II, cap. 41; HELMOLDUS, *op. cit.*, lib. II, cap. 108; POMMERELISCHES URKUNDEBUCH, ed. M. Perlbach (Danzig 1882) - PLL. U. B., nr. 9: 1198; CODEX DIPLOMATICUS NEC NON EPISTOLARIS SILESIAE - C. D. SIL., vol. II, ed. K. Maleczyński and A. Skowrońska (Wrocław 1951), nr. 149: 1211, 168: 1214, vol. III, ed. K. Maleczyński (Wrocław 1964), nr. 309: 1226. This tariff also mentioned the slave trade carried on by Jewish and Christian traders, travelling from Moravia to Kuyavia and back; CODEX DIPLOMATICUS MAIORIS POLONIAE, ed. I. Zakrzewski, vol. I (Poznań 1877) - C.D.M. Pol. nr. 372: 1259: corroboration of an older document from about 1230 A.D., concerning customs duty at Kostrzyń on the Oder.

tariff of 1159. Several Polish monasteries, like Trzebnica (1214) Żukowo (1299), Oliwa and Żarnowiec (1257) in the Gdańsk region and Kołbacz (before 1240) in western Pomerania were granted shares of the product of the salt-works at Kołobrzeg.²⁷

Timber had been exported from the coastal woodlands since the earliest times. The Pomeranian tariff of 1159 had already referred to rafts floated down the river Parsęta to Kołobrzeg. As the area surrounding this town was then heavily wooded it seems probable that at least some of this timber was sent abroad. A contemporary charter of 1188 for the town of Lübeck prohibited the sale of timber from its woods to foreigners. This had been exported to countries where forests were already scarce like Flanders or Frisland.²⁸

The Slavonic countries also sold some manufactured articles abroad. Excavations carried on at Lund have discovered fragments of earthenware produced by Obodrite or Pomeranian potters and dated to the XIIth century. Some of the glass-rings and bracelets excavated there were probably also of Slavonic provenance. It is probable that amber beads from the Pomeranian area were exported to Scandinavia and Northern Russia.²⁹

The nature of the goods purchased by North-Western Slavs in the XII-XIIIth century differed from that of the previous phase. The influx of foreign coins dwindled. The spread of the Christian feudal culture with its rulers' courts and ceremonial brought about an increasing demand for decorative paraphernalia, vestments, and church ornaments. On the other hand advances made in craft production demanded many new implements and particular raw materials.

²⁷ POMM. U. B. I, nr. 48: 1159; C. D. SIL. II, nr. 168: 1214; POMM. U. B. I, nr. 256: 1229; Ptt U. B. nr. 219: 1267; POMM. U. B., II nr. 837; I, nr. 373:1240.

²⁸ POMM. U. B., nr. 48; MECKL. U. B. I, nr. 143: 1188.

²⁹ L. STENHOLM, *Hushållskärl af äldre svartgods*, in: "Archaeologica Lundensia", VII, red. A. W. Mårtensson (Malmö 1976), pp. 253-259; L. STENHOLM, *Dräkttilbehör och smycken*, ibidem, pp. 302-304.

Specimens of Norwegian steatite and German basalt used for smelting have been excavated at Old-Lübeck. Rhenish and Saxon earthenware have been found here and at Gdańsk, and glass vessels from about 1150-1280 at Szczecin. Lead used for glass production by Wolin craftsmen was imported from Western-European countries. Metal dishes, probably from Magdeburg, have been found at Kamien Pomorski, for instance.

From Friesland and Flanders came cloth and fine linen (falding). Herbordus related that bishop Otto of Bamberg brought with him purple and other fine vestments and Frisian woollen cloth, which were much prized by Pomeranian nobles. The import of cloth to Gdańsk was first mentioned in a document of 1209 but took place much earlier. Another document from the years 1220-26 stated that a big ship (cog) loaded with cloth paid 10 ells of burnit (i.e. brown English cloth) or frizal (Frisian cloth) in Gdańsk.³⁰

Trade with Scandinavia left fewer traces than in the previous period. Mention should be made of such metal products, as a Gotlandian belt clasp of about 1100 found at Kołobrzeg, another from Old Lübeck, and amber amulets ("Thors hammer") from the beginning of the XIIth century.

Most goods from the Baltic area were found in Gdańsk and other sites on the Vistula, e.g. a bronze fitting of a sword of the Courland type (about 1230-35) and hasps in the form of a horse-shoe. Some products reached as far as Wolin and Old Lübeck.³¹

Trade with Russian centres continued. Ships from Novgorod and Pskov were mentioned in a charter for Lübeck about

³⁰ W. NEUGEBAUER, *Der Burgwall Alt Lübeck*, "Offa", vol. 21-22 (1964-65), p. 242; K. JAŹDŹEWSKI, *op. cit.*, table XIII; L. LECIEJEWICZ, M. RULBOWICZ, S. WESOŁOWSKI, T. WIECZOROWSKI, *La ville de Szczecin des IX-XIII s.*, *Archaeologia Urbium: Pologne*, fasc. 2 (Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 1972), table Va; L. LECIEJEWICZ, *Początki...*, p. 126; HERBORDUS, *op. cit.*, lib. I, cap. 36; *PL. U. B.*, nr. 14; 1209; nr. 33; 1220-26.

³¹ L. LECIEJEWICZ, *Investigations...*, p. 143, fig. 9 and 11; L. LECIEJEWICZ, *Początki...*, p. 170, fig. b; K. JAŹDŹEWSKI, *op. cit.*, Table XVI.

1220. In 1165 a Novgorod chronicle mentioned a guild of merchants trading with Szczecin, while Old Russian folk-songs originating from the Middle Ages referred to this port. Many examples of Russian earthen-ware made of white clay with green enamel and glass-ware, were discovered at Gdańsk, as well as semi-precious stones, crystal, and embroidered fabrics brought to Gdańsk from the Near East by Russian traders. Most of these were found in strata dating from the XIIth or early XIIIth century because later the Tartar invasion of Southern Russia made the oriental trade more difficult.³²

The continental Polish provinces participated in Baltic Sea trade not only with their own products, like wax, skins, tar, pitch, bronze jewelry etc. but also with articles imported from Hungary, Bohemia and Moravia, e.g. copper, tin, and glass jewelry.³³ A document from 1226 mentions the export of lead from Małopolska (Little Poland) to central Poland and probably to Gdańsk.³⁴

After this brief survey of the contribution of the North-Western Slavs to mediaeval Baltic sea trade we can sum up our considerations. Previous historical accounts emphasized the role of Frisian, Scandinavian and Saxon traders in the trade of the Baltic region during the earlier Middle-Ages. It is true that Danes, Swedes and to some degree Norwegians were the first to make contact with Frisian merchants and Balt, Finnish and above all Russian markets. From the VIth to the XIth century the Scandinavians played a very important part in the Baltic trade,

³² V. B. VILINBAKHOV, *Frühmittelalterliche Verbindungen...*, p. 238; K. JAŹDŹEWSKI, *op. cit.*, tables XIII and XVI.

³³ C. D. SIL. III, nr. 309: 1226: "currum vero per Seuor (Siewierz, Upper Silesia) transiens si plumbum ferat, scotum argenti solvat."

³⁴ A general survey of the juridical and economic changes has been given by: AN DRZEJ WEDZKI, *Początki reformy miejskiej w środkowej Europie do połowy XIII w. - Słowiańszczyzna zachodnia* (The Beginning of urban reorganization in central Europe up to the half of the 13th Century Western Slavs, *Anfänge der Städtereform in Mitteleuropa bis zur Hälfte des 13 Jahrhunderts-Westlawentum* (Warszawa-Poznań 1974).

along with first Frisian and later Saxon traders. The Slavs joined their northern neighbours in foreign trade only in the IXth century, when they had mastered the skill of navigating on the open sea. They were soon followed to a lesser extent by Balt and Finnish sailors.

The Slavonic peoples of the southern coast of the Baltic Sea now not only supplied raw materials to foreign merchants, but themselves became producers and traders. It was however only in the XIIth century that it was organized on a partially professional basis, compared with the Scandinavians. Further development of this organisation was impeded by competition from German merchants and craftsmen settling in existing or newly established towns in Slav and, to a lesser degree, Scandinavian lands. The subsequent process of replacing the native element first in foreign, then from domestic trade began in some countries ruled by a German or Germanised upper class such as Vagria, or the duchy of Mecklenburg, at the end of the XIIth century, and the duchies of Rügen and of western Pomerania in the first half of the XIIIth century.

In eastern Pomerania these changes occurred much later. The duchy of Gdańsk (which in the XIIIth century also include Slawno) was under the suzerainty of the Polish Dukes of Cracow until about 1227 and in 1294 returned to the united kingdom of Poland. Although there was a colony of foreign settlers in Gdańsk in the XIIIth century, native traders and craftsmen continued their activity. The Germans gained superiority in trade only after the capture of eastern Pomerania by the Brandenburgers and the Teutonic Order between 1306 and 1308.

