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## REVIEW ARTICLES

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### *Recent Research on Levantine Trade*

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The purpose of this paper is to give some information on the books and papers which have been published between 1965 and 1972 dealing with Levantine trade in the period from the Arab conquests to its decline in about 1600. No effort has been made to provide a complete bibliography. The paper is intended as a review of publications which make valuable contributions to this field of economic history or which represent particular trends in research. Critical remarks have been limited as far as possible.

#### a) EARLY MIDDLE AGES.

The long debate on the Pirenne thesis continues. R. S. LOPEZ, who has already dealt with this subject in previous publications, approaches it once more, from a new angle,<sup>1</sup> grouping the scanty records in chronological order. His aim is to show that in the first century of Moslem rule the Near East and Western Europe suffered a depression. The Arabs did not however suppress trade with the Christian Occident. The second half of the eighth and the first half of the ninth centuries were a flourishing period for both the Carolingian and the Abbasid empires. Then the Syrian and Greek traders no longer acted as intermediaries between East and West, because the governments of the great empires (the Carolingian, Byzantine and Moslem) tried to concentrate international trade in their capitals and, by effective controls, to prevent the export of certain articles. But Mediterranean trade was not extinct, as Pirenne claimed. The Greek towns of Southern Italy, which had

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<sup>1</sup> *L'importanza del mondo islamico nella vita economica europea*, in «L'Occidente e l'Islam nell'alto medioevo», XII Settimana di studi sull'alto medioevo 1964 (Spoleto 1965), I, p. 433-460.

become independent from Byzantium, linked the Near East to Western Europe, and the volume of Mediterranean trade increased in this period. In the tenth century there began a third period in East-West relations which was characterised on both sides of the Mediterranean by growth in population, increase in the area of cultivated land and in the output of mining. Correspondingly the commercial activities of the Italians greatly developed.<sup>2</sup>

A lecture by CL. CAHEN, which is included in the same volume as that of Lopez,<sup>3</sup> is one of the first contributions by the Orientalists to the discussion of the Pirenne thesis.<sup>4</sup> The French Orientalist disputes the ideas of Bolin,<sup>5</sup> who tried to show the parallel development of the monetary systems (and the AU:AR ratio) in the Abbasid and Carolingian empires. According to Cahen our knowledge of monetary conditions in the Caliphal empire is not sufficient to permit us to draw conclusions, and a number of suppositions are based on theories elaborated by late Moslem jurisconsults (e.g. the exchange rate of the dinar in early Moslem times). In the discussion of the Pirenne thesis the Moslem (and Christian) world should not be considered as one economic unit, for various Moslem countries had more intense economic relations with non-Moslem regions than with other parts of the Caliphal empire. The empire of the Caliphs could be roughly divided into three economic regions: Central Asia, the Near East and the Maghrib (including Spain). The Maghribin countries traded with Southern Italy, just as Moslem Spain exchanged goods with France. From the ninth century Maghribin Moslems visited Amalfi and other Italian towns, but they did not trade beyond Italy, for two reasons: the Italians did not allow them to go there, and they had little interest in Central Europe, which had not much to offer them.<sup>6</sup>

Three papers published by the writer of this review strongly support the Pirenne thesis.<sup>7</sup> Arabic and other sources are cited to show that the almost permanent warfare in the Mediterranean prevented regular wholesale trade in

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<sup>2</sup> For this period LOPEZ refers to his paper *East and West in the Middle Ages*, «*Relazioni del X Congresso internazionale di scienze storiche*», Rome 1955, III, pp. 113-163. But he also quotes recently published papers.

<sup>3</sup> *Quelques problèmes concernant l'expansion économique musulmane au haut Moyen Age*, XII *Settimana* etc., p. 391-432.

<sup>4</sup> He was preceded only, as far as I know, by D. C. DENNETT, *Pirenne and Mohammed*, «*Speculum*» 23 (1948), p. 165-190 (reprinted in A. F. HAVIGHURST, *The Pirenne thesis, analysis criticism and revision*, Boston 1958).

<sup>5</sup> MOHAMMED, CHARLEMAGNE and RURIC, «*The Scandinavian Economic History Review*» I (1953), pp. 5-39.

<sup>6</sup> On the trade of Amalfi with the Moslems see also A. O. CITARELLA, *The relations of Amalfi with the Arab world before the Crusades*, «*Speculum*» 42 (1967), pp. 299-312.

<sup>7</sup> E. ASHTOR, *Quelques observations d'un orientaliste sur la thèse de Pirenne*, «*Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*» 13 (1970), pp. 166-194; *Nouvelles réflexions sur la thèse de Pirenne*, «*Revue Suisse d'histoire*» 20 (1970), pp. 601-607; *Che cosa sapevano i geografi arabi dell'Europa occidentale*, «*Riv. Stor. It.*», 81 (1969), pp. 453-479.

the eighth and ninth centuries. The raids of Byzantine and Moslem war fleets brought about the decline or even the suspension of seaborne trade between Western and Southern Europe, on one hand, and the Near East, on the other hand. Arabic literary sources can be used to determine the origin of the articles which could have been imported into the Near East from Western Europe. From these works and Jewish juridical writings of the ninth and the tenth centuries one must conclude that the slaves employed in domestic service were mainly Negroes, and those acquired for military service Turks. Furs, the other commodity which could have come from Western Europe, were imported from Russia. The flourishing Moslem trade with Russia did not however link the Near East with the Christian Occident, for it connected Khwarizm with some regions of Northern Russia where Greek and Byzantine traders had been active many centuries before. The rapid decay of the coastal towns of Syria and Palestine in the ninth and tenth centuries bears evidence of the commercial depression in the Mediterranean world. In this period there was intense migration from Iraq to Syria and Egypt, but very few emigrants settled in the coastal towns of Syria. Finally, Arabic authors' complete ignorance of European geography shows that there were no commercial relations with the Christian Occident. Whereas the Arabic geographers of the ninth century and the first half of the tenth century included in their works long chapters on regions in the Far East and in West Africa, Europe remained a blank on their maps.

The approach of the American Orientalist A. S. EHRENKREUTZ<sup>8</sup> is very different. In his view the insecurity in the Mediterranean could have been the consequence of the Oriental traders' lack of interest in investing capital in transmediterranean operations. There Moslem governments had no reason to commit their resources to the maintenance of naval forces in the Mediterranean. The Arab conquests reduced commercial activities in the Mediterranean, but this was also brought about, to a great extent, by changes in the fiscal system and public finances of the Moslem empire. Unlike pre-Islamic times, the tax revenues from its various regions were not destined to maintain administrative centres and political activities outside the Near East. The capitals of the caliphs were in the lands of the Fertile Crescent. The reform of the coinage by 'Abdalmalik was undertaken in response to the expanding markets. Despite the increasing output of Moslem mints prices remained stable. A great new economic unit had come into being, so that Moslem traders were no longer induced to engage in trade with Western Europe.

The Rādhānites, those Jewish merchants who conducted world wide trade at a time when the Mediterranean was closed to Christian and Moslem traders, are the subject of two papers. J. JACOBI<sup>9</sup> tries, like many other

<sup>8</sup> *Another orientalist's remarks concerning the Pirenne thesis*, « Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient » 15 (1972), pp. 94-104.

<sup>9</sup> *Die Rādhāniya*, « Der Islam » 47 (1971), pp. 252-264.

scholars before him, to provide a satisfactory commentary to the passage in the work of Ibn Khurdādhbeh which refers to them. He believes that the enigmatic Djābiya (mentioned in the second itinerary of the Rādhānites) should be corrected to Bālis, and that Sūs al-aqsā (in the third itinerary) is a synonym of al-Maghrib al-aqsā. In the opinion of the German Orientalist the name ar-Rādhāniya itself means « Jewish wayfarers who provided the Arab geographers (and others) with information on trade routes », in other words it was a technical term employed in the caliphal intelligence service. This explanation is accepted by CL. CAHEN in a new paper on the Rādhānites,<sup>10</sup> in which he does however raise new questions. Is it conceivable that the same merchants travelled from the Western to the Eastern end of the hemisphere? If the trade routes travelled by Ibn Khurdādhbeh were the routes of great international trade in that period, why does he ascribe them especially to the Rādhānites? Why are they not mentioned in other sources?

#### b) THE PERIOD OF THE CRUSADES.

For research on Mediterranean trade in this period the so-called geniza documents are a very important source. Most of these Judaeo-Arabic documents — accounts, merchants, letters and contracts — date from the second half of the eleventh and the twelfth centuries. But S. D. GOITEIN has collected more than 30 letters from the archives of Joseph Ibn ʿAukal, an enterprising merchant in Fostat (Old Cairo) at the beginning of the eleventh century. These letters contain valuable information on Mediterranean trade in that early period. The letters, which Goitein published with a Hebrew translation and commentary,<sup>11</sup> reveal that Joseph Ibn ʿAukal conducted lively trade with Sicily, Tunisia, Morocco and Spain. He exported mainly flax and spices to Sicily and Tunisia, as well as indigo, precious stones, pearls, costly garments and vessels. From the Western Mediterranean he imported to Egypt gold and silver coins, silk, copper and corals (from Tunisia). Undoubtedly these were the main articles of Mediterranean trade in that period. It is worthwhile emphasising that this great merchant had no contacts with Christian traders, for trade between the Christian ports of the Mediterranean and the Moslem countries was conducted by Christian merchants.

The most important publication in this field in the years reviewed here has surely been the first volume of GOITEIN's summary of his geniza studies.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Quelques questions sur les Radanites*, « Der Islam » 48 (1972), p. 33 f.; cf. his paper *Y a-t-il eu des Rabdanites*, « Revue des études juives » 123 (1964), pp. 499-505.

<sup>11</sup> *Jewish trade in the Mediterranean at the beginning of the eleventh century (from the archives of the Ibn ʿAukal family)*, « Tarbiz » 36 (1967), pp. 366-395; 37 (1968), pp. 48-77, 158-190 (in Hebrew, with English summaries).

<sup>12</sup> *A Mediterranean society*, Vol. I (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1967). See also his paper *Mediterranean trade in the eleventh century, some*

The major results of Goitein's research, as far as Mediterranean trade is concerned, may be summed up as follows. Even after the dismemberment of the Caliphate the Moslem countries of this area still formed one economic region, exchanging their products and constituting a free market. The Moslem successor states did not impede the free exchange of goods, there were seldom, except for instance in time of war, embargos. Although there are some references in the geniza documents to trade journeys made by Arabic speaking Jews to Constantinople, Salerno, Amalfi, Genoa, Marseilles and other Christian ports, there can be no doubt that they were neither regular nor made by a great number of merchants. As a rule, it was the European merchants who came to the ports of Syria, Egypt and Tunisia. It was they who transported Oriental goods to Europe, not Moslems and non-Moslem subjects of the Arab states. Goitein concluded that in the eleventh century there were perhaps 8000 traders who participated in Mediterranean international trade. The average capacity of a big ship (sc. owned by a Moslem) was 400 passengers. So reports of about 5000 merchants travelling on the most important route, from Sicily to Alexandria, in one year might be indeed representative of the situation in that period. The volume of trade was limited. A caravan of 500 camels carrying spices from the Red Sea to Cairo was considered very large. The sums invested by an average oversea trader amounted to some hundred dinars a year. During the tenth and the early eleventh centuries Tunisia and Sicily were the hub of the Mediterranean, where goods from East and West were exchanged. Tunisian and Sicilian ports were the destination of most lines from Egypt. But there were also direct shipping lines linking Alexandria with Spanish ports like Denia, Almeria and Seville. The main ports of Tunisia were al-Mahdiyya, Sūsa, Sfax and Tunis. The ports between Tunisia and Egypt were of lesser importance. On the Syro-Palestinian coast no less than 14 ports are documented in the geniza papers.

Any fair reviewer can have only praise for Goitein's scholarly achievement. But only those who have themselves done research in geniza records can appreciate its real value. To draw general conclusions from the torn and fragmentary, often illegible and enigmatic geniza papers can be compared with constructing a high building from scattered and broken materials. Some reservations must however be made about Goitein's general statements.

The Cairo geniza (the store room of an old synagogue where documents were kept) belonged to *one* Jewish congregation in the Egyptian capital, that of the Palestinian Jews who were joined by the Tunisians. The merchants who belonged to it were engaged almost exclusively in trade with the Western Mediterranean, so the accounts preserved in the geniza contain no information at all about the trade between Egypt and Iraq, Byzantium etc. What limits

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*facts and problems*, first published in «Diogenes» 59 (1967) and then reprinted in M. A. Cook, *Studies in the economic history of the Middle East* (Oxford University Press 1970), pp. 51-62.

the historical importance of the geniza documents far more is, however, the range of the commercial activities of the traders to whose archives they originally belonged. The 'geniza traders', if we may call them by this name, were not engaged in trade of timber, slaves, weapons and furs, while their share in the wholesale trade of gold and grain was very small. Their activities even in the metal trade, which was of great importance in the Mediterranean, were insignificant, for the Christian traders of Southern Europe imported iron and copper to the Near East. Consequently the greatest caution is necessary in drawing from the geniza documents general conclusions as to Mediterranean trade as a whole. Were the commercial practices of the geniza traders really representative of those of other Mediterranean traders? Goitein himself emphasizes that cooperation between Jewish merchants in different countries was an important element in the success of their undertakings. A striking illustration of the danger of making overstatements is Goitein's conclusion that at least after the increase of Bedouin raids in the eleventh century (Banū Hilāl etc.) the merchants avoided as far as possible travelling overland, and preferred sea travel. The reviewer takes the liberty of asking if there was not another reason why Jewish traders avoided joining caravans, that is the desire to rest on Saturdays.<sup>13</sup>

The early stages of Italian trade in the Levant is the subject of a monograph by K.-H. ALLMENDINGER.<sup>14</sup> This book analyses the treaties of Pisa with the Fatimid and Ayyubid rulers of Egypt. The author does not quote new texts but attempts an exhaustive commentary on the treaties published by Amari by interpreting them in the light of the historical situation and the tenets of Moslem law. Allmendinger gives a thorough account of the status of the consuls, and the duties to be paid by the Pisan merchants and concludes from the privilege given to them in 1215 that their *fondaco* was considered extraterritorial (p. 84). Unfortunately the author relies too much on secondary sources and his knowledge of Arabic seems rather limited. So his results should not be accepted without checking the sources. Allmendinger says for example that trade was monopolised by the Fatimids (p. 51) and that the activities of the Kārimites, the great wholesale traders of spices in Yemen and Egypt, flourished under the reign of the Ayyubids, whereas they were suppressed by the Mamlūks (p. 77). But in fact, the fourteenth century was the apogee of Kārimite trade.

The effects of the fourth Crusade on Genoese trade in the Byzantine territories is examined in an excellent paper by B. BALARD.<sup>15</sup> This is a very

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<sup>13</sup> According to Jewish law a traveller who embarked before Saturday was allowed to continue his journey.

<sup>14</sup> *Die Beziehungen zwischen der Kommune Pisa und Ägypten im hohen Mittelalter* (Wiesbaden 1967) («Beihefte der Vierteljahrschrift f. Sozial- u. Wirtschaftsgeschichte», 54).

<sup>15</sup> *Les Génois en Romanie entre 1204 et 1261*, «Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire» (publ. par l'École française de Rome) 78 (1966), pp. 467-502.

successful attempt to combine data from notarial deeds with historical records and to calculate the volume of Genoa's international trade in the thirteenth century. The main conclusion of Balard's research is that despite the treaties with Venice the commercial activities of Genoa during Latin rule in Byzantium were very limited.

An original, though debatable, contribution to the history of Levantine trade in the period of the Crusades is a paper by A. M. WATSON.<sup>16</sup> The author, a Canadian scholar, intends to prove that gold moved from the Near East to Europe in that period, whereas silver was transported in the opposite direction. That would explain the « silver famine » in Europe. The first outflow began at the time of the Crusades in the thirteenth century. European silver was mainly exported to North Africa (by means of the millares). During this period, and also in the fourteenth century, Europe received gold from the Near East. At the end of this century the direction of the flow reversed; gold went from Europe to the Moslem Near East, and silver from there to Europe. Watson tries to substantiate these suppositions by tables of the AU : AR ratio in Europe and in Moslem countries. The data known to him are, however, few so that he underrates the value of gold in Near Eastern countries. Consequently his major result — that until the end of the fourteenth century Levantine trade supplied Europe with Near Eastern gold — will be contested.

### c) THE LATER MIDDLE AGES.

There is a considerable number of recent publications, papers and books, on the flourishing period of the Levantine trade, the Mamlük period, and some are of great importance.

The most lengthy contribution to the history of Levantine trade in this period is the history of Egyptian trade in the later Middle Ages by Subhi Y. LABIB.<sup>17</sup> The title of Labib's book does not correspond to its contents, for it is in fact an economic history of Egypt in the later Middle Ages. The author concludes that the rapacious policy of the Mamlük sultans brought about the decline of Levantine trade. The decisive step was taken by sultan Barsbay (1422-38) who made the spice trade a state monopoly. His successors pursued the same policy, which undoubtedly resulted in the decline of Egyptian commercial relations with Southern Europe in the second half of the fifteenth century (p. 339, 369). The Mamlük sultans embarked on this policy because they were incapable of balancing their budget. That, again, was the consequence of the antagonism between rich and poor Mamlüks and

<sup>16</sup> *Back to gold— and silver*, « The Economic History Review », 2nd series, 20 (1967), pp. 1-34.

<sup>17</sup> *Handelsgeschichte Ägyptens im Spätmittelalter (1171-1517)* (Wiesbaden 1965) (« Beihefte der Vierteljahrschrift f. Sozial- u. Wirtschaftsgeschichte », 46).

of the great corruption that was prevalent (p. 409f.). Egyptian industries decayed as a consequence of the attacks by European princes, and prices rose during the fifteenth century. Labib's book also contains chapters on communications, taxes and other topics.

The book is supplemented by the author's paper on « Egyptian commercial policy in the Middle Ages ».<sup>18</sup> Here Labib conjectures that it was Saladin who finally confined European traders to Alexandria and other ports, his aim being to exclude Western merchants from trade in Cairo and other towns of Central Egypt. The Italian traders were confined to their *fondachi*, which were by no means extraterritorial enclaves (cf. above ALLMENDINGER's view!), but buildings which the Egyptian government placed at the disposal of foreign merchants. The spice trade of Egypt and Yemen was in the hands of the Kārimites who were exclusively Moslem merchants. The Europeans imported into Egypt 2000 slaves a year from the Black Sea, grain and other commodities, whereas they exported from Egypt sugar, paper, oil and other articles. In the later Middle Ages a new market was opened to Egyptian trade — the Western Sudan. Nevertheless in the fifteenth century the European traders were Egypt's main suppliers of gold. But the Sultan's fiscal policy, « forced sales » and other measures taken by the government of Cairo, doomed the economic life of Egypt.

Readers of Labib's book (and the supplementary paper) will greatly appreciate the author's knowledge of Arabic literature, both printed books and MSS. Labib quotes a great number of Arabic treatises on administration and other subjects, Arabic documents in the Coptic patriarchate in Cairo and other sources. On the other hand he has omitted the Italian sources. The documents in the Italian archives which are the main source for the history of Levantine trade, have not been used (besides some Arabic papers). Even such printed works as the *Diarii* of Marino Sanuto and Girolamo Priuli are quoted at second hand, while Italian studies, such as the works of Roberto Cessi, have been overlooked. So it is obvious why the author arrived at erroneous conclusions. The spice trade was *not* monopolised, nor were the Kārimites an exclusively Moslem group of traders. Labib's statements about the articles exported and imported from Egypt by the Italian traders in the fifteenth century must be corrected in the light of the copious evidence in Italian documents and printed sources.<sup>19</sup> But the main objection to be made against Labib's book concerns his major thesis. The fiscal policy of the Mamlūks, bad and harmful though it was, was not the reason for the economic decay but the result of it! Egyptian industries decayed mainly

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<sup>18</sup> In A. M. Cook, *Studies in the economic history of the Middle East*, pp. 93-128.

<sup>19</sup> See my paper *The Kārimī merchants*, « *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* » 1956, p. 55; *A private letter of the Mamlūk period* (in Hebrew), « *Kiryath Sepher* » 18 (1941/2), p. 199 ff.

because of technological decline, not as a consequence of the attacks of the Crusaders or the extortions by the Mamlūks.<sup>20</sup>

Among papers and books dealing with the commercial relations of some European « trading nations » with the Near East attention should be drawn to the publications of GIANGIACOMO MUSSO.<sup>21</sup> This tireless searcher of Genoese archives has again published some very useful papers on Genoese activities in the Black Sea, Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean regions. Musso's papers contain detailed information about the records in the notarial deeds and other Genoese documents which refer to commercial activities, the administration of the Genoese colonies, the conditions of the non-Christian or heretical subjects of the Genoese and their policy in the Near East. He deals extensively with the great rôle of Chios and Caffa, showing that the commercial activities of the Genoese in the latter emporium did not cease after its fall in 1475. The history of Genoese rule on the island of Chios is the subject of a long paper by G. PISTARINO.<sup>22</sup> The author deals mainly with the political history of Genoese Chios, but his paper provides the economic historian with a broad view of the conditions which enabled the Italian traders to carry on their activities in the Aegean Sea.

The Levantine trade of Florence is dealt with in a monograph by M. E. MALLET on the Florentine galley.<sup>23</sup> This is a very thorough study based on numerous MSS. in Italian and English collections. The author concludes that the average cargo of the galleys was smaller than the figures usually given, viz. 150-250 tons of merchandise. According to Mallett's findings the cargoes rarely exceeded 150 tons and were often less (p. 31). A characteristic feature of Florentine trade in the Mediterranean was the preference given to the carrying trade. It was the custom of the Florentine galleys to go from port to port loading and unloading small quantities of merchandise (p. 32). Mallett gives an outline of Florentine trade with Egypt and Syria in the fifteenth century, showing that the visits of Florentine galleys to Levantine

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. my review of LABIB's book in « JESHO » VIII (1965), pp. 323-326. I do not point out minor slips, such as p. 103 where the author says that the gold of Taktūr came from Europe.

<sup>21</sup> *Nuovi documenti dell'Archivio di Stato di Genova sui genovesi e il Levante nel secondo Quattrocento*, « Rassegna degli Archivi di Stato » 27 (1967), pp. 443-496; *Fonti documentarie per la storia di Chio dei genovesi*, « La Berio » VIII, no. 3 (1968), pp. 5-30; *Russia e genovesi del Levante nel Quattrocento, Note su documenti*, « Rassegna degli Archivi di Stato » 25 (1965), pp. 227-244; *Note d'archivio sulla « massaria » di Caffa*, « Studi Genuensi » V (1964/65) (Bordighera-Genova 1968), pp. 62-98; *Il tramonto di Caffa genovese, Miscellanea di storia ligure in memoria di Giorgio Falco* (Genova 1966) (« Miscellanea di storia ligure » XII), pp. 313-336. Among recent publications on the Italian colonies in the Black Sea the Italian translation of E. C. SKRŽINSKAJA, *Storia della Tana*, translated by G. GIRAUDDO, in « Studi Veneziani » X (1968), pp. 3-45 should also be mentioned.

<sup>22</sup> *Chio dei Genovesi*, « Studi Medievali » X (1969), pt. I, pp. 3-68.

<sup>23</sup> *The Florentine galleys in the fifteenth century* (Oxford 1967).

ports were irregular and often suspended altogether (p. 63ff.). Finally attention should be drawn to the cargo lists which Mallett publishes. These are indeed very interesting documents. The author concludes (p. 121) that the Florentine loaded their galleys with large quantities of cotton, linen, soda, hides etc. whereas the cargoes of the Venetian ships consisted predominantly of spices. This conclusion will, however, arouse objections. Mallett draws on a paper by Heers dealing with Venetian trade at the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth centuries. But the so-called *muda* of the cogs visiting Syria in spring should be taken into consideration and in general the cargoes of the « round ships ». The discrepancy assumed by Mallett does not in fact exist. Generally speaking, the weakness of Mallett's book is the one-sidedness of his sources, due to his neglect of commercial and legal documents. It is not easy to collect data for the history of seaborne trade with the Levant from such sources as the files of the *mercanzia* in the Florentine State archives, but without doing so any result must be distorted to some extent.

The book by Mlle CL. CARRÈRE on Barcelona as an economic centre between 1380 to 1462 contains an interesting chapter on Levantine trade.<sup>24</sup> It is the result of thorough and patient research in the rich archives of Barcelona and provides an overall picture of Catalan trade in the Mediterranean. The author shows that Catalan commercial activities in the Eastern Mediterranean underwent frequent changes. Her findings indicate that Rhodes was the main emporium of Catalan trade in the Eastern Mediterranean, just as Chios was that of the Genoese. The author concludes that the importance of Rhodes for Catalan trade increased steadily in that period. Many Catalan traders settled there and sent their merchandise to Alexandria on Venetian, Genoese and Greek ships. The relations between the knights of Rhodes and the Catalans must have been very cordial. On the other hand, Catalan trading activities in the Aegean were less developed. There was no regular traffic between Barcelona and Aegean ports, although there was intense traffic between the Aegean islands and Rhodes. The pattern of trade and commercial navigation within the Eastern Mediterranean area is a subject which has been neglected by Heyd. So these chapters in Carrère's book will surely be very much appreciated by its readers. According to the author's findings Catalan trade with Syria flourished at the end of the fourteenth century, when every year three to five galleys (as well as round ships) visited Beirut. The author concludes that in that period the traders of Barcelona acquired Oriental products, such as spices, mainly in Syria. At the beginning of the fifteenth century the volume of Catalan trade in Syria diminished and in 1420 it came to an end. Henceforth Catalan traders did not visit Syria for 25 years. In

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<sup>24</sup> *Barcelone, centre économique à l'époque des difficultés 1380-1462* (Paris 1967).

the mid fifteenth century the Catalans resumed their visits to Syria and imported there textiles, honey, saffron, olive oil and other products.

The publications of commercial treaties by J. WANSBROUGH, professor of Arabic at the University of London, are fine pieces of painstaking research. The English scholar who has already published several texts and papers on the relations between Venice and the Mamlūk sultans<sup>25</sup> now gives us the texts of three commercial privileges (treaties), one granted by the Mamlūk sultan of Cairo to Venice in 1442, and discovered in the Museo Correr, another obtained by Florence in 1497, and found in the Laurenziana,<sup>26</sup> and finally the treaty between Florence and the sultan of Cairo in 1489.<sup>27</sup> In the paper containing the first two treaties Wansbrough intends to show how the Venetian privileges served as models for the treaties concluded between other European trading nations and the sultan of Cairo. The other paper analyses the various phases of the negotiations which preceded the conclusion of the treaty. Wansbrough publishes the Arabic and Italian texts of the treaties with an English translation and a commentary.<sup>28</sup>

The major problems of the Levantine trade in the later Middle Ages are dealt with in the following publications.

R.-H. BAUTIER, professor at the *École des Chartes*, outlines in a long and well documented paper the long-term trends in Levantine trade. It is the text of a lecture given at the eighth international conference on maritime history held in Beirut in 1966 and published four years later.<sup>29</sup> The paper sketches at length the history of the Genoese colony of Caffa and the role of Tabriz in international trade in the period of the Ilkhans. Bautier disproves (p. 289) Lopez' assumption that the Chinese silk transported on the « silk route » was destined for mass consumption and therefore cheap. He explains the rentability of its exports to the West by the fact that it was transported by nomads and other Asiatic traders to Persia. Some contentions in Bautier's paper, in which many documents of the archives of Florence,

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<sup>25</sup> *A Mamlūk letter of 877/1473*, « Bull. of the School of Oriental and African Studies » 24 (1961), pp. 200-213; *A Mamlūk ambassador to Venice in 913/1507*, *ibid.* 26 (1963), pp. 503-530.

<sup>26</sup> *Venice and Florence in the Mamlūk commercial privileges*, « Bull. of the School of Oriental and African Studies » 28 (1965), pp. 483-523.

<sup>27</sup> *A Mamlūk commercial treaty concluded with the Republic of Florence 894/1489*, in « Documents from Islamic chanceries », ed. S. M. STERN (Oxford 1965), pp. 39-79.

<sup>28</sup> The reviewer takes the liberty of making two remarks concerning the excellent translation. Instead of Amman, in « B.S.O.A.S. » 28, p. 485 it should probably be Hamath, an important center of cotton growing and trade (the Europeans called Hamath in fact Aman); p. 491 Zibeli is probably not Djibāl, but a town, see the context, a translation of buldān, and consequently it must be Djabala.

<sup>29</sup> *Les relations économiques des occidentaux avec les pays d'Orient, au moyen âge, points de vue et documents*, in « Sociétés et compagnies de commerce en Orient et dans l'océan indien », Actes du huitième colloque international d'histoire maritime (Paris 1970), pp. 263-331.

Piacenza, Aigues-Mortes and Barcelona are quoted, will surely arouse objections. According to Bautier the beginning of the fifteenth century saw the apogee of Venice's Levantine trade. Then the Turks put an end to Alexandria's function as the great emporium of the Eastern Mediterranean; that surely happened not later than 1470 (p. 298 f.). The European products (textiles and metals) which were exported to the Near East were more expensive than spices, so that by the end of the Crusaders' period the balance of trade became favourable to the Europeans (p. 300f.). The spice trade was by no means the most important branch of Mediterranean trade, and when one considers the value of these articles and the number of ships employed in transporting them one can talk of a « myth of spices » (p. 309). This is borne out by the quantities of spices which passed through the toll and customs houses of Southern Europe. Further, the merchants who took part in this trade, both in Europe and in the Near East, mainly belonged to the bourgeoisie of the border areas between the two continents. Bautier's thesis is supported by data concerning the customs collected in Aigues-Mortes and other Western emporia. In the discussion following his lecture both Cl. Cahen and Mlle Carrère disputed his thesis and cast doubt on his assumption that the balance of trade was favourable to the West. To the arguments put forward by these eminent scholars others could be added. The volume of Levantine trade in the second half of the fifteenth century was probably much greater than in the first half.<sup>30</sup> In order to prove that the balance of payments of the Near East was passive it must be shown how great were the quantities of European articles acquired by the Near Easterners. That in the first half of the fifteenth century the Near East lost such great quantities of gold as a consequence of the difference of the AU : AR ratio that dinars could no longer be coined is surely not true.<sup>31</sup>

In a paper written jointly with R. S. Lopez and H. Miskimin, Professor A. UDOVITCH, of Princeton University, offers a new analysis of the economic decline of the Near East which had repercussions on the development of Levantine trade.<sup>32</sup> In Udovitch's view demographic decline brought about a decrease in the revenues of the ruling class, so that the Mamlūk government

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<sup>30</sup> See the writer's paper *La découverte de la voie maritime aux Indes et les prix des épices*, in « Mélanges F. Braudel » (Toulouse 1972), I, p. 31 ff.

<sup>31</sup> See the data concerning the minting of dinars in Syria in P. BALOG, *The coinage of the Mamlūk sultans of Egypt and Syria* (New York 1964), nos. 120, 148, 156, 169, 170, 178, 179, 187, 190. There was indeed a shortage of gold in the Mints of Irak in the second half of the thirteenth century, but it was the consequence of the interruption of trade with Syria, Egypt and other Mediterranean countries. When commercial relations had been renewed at the end of the century, the Ilkhans did strike ever increasing numbers of heavy gold coins, S. J. M. SMITH-F. PLUNKETT, *Gold money in Mongol Iran*, « Journal of the Econ. and Soc. Hist. of the Orient » 11 (1968), p. 285.

<sup>32</sup> *England to Egypt, 1350-1500, long-term trends and long distance trade*, « Studies in the economic history », ed. M. A. COOK, pp. 93-128.

was compelled to resort to higher taxation. The scarcity of gold and silver coins was not the consequence of a wrong policy pursued by the sultan's government, but the sequel of Egypt's unfavourable position in international trade, that means its deficitary balance of payments. Trade with Western Sudan declined in the latter part of the fourteenth century, when African gold was channelled off to Europe. Henceforth the spice trade with Europe became the Near East's sole source of cash currency. The import of European textiles contributed to some extent to the decline of the Near Eastern textile industries. On the other hand, the rulers of Egypt and Syria spent such great sums on the acquisition of military slaves that Egyptian resources of precious metals decreased considerably. These are the main points in Udovitch's paper. The first part of his thesis, the supposition that demographic decline was the reason for tightening fiscal exaction, and not, on the contrary, that the heavy taxation resulted in economic decay, is surely true. Moreover, it is a brilliant refutation of prevalent simplicist interpretations of the economic history of the Near East in the later Middle Ages. As for the the analysis of the balance of payments of Levantine trade, see the summary of a monograph by the reviewer which follows.

Another paper dealing with the long-term trends in the history of Levantine trade is the work of CH. ISSAWI, professor of economic history at Columbia University.<sup>33</sup> According to Issawi the decline of Levantine trade dates from the beginning of the twelfth century and continued for seven hundred years. It accompanied the general decline of the Near Eastern economy, and the decay of its agriculture and industry, whose output fell short of the quantity making export possible. On the other hand, the industrial production of various regions of Europe and the Far East increased so much that the traders were able to start dumping in the Near East. Several objections could be made to this overall view of the development of Levantine trade. Was the volume of international trade in the Near East in the eleventh century really greater than in the fifteenth century? The documents in the Italian archives (and printed sources too) leave no doubt as to the almost continuous increase in trade between Southern Europe and the Near East. In the period of the Crusades the Near Eastern countries exported mainly flax and textiles, whose prices were considerably lower than those of Indian spices, the main articles of international trade in the later Middle Ages. It is also extremely doubtful that the agricultural output of the Near East declined so much that it could no longer export its products. The export of cotton from Syria was surely much more intense in the fifteenth century than at any time before. Issawi refers to the rise of grain prices in the Near East from the fourteenth century,

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<sup>33</sup> *The decline of the Middle Eastern trade 1100-1850*, in «Islam and the trade of Asia, a colloquium» ed. by D. S. RICHARDS (Oxford 1967), pp. 245-266.

but in fact they fell in the later Middle Ages, a clear sign of the discrepancy between supply and demand. It is true that the Near Eastern industries declined in that period, but it is certainly mistaken to say that Italian merchants more or less monopolised Levantine trade by the beginning of the ninth century (p. 259 f.). It seems that in this part of this interesting paper, as in others, the learned author draws on scholars whole conclusions are often dubious.

A small book by the reviewer deals with the Near East's supply of precious metals and its balance of payments in the later Middle Ages.<sup>34</sup> The supply of gold from the Western Sudan, although diminished, should have been sufficient until the second half of the fifteenth century, when the Portuguese share grew considerably. The supply of silver was less regular, but also in the later Middle Ages the Near East obtained great quantities from various countries. The « silver famine » in the eleventh and twelfth centuries came to an end when the Khwarizmians and Mongols brought great quantities of the white metal into the Near East. The invasion of Iraq and Syria and the establishment of Ilkhan rule in the thirteenth century brought about a new influx of silver from Central Asia. During the reign of the Bahri Mamlūks the Italian traders and the tribute paid by the kings of Little Armenia provided the Mints of Syria and Egypt with sufficient stocks of silver. At the end of the fourteenth century silver disappeared once more in the Near Eastern countries, but after the Mongol invasion led by Timur and the renewal of commercial relations with Central Asia, the rulers of the Near East could once more strike dirhams. The fluctuations of the AU:AR ratio in the Near East clearly reflected these changes. In order to explain the economic decline of the Near East at the end of the Middle Ages, despite the more or less sufficient supply of minting materials, the balance of payments of its international trade must be analysed. According to various sources the Venetians brought at the end of the fifteenth century about 300,000 ducats (in gold and silver) every year to the Near East, but as they acquired spices and other Oriental articles for much greater sums, they must have bought a great part, perhaps 40%, by barter, paying with European merchandise. The share of other European trading nations in Levantine trade was much smaller in the later Middle Ages, their commercial activities often being discontinued. Anyhow, there is sufficient evidence for the supposition that they too made many of their purchases by barter, mainly selling textiles and metals. Every year the Venetians imported into the Near East about 6000 *qintār djarwī* of copper, fetching 40,000-70,000 ducats. The sums spent by the sultan (and his amirs) on the acquisition of military slaves has been exaggerated, in the author's view. A thorough

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<sup>34</sup> *Les métaux précieux et la balance des paiements du Proche-Orient à la basse époque* (Paris 1971).

analysis of Arabic sources shows that in the fifteenth century they bought no more than 400-500 a year, spending perhaps 35,000 *asbrafis*. It is doubtful that the spices were liable to duty amounting to 100% of their value from their arrival in the sultan's dominions until they were handed over to the Europeans. The taxes can not have exceeded 50%. As the Near Eastern merchants acquired the Indian articles also partly by barter, the balance of payments of Levantine trade was in fact favourable to the Near East. The balance of trade with the European trading nations was, on the other hand, deficitary, but the deficit was more than compensated by substantial gains from the gold trade with the Western Sudan. The breakdown of the public finances of Egypt and Syria at the end of the Middle Ages was brought about by hoarding and great expenditure on military activities, at the very time when the Portuguese tightened their grip on the Sudanese gold and the Ottomans were advancing.

The proceedings of the sixth and the eighth conferences on maritime history include some papers which ought to be mentioned here. In those of the sixth conference there is an excellent paper by M. MALOWIST on Poland supply of Oriental articles at the end of the Middle Ages and at the beginning of the modern period.<sup>35</sup> The author outlines the trade between Lwow, the capital of Eastern Galicia, and the Italian colonies in the Crimea and Tana as well as the activities of Italian traders in Cracow, Breslau and other Polish towns. The import of spices into Poland increased considerably in the fifteenth century. After the discovery of the Cape route Indian pepper was imported into Poland mainly from Antwerp, but also from Turkey, especially in the Southern provinces.

In the proceedings of the eighth conference F. MELIS publishes a table of data concerning traffic in the port of Beirut from 1394 to 1408.<sup>36</sup> This is a most interesting contribution to the history of Levantine trade. The material compiled by the distinguished Florentine scholar reveals that the number of Venetian ships which anchored in Beirut in those years was no less than 278, while there were 264 Genoese and 224 Catalan vessels. Altogether 864 ships (only those having a tonnage of more than 150 tons are listed) visited the port of Beirut in those 15 years. F. HOURS discusses the increase in Beirut's overseas trade in the last years of Mamlūk rule,<sup>37</sup> which was undoubtedly the consequence of the great difficulties experienced by the European traders in Egypt in those years. R. SPRANDEL deals with the iron

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<sup>35</sup> *Les routes du commerce et les marchandises du Levant dans la vie de la Pologne au Bas Moyen Age et au début de l'époque moderne*, in « *Mediterraneo e Oceano Indiano* », Atti del sesto colloquio internazionale di storia marittima, Venezia 20-29 settembre 1962 (Firenze 1970), pp. 157-175.

<sup>36</sup> « *Sociétés et compagnies* », pp. 371-373.

<sup>37</sup> *Le rôle de Beyrouth dans le commerce oriental de Venise durant les derniers années du régime mamelouk (1510-1517)*, op. cit., pp. 435-437.

trade, an important branch of Mediterranean trade, about which medieval sources yield little information.<sup>38</sup> So one must be grateful to the author for having collected some data (from printed sources).

d) AFTER THE PORTUGUESE DISCOVERIES.

The publication of the second edition of F. BRAUDEL's *magnum opus*<sup>39</sup> is certainly an important event to be dealt with in this review. The author has included in the new edition references to a great number of books and papers published since the first edition appeared in 1949. Some of them, for example the books of Xavier de Planhol, Le Roy Ladurie, Ömer Lütfi Barkan and P. Chaunu, induced him to rewrite or to add whole chapters. So he has added a chapter on the global tonnage of the Mediterranean fleets (I, p. 406 f.) and, at the end of the section dealing with Levantine trade, a chapter based on the recent publications of Meilink Roelofs, Glamann and Magalhães-Godinho. But what did he change in the long chapters about the consequences of the Portuguese discoveries? Some corrections have been made to the conclusions of the first edition. Whereas Braudel stated in the first edition (p. 424) that the Portuguese did not succeed in impeding by force the export of spices from India to the Near East, he maintains in the second edition (I, p. 496), quoting Magalhães-Godinho, that this did indeed happen. As for the date of the recovery of the Near Eastern spice trade after its long decline following the discovery of the sea route to India, Braudel concluded in the first edition (p. 423) that 1530 must have been the (approximate) date. In the second edition he postpones it to 1540 (I, p. 493 ff.).

Braudel's thesis that Levantine trade continued to flourish despite the interruption caused by Portuguese enterprises is strongly supported in a brilliant paper by R. ROMANO - A. TENENTI - U. TUCCI.<sup>40</sup> The tables which these scholars have compiled of Venetian shipping in the Levant show the great decline which took place after 1500. The authors dwell on the various reasons for this decline which had no connection with the discovery of the sea route to India. Wars with the Turks and enemies in the West, the ensuing financial crisis and the competition of other European trading nations hit Venetian trade much more seriously, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, than Portuguese activities in the Indian Ocean; what is more, the Portuguese shipped to Lisbon only or almost exclusively pepper,

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<sup>38</sup> *Le commerce du fer en Méditerranée orientale au Moyen Age*, op. cit., pp. 387-392.

<sup>39</sup> *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, seconde édition revue et augmentée, two volumes (Paris 1966).

<sup>40</sup> *Venise et la route du Cap*, in «Mediterraneo e Oceano Indiano», pp. 109-132. By the way, the paper has been reproduced, apparently from the text of the lecture given at the colloquium, by LABIB in his *Handelsgeschichte*, p. 470 ff., five years earlier. Habent sua fata libella.

whereas they could not obtain great quantities of ginger and other spices. They could not offer their customers many articles, for example cotton, which the Venetians brought from the Near East. They could not barter such metals as tin, lead and copper for their pepper, because they had no customers for these articles, unlike the Venetians, in the Near East. Consequently the Portuguese cargoes began to diminish after the year 1520. The Levantine spice trade therefore survived the shock of the Portuguese discoveries, but the Venetians had reason for complaint, for they had lost their monopoly. They could no longer maintain the high price of pepper as they had before. But other branches of Venetian trade in the Levant also flourished in this late period. This well documented paper, in which a great number of merchant's letters from the Venetian State archives is quoted, is however, not entirely convincing. Its merit is the reappraisal of the effects of the Portuguese discovery, but they are seen from only one point of view, The historian of the Near East would emphasize the great losses suffered by the Treasury of the sultan of Cairo when the Portuguese brought pepper to Lisbon. As the sultan had handed over most of the estates to feudal lords, the income from the spice trade was an important part of his budget. Surely it was not by chance that shortly after the establishment of the Portuguese in India the Mamlūk sultanate fell.

Last but not least, the publication of the voluminous work of MAGALHÃES-GODINHO should be mentioned here.<sup>41</sup> In those chapters of this long awaited book which deal with Levantine trade the Portuguese scholar concludes (p. 310) that the Venetians paid perhaps 5/8 of the price of the spices in cash. The sum of money cash invested yearly by the European trading nations in Levantine trade amounted to half a million ducats (almost the same conclusions drawn by the reviewer in his *Métaux précieux* etc!). But immediately after the voyage of Vasco da Gama the decline of Venetian trade began, its place being taken by the Genoese, French and other European traders. The author quotes Lybyer and Portuguese scholars who had maintained before Braudel that the Mediterranean spice trade remained more intensive than the Portuguese till the end of the sixteenth century. But Magalhães-Godinho rightly raises an objection to the new trend initiated by Braudel's book which minimises the consequences of the Portuguese enterprise for Mediterranean trade. He stresses (p. 730) its fatal consequences for the Mamlūk kingdom of Egypt and Syria. Finally the book contains a very thorough account of the competition between the Portuguese and the Turks on the trade routes in the Indian Ocean. All those who are interested in this field of historical research will be very grateful to the author for this well-balanced presentation.

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<sup>41</sup> V. MAGALHÃES-GODINHO, *L'économie de l'empire portugais aux XV<sup>e</sup> et XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Paris 1969).

Finally a long paper by Mrs. F. LUCCHETTA ought to be reviewed here.<sup>42</sup> Its subject is a brief political conflict between Venice and the sultan of Cairo, but it also sheds light on the situation in the Near East after the Portuguese discoveries, on Venetian policy and the situation of the Venetian traders in Egypt and in Syria. The paper is mainly based on a MS. in the Museo Correr, but the author also used Arabic sources.<sup>43</sup>

e) VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

Besides the books and papers dealing with Levantine trade in certain periods or regions, mention must be made of some papers on the organisation of the commercial enterprises, the structure of the trader colonies etc. This was in fact the main theme of the eighth conference on maritime history.

Did large commercial companies come into being when the volume of international trade in the Mediterranean had considerably increased in the later Middle Ages? Obviously the study of trade in certain regions is the best way to find an answer to this question. In the proceedings of the conference there are in fact some papers of this kind. E. BARATIER, a great specialist in the economic history of Southern France, concludes that throughout the Middle Ages Provençal traders used to make contracts for one journey only, *commendas* and sea loans.<sup>44</sup> CL. CARRÈRE, discussing the Levantine trade of the Catalans, also emphasizes the conservative nature of their transactions. They travelled very much themselves and used the *commenda* when it was already out of favour in trade with other regions. They did not conduct trade with the help of factors; there were no companies of Levant traders in Barcelona.<sup>45</sup> The same is true for Genoese trade in Caffa according to M. BALARD, who analyses the deeds of a notary in Caffa, Lombardo di Sambuceto.<sup>46</sup> The *commenda* remained the usual method of association. All contracts were made for one journey only and the amount of capital involved was limited. The founding of companies was very rare. Sometimes the Genoese at Caffa employed « procurators », but they were seldom permanent ones.

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<sup>42</sup> L'« affaire Zen » in Levante nel primo Cinquecento, « Studi Veneziani » X (1968), pp. 109-219.

<sup>43</sup> Without detracting from the great value of this paper I would like to correct some errors and provide some explanations: p. 136 and p. 156, note 188 Dultibeg is Daulatbay; p. 139 Tauris is Tabriz, not Taurus; p. 142, note 126 Colocut is Calicut, not Calcutta; p. 149, note 156 and p. 168, note 225 should be Ibn Iyās, not Iyās.

<sup>44</sup> L'activité des Occidentaux en Orient au Moyen Age, in « Sociétés et compagnies », pp. 333-341.

<sup>45</sup> Barcelone et le commerce de l'Orient à la fin du Moyen Age, op. cit., pp. 365-368.

<sup>46</sup> Notes sur l'activité maritime des Génois de Caffa à la fin du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, op. cit., pp. 375-385.

R. S. LOPEZ outlines the development of commercial associations in Levantine trade throughout the Middle Ages.<sup>47</sup> He shows that the *compagnia* which had developed in the early Middle Ages from the administration of family property was not suitable for seaborne trade where every journey was a separate transaction which involved great risks. Even the *colonna*, the association of all the merchants travelling aboard one ship, did not prove suitable for this purpose. So the sea loan, inherited from the Greeks and the Romans, came into favour while the *commenda*, which was the favourite association for a long time, was even more popular. In the fourteenth century first the sea loan and then the *commenda* lost ground, when the insurance of merchandise became a common means of carrying on overseas trade. As it was no longer necessary for the merchandise to be accompanied by a business partner, the Levantine traders from then on conducted their activities with the help of overseas commissioners.

As far as the commercial associations of the Near Eastern traders are concerned, the proceedings of the eighth conference on maritime history also include a paper by S. LABIB on this subject.<sup>48</sup> The author concluded that the usual form of associations for these great merchants of the later Middle Ages were the family enterprise and the *commenda*. This is an unwarranted statement; the Arabic sources that refer to the *Kārimīs* do not make it possible to draw any conclusion as to their associations. (As regards the eleventh and the first half of the twelfth centuries, Goitein in his well-documented book has stressed that informal collaboration was prevalent, although there were family enterprises in existence).

The legal status of the Italian traders' colonies in the Near East and their judicial organisation are the subject of G. ASTUTI's paper in the proceedings of the sixth conference on maritime history. In this paper,<sup>49</sup> continuing previous studies in this field,<sup>50</sup> the author analyses the status of the Italian colonies in the Crusader states, the Byzantine empire and the Moslem sultanates. In the latter states the colonies of the Italian traders were, according to Astuti, by no means true colonial settlements, recognised by the local rulers as belonging to their European mother countries and enjoying autonomy. They had no extraterritorial rights, but a « regime of guarantees ». Although the organisation of the colonies varied greatly it may be said that they were small republics, modelled on their mother towns. But there were

<sup>47</sup> *Les méthodes commerciales des marchands occidentaux en Asie du XI<sup>e</sup> au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, op. cit., p. 343-348.

<sup>48</sup> *Les marchands Kārimīs en Orient et sur l'Océan Indien*, op. cit., pp. 209-214.

<sup>49</sup> *L'organizzazione giuridica del sistema coloniale e della navigazione mercantile delle città italiane nel Medioevo*, in « Mediterraneo e Oceano Indiano », pp. 57-83.

<sup>50</sup> *Le colonie genovesi*, « Rivista di storia del diritto italiano » 25 (1952), p. 19 ff.; ASTUTI-LEICHT, *La posizione giuridica delle colonie di mercanti occidentali nel Vicino Oriente e nell'Africa del nord nel medio evo*, « Atti del III Congresso di diritto comparato », Roma 1953, II, p. 131 f.

strong elements of a feudal regime. Some colonies like Pera and Crete even developed their own law.

In the proceedings of this conference there is another paper to which attention should be drawn, namely that of P. ADAM.<sup>55</sup> The French scholar believes that the lateen sail was invented not in the Indian Ocean, but in the Eastern Mediterranean. It was an innovation made by the Byzantines between the sixth and ninth centuries.

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Let us sum up this review by emphasizing that during the last few years research on Levantine trade in the Middle Ages has been enriched by painstaking, well documented publications concerning commercial activities in certain periods or certain regions and also by attempts to resolve the major problems, such as the balance of payments, the reasons for its flourishing in the High Middle Ages and for its decline after the Portuguese discoveries.

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<sup>51</sup> *A propos de la voile latine*, op. cit., pp. 203-215.