Cogs, Cargoes, and Commerce: Maritime Bulk Trade in Northern Europe, 1150-1400

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Lübeck and the Baltic Trade in Bulk Goods for the North Sea Region 1150-1400
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The German town of Lübeck, founded in 1143, was at the height of its importance for the east-west trade from the early thirteenth to the second half of the fourteenth century. It played a key role in the trade between Western Europe and the Holy Roman Empire on the one hand, and the Scandinavian countries and the Baltic region on the other. In the traditional view of the trade between the Baltic region and the North Sea region, nearly all western goods en route to the east and eastern goods travelling west had to be unloaded and reloaded in Lübeck from sea-going ship to barge and cart or vice versa. During the second half of the fourteenth century direct shipment of bulk goods, such as grain, timber or salt, between the North Sea and the Baltic Sea increased, and Lübeck's importance in bulk-goods trade consequently decreased—at least in comparison with its trade in high-quality products. This applied, however, only to the direct east-west trade; the town's importance for the transport of goods from the Baltic Sea region to central and southern Germany remained constant.

This traditional picture is founded on precious little information. There are only a few written sources dealing with Lübeck's bulk-goods trade in the thirteenth century; they are somewhat more abundant in the fourteenth century but then mostly relate to the trade in luxury goods such as furs, wax and cloths. In the following it will be questioned whether it is correct to maintain that the two sea regions, from early Hanseatic time up to the fourteenth century, were connected virtually only by the land link Lübeck-Hamburg.¹

Concerning the commodities traded, the traditional view portrays Lübeck in the second half of the twelfth century as a trading-place and port of transshipment mainly for high-value goods such as cloth, furs and wax.

¹ Daenell 1902: 9 f.; Rörig 1928: 158; Dollinger 1989: 301, 512. A fairly recent archaeological study even discusses totally separate trading areas during late medieval and early modern trade; van Haster 1991: 211.
But by the end of this century at the latest, bulk goods such as herring and salt supplemented these high-value goods. The increasing demand for foodstuffs caused by the growth of the European population in the thirteenth century meant that herring and salt became the fundamental commodities traded in Lübeck for at least 400 years. So fundamental were they that it was said that Lübeck was built upon herring-barrels.

By far the most important fishing grounds in Europe in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were those of Scania, which was also the busiest centre for curing and trade with herring. Scania's importance for Lübeck already in 1201 was so great that the town surrendered to King Knut VI of Denmark, when he arrested the merchants of Lübeck and seized their vessels at the markets of Skanör and Falsterbo. Important fishing grounds were also found along the coasts of the Isle of Rügen, near Stralsund; here Lübeck obtained privileges concerning herring exports in 1224.

The strong position achieved by Lübeck in the herring trade was a result of its trade with salt from Lüneburg. Even if this salt trade was far from monopolised by Lübeck merchants, by the end of the fourteenth century they were purchasing roughly 50% of the annual production of the Lüneburg salt-works (there is evidence of this from 1368/69). Lüneburg salt was not only used for curing fish but also exported on a large scale to the Baltic area.

At the turn of the thirteenth century, Lübeck traded in bulk goods from the western Baltic (herring, salt, grain and presumably beer) and from Norway (stockfish). Salt was only sent into the Baltic region via Lübeck, and to certain extent this was also the case with herring. Grain and beer, presumably from Holstein and Mecklenburg, were shipped to Norway. All other bulk goods were brought from the east to Western and Central Europe via Lübeck. The traditional view holds that the connection between the Baltic and the North Sea was made using the land link via Lübeck-Hamburg but not directly by sea.

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2 There is now evidence—mainly archaeological—that the herring trade already had great importance for the coastal region of the south-western and southern Baltic before the twelfth century; Benecke 1982; Leciejewicz 1985; Leciejewicz 1991; Jahnke 2000, chapter 1, "Einleitung".


4 Hammel-Kiesow 1998a. The production of Lüneburg salt itself increased from 5200 tons in 1205 to approximately 16000 tons at the end of the thirteenth century.
The role of Lübeck as a link between east and west was shared in late summer every year by the herring markets of Skanör and Falsterbo, which are recorded since the twelfth century and were established as international fairs towards the middle of the thirteenth century. Merchants from the Netherlands, England and other parts of Western Europe came to the Scanian fairs by ship, sold their goods, and bought herring and Baltic commodities taken to the fairs by Scandinavian merchants and by merchants from the newly-settled towns on the southern and eastern coasts of the Baltic. The ummelandfart (the sea route round the Skaw, northern Jutland) is first recorded in a charter given to Kampen merchants by the Danish king in 1251.5

This document, however, does not necessarily indicate the start of the direct route from Western Europe to the Scanian markets, and the Baltic Sea. Indeed, it seems more likely that the direct route was used even before 1251. But with what frequency? And did the ships sail on from Scania to the Baltic ports? The answer to these questions would indicate the importance of trade with bulk commodities via Lübeck before the second half of the fourteenth century.

In my opinion it is not too far-fetched to imagine considerable ummelandfart before the 1250s. Ever since the end of the twelfth century the sea route from the island of Gotland in the Baltic Sea to Norway and further on to the English east coast is well recorded. German merchants of the Baltic cities, primarily Lübeck merchants we presume, joined the Gotlandic merchants in the so-called Gilda communis and sailed together with them to Norway and England.6 German merchants, especially from the Wendish towns Lübeck, Wismar, Rostock and Stralsund, visited Norway on their own from the beginning of the thirteenth century at the latest. On getting closer trade connections with England and Flanders, it was only a small step to sail from the top of the Skaw in the direction of Boston or Bruges. This was of course far more dangerous since gales were frequent and the west coast of the Jutland peninsula lacked natural harbours. For this reason the direct route between the Baltic and the North Sea region was used only by ships carrying bulk goods; for very valuable goods Lübeck remained the most important port of transshipment.

5 Diplomatarium Danicum, 2d ser. vol.1, no. 50; Hansisches Urkundenbuch 1, 1876, no. 411.
6 Kattinger 1999: 184 f.
Studies in Hanseatic history in the decades after World War II do not (at least not directly) deal with the topic of Baltic bulk goods—the first monograph on Baltic herring fishery and trade was published in 2000. And hardly any attention has been paid to the other bulk goods from the region, such as grain, tar, pitch, potash, etc., even though the overall picture of trade between Western and Eastern Europe emphasises the essential importance of Baltic bulk goods. In the main these were raw materials and foodstuffs necessary for the economic growth and prosperity of Flanders and England and, later on, of the northern Netherlands. Nevertheless, more recent studies do deal with the ummelandfart in both directions, which is said to have taken place in a small number of cases with bulk commodities already in the second half of the thirteenth century, but no study presents the few pieces of evidence we actually have. In what follows, I will therefore give a description of the part Lübeck merchants may have played in the ummelandfart with respect to their trade in bulk goods.

WRITTEN EVIDENCE

The written sources for Lübeck trade fall in three periods. In the first, which began in the middle of the twelfth and came to a close in the middle of the thirteenth century, no figures at all are recorded for bulk commodities. Chronicles, privileges and even the famous toll rolls from Damme and Thourout on the route to Bruges (1252) give hardly any information. The second period—from the third quarter of the thirteenth to the middle of the fourteenth century—gives better information through the account books (Handelsbücher) of some Lübeck merchants, some customs accounts recorded in England, and also the so-called Niederstadtbuch, a ledger maintained by the city authorities for private debts. But, like the lists of commodities carried by wrecked or captured ships, these sources only give information concerning individual cases. However, they do allow us in some cases to reconstruct the ratio between high-value goods and bulk goods.

7 Jahnke 2000 (see note 2 above).
8 See, e.g., Postan 1973.
10 According to Dollinger 1989: 275-78.
11 Hansisches Urkundenbuch 1, 1876, no. 432, 435.
The third period that began in the second half of the fourteenth century, is characterised by a far greater wealth of sources, most of them of the same type as in the second period. However, the most important ones are new: the so-called Pfundzollbücher. The Pfundzoll were customs imposed on ships and commodities in towns of the Hanseatic League during times of war. The great importance of this source is that for specific harbours and specific years it lists nearly all the ships, the weight and the value of almost all commodities which arrived in and sailed from a harbour.\(^{12}\) Of course there are gaps, but in spite of them these sources allow us for the first time to reconstruct nearly all the seaborne trade for a specific town. In this way we are able to get a rough picture of the relationship between high-value goods and bulk goods.

This short overview shows that the Lübeck evidence gives no figures allowing us to determine the proportions of high-value and of bulk goods, not even in individual cases, before the third decade of the fourteenth century. No rough overall relationship can be established for the time before 1368/69, i.e., when a large and ever-increasing share of the bulk goods passed Lübeck by on its way through the Sound. For the period in which it must have been important, both in value and in volume (1150/1200-1350/1400), there are only few sources with qualified evidence and even a total lack of “hard figures.”

GROWTH AND DECLINE OF POPULATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ECONOMY

Population growth, mainly in Western Europe, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries led to an increasing demand for foodstuffs and raw materials. In the course of the thirteenth century the newly settled coastal regions of the southern and eastern Baltic, and their hinterlands, increasingly provided these commodities.

There must have been a serious recession in the bulk-goods trade after the Black Death in the second half of the fourteenth century. This is important from a methodological viewpoint because the above-mentioned Pfundzollbücher, which give a rough ratio between high-value goods and bulk commodities, do not exist before 1368/69 when heavy population losses had already taken place. In contrast to historians believing in an

\(^{12}\) The records for the Baltic region are given in Jahnke 1998 (see list 163-170).
increasing trade (with high-value goods only?) after the first epidemics, I presume that the heavy losses of one-third, or even half of the population in many parts of Europe must consequently have led to a downswing in trade with bulk commodities. There is evidence throughout Europe of a severe economic downswing after the late 1370s when the de-population effects of the third wave of the Black Death had culminated and led to consequences for the level of rents, prices and the demand for certain commodities. In Lübeck and Genoa the value of the seaborne trade shows a considerable decrease, as in England too. The output of silver coins also shrank dramatically, in Lübeck in the second half of the fourteenth century, in other European countries and towns mainly between 1395 and 1415. The only exception—as far as we know—was the Netherlands where only few died during the Black Death epidemics. The figures Arne Nedkvitne gives for the trade with stockfish between Norway and England also show an extreme downswing. At the beginning of the fourteenth century approximately 2000 tons (1 ton = 1000 kg) of stockfish per year were brought to the eastern harbours of England (1200 tons by German merchants, especially from Lübeck, 500 tons by English and 300 tons by Norwegian merchants). From 1365 to 1400 stockfish exports to England had sunk to roughly 470 tons, about a quarter of the amount traded at the beginning of the century. Even if this shrinkage does not apply to the entire stockfish trade, it seems clear that this development was due to population decreases and smaller production in Norway as well as in England (and in other countries to which stockfish was exported, even if there are no figures like those found for England). The figures given in the Pfundzollbücher for 1368/69 must therefore be smaller than those (unknown ones) for Lübeck's seaborne trade half a century earlier.

This assumption may be substantiated by evidence of trade with bulk goods in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to which less importance has hitherto been attached.

15 Nedkvitne 1976a. See also Nedkvitne 1983b: 33-61. For an overview see Helle 1980: 32f. For the former period see Helle 1967. Stockfish constituted about 83% of the whole Norwegian export to England which seems to have been more important than the export from Bergen/Norway to Lübeck.
THE TOPOGRAPHICAL INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE LÜBECK HARBOUR

To some degree the topographical infrastructure of the Lübeck harbour reflects the history and development of the town's trade (Figure 6). In the oldest part of the port, which we think goes back to the twelfth century, were the landing-places for vessels from Rostock, Stockholm, Wismar, Novgorod and Riga, all places which Lübeck merchants visited already in the twelfth and at the beginning of the thirteenth century. Vessels from Bergen in Norway, from the markets of Skanör and Falsterbo, from Prussia and Courland had landing-places in areas of the port which were extended in the early thirteenth century, the time when Lübeck merchants started to visit the markets of these regions.

According to this pattern of development the port of Lübeck was divided into two specific areas according to the nature of the goods that were loaded and unloaded there: in the oldest area high-value goods such as furs, wax and cloth were unloaded, whereas the extended area constituted the port for bulk goods such as herring, grain and beer.

Grain must have been an item of much importance in Lübeck trade. It came to Lübeck from Mecklenburg, Holstein and the county of Ratzeburg, and Prussia too from 1280, mainly for transport to the west. The status of the southern Baltic coast as a region of surplus grain production is well documented from the second half of the thirteenth century. Moreover, at the end of the thirteenth century, the Wakenitz River was dammed for a third time to obtain enough waterpower to be able to construct larger grain mills. However, the capacity of these mills is unknown, and neither do we know if they were fully occupied in supplying the town's population with flour. Certainly flour is well documented as one of Lübeck's exports, chiefly being supplied to Bergen.

There were many granaries in both harbour areas. At the turn of the thirteenth/fourteenth century, twenty-two granaries were located on the sea harbour (Figure 6) and a further seventeen on the domestic port (Figure 7). This leads to the conclusion that large amounts of grain were brought in by sea. But much must also have come from the county of Holstein to Lübeck via the Trave River, or been sent from Lübeck to Hamburg.

17 See Hammel-Keesow 1996.
18 For the Lübeck grain trade see Rödig 1958a: 190 f.; Rödig 1958b: 555-559, 564 f.; Rödig 1958c: 221 note 7, 238.
on the same river; grain would have travelled from the county of Ratzeburg on the river Stecknitz. Unfortunately, the buildings whose function can be clearly identified by their descriptions in the Oberstadtbücher do not exist any more, and only a few traces of them have been found. Therefore we know nothing of their storage capacity.

There is, however, an eighteenth-century drawing of the later, so-called Arsenal in the north of the town, which in those days was called the domus civitatis, and was used as a granary. It was the same type of building as one
which was, or rather still is situated in the domestic port. During the sixteenth century this was converted into a salt store, as was the Arsenal, and in the late seventeenth century it was rebuilt and became one of the most valuable buildings of the early modern town according to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century tax documents. Here we can at least find the remains of the grain store in its fireproof walls, and note that the facade remained unchanged although the function of the building underwent total alteration.
Judging by the entries in the Oberstadtbücher, a large number of grain stores in the town’s harbour areas were converted into salt stores in the sixteenth century. The records of grain stores of around 1300, in comparison to the salt lofts and salt stores of the sixteenth century, clearly reflect the decline of the grain trade through Lübeck and the flourishing of the trade with Lüneburg salt which, however, culminated between 1525/6 and 1571/2. The herring houses—the famous Lübeck Salzspeicher—near the Holstentor were converted into salt stores at the same time (Plate 1).

19 The storage building An der Obertrave 43/44, for example, was recorded in 1301 as domus frumenti, in 1539 as solthus. I am grateful to Margrit Christensen who allowed me to use the results of her research; see her Kleinbürgerlicher Wohnungsba in Lübeck. Grundstücksentwicklung, Baustuktur und Sozialtopographie im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert (forthcoming).

In the last quarter of the thirteenth century, with the great increase in stone structures, house types became standardised in Lübeck. There is documentation for a wide range of building types in the second and third quarters of this century, but after ca. 1500 virtually only the so-called Dielenhäuser were built.\(^1\)

Typically the Dielenhaus consisted of a large, high, single room on the ground floor (possibly already with a Dornse, a small, separated room beside the entrance, used as an office, scrivekamere), sometimes a very low first storey and three to four lofts under the roof. Where the ground allowed it, a cellar construction was built, usually in merchants’ houses of vaulted construction (Plate 2).

The storage lofts appear to have been primarily constructed for bulk goods because their loading capacity was insufficient for barrel-packed commodities. The storage capacity of a Dielenhaus far exceeded the provisions necessary for a normal household. One Last of grain, about two tons, needs ten square metres of floor space.\(^2\) On the lower floor of a Dielenhaus, where the storage space is unrestricted by the slope of the roof, an average of 160 square metres could have stored 16 Last or 32 tons of grain. In the fourteenth century there were about 500 merchants in Lübeck, some owning more than one property,\(^3\) giving a lower storage-room capacity for the whole town of 8,000 Last or 16,000 tons of grain. In other words, there would have been sufficient storage space for the provisions of around 46,000 people for one year (350 kg per head/year). But this does not take into account the storage capacity of the lofts, nor the capacity of the Dielenhäuser that were not owned by merchants, nor, most importantly, the capacity of the storage houses mentioned above. The latter ones would have had room for another 16,000 tons of grain.\(^4\) It should be noted that

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\(^2\) Hennings 1956.
\(^3\) Hammel-Kiesow 1988: 56 f.
\(^4\) A highly hypothetical calculation can be made for the storage house in the area of the domestic port (see Figure 6). It has a surface of ca. 670 square metres, which would be sufficient to store 67 Last or 134 tons (see note 22). If we calculate for three floors only, the storage capacity would have been 134 Last or about 400 tons. If we now assume a similar capacity for the 39 storage houses existing at the beginning of the fourteenth century, we get a storage room capacity of another 16,000
Plate 2. Lübeck, vaulted cellar, Schüsselbuden 2, used as a store room for goods that could be kept in a slightly damp atmosphere. Photo: Jens Holst, Hoisdorf/Stralsund.
Lübeck had around 20,000 inhabitants at this time. If we compare this with the annual grain consumption in London (at the end of the thirteenth century approximately 27,900 tons for both food and drink) we see that Lübeck's storage capacity (over 32,000 tons) would have been more than sufficient for the estimated grain requirement of London's 100,000 inhabitants. To put these figures into perspective, they should be compared to the "rather substantial amount of grain" exported from England between 1377 and 1461—which averaged no more than 3,861 quarters (= 653 tons) per annum.

We do not know when the east-west grain trade through Lübeck came to an end. It must have declined simultaneously with the increasing trade via the direct route from Prussian and Livonian harbours to Western Europe. This began in the second half of the fourteenth century but would only have threatened Lübeck's trade from the last quarter of the fifteenth century. Grain was an important commodity for western destinations—at first to Bruges and later direct to other ports and to the bays of Bourgneuf, to Portugal and Spain, where it was exchanged for salt.

It is interesting to note that, as far as we now know, trusses (Unterzüge) and Hausbäume, which increased the loading capacity of the lofts, came into being in the fifteenth-century Dielenhäuser. This could indicate that the bulk goods storage spaces, after the decline in the grain trade, were now rebuilt to accommodate other, heavier items. The number known of such cases is, however, too small to offer a solid basis for this hypothesis.

The Dielenhaus had further storage spaces: the first storey, which was possibly also used as living quarters, but above all the cellar. This served as store for goods that ought to be kept in a somewhat damper atmosphere,
Figure 8. Lübeck—map of cellars. Black: vaulted cellars; grey: cellars with trabeated ceilings. Map: Jens Holst, Hoisdorf/Stralsund.
such as cloth and furs, while the upper storey was kept for goods needing dry storage.

The storage capacity of the cellars was enormous. For the exhibition "Pfeffer & Tuch für Mark & Dukaten" (The Lübeck Treasure Trove), the present writer made a reconstruction of the cellar of a Lübeck merchant house from around 1530. The goods are shown in barrels, bales and sacks, which correspond in size, contents and price to our present knowledge of trade in Lübeck in the first half of the sixteenth century. Only half of the cellar is filled with goods, which have a value of 1.3 million DM in today's currency, or roughly 580,000 US dollars or 665,000 Euro (2001 rates).

A glance at the cellar plan of the town (Figure 8) shows how many vaulted cellars (the black ones), were constructed in Lübeck as a rule in the thirteenth and at the latest in the early fourteenth century. This information gives an idea of the quantity and value of the goods stored in the houses of the Lübeck merchants in the Middle Ages and in Early Modern times.

The development of the infrastructure of the Lübeck sea harbour, as well as the evidence of storage-houses mentioned in the entries of the Oberstadtbücher, and architectural history revealing the storage capacity of the Dielenhaus, prove the existence of the bulk goods trade (which was never in doubt anyway). The question now is the nature of these bulk goods and whether some travelled to England and Flanders by ship—through the Belt or Sound and round the Skaw.

**Bulk Goods in the Trade with England**

At the beginning of the thirteenth century it seems that German merchants from the Baltic region travelled to England, at first together with Scandinavian merchants from Gotland. The question of whether the Gotland mer-

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30 The first evidence of a merchant from the Baltic region in London is a safe-conduct given in July 1223 to Gilbert of Schleswig, a subject of the Duke of Lüneburg; see Lloyd 1991: 17 and note 5.

The presence of Lübeck merchants in London before 1226 is proved indirectly by an imperial charter (Reichsfreiheitsprivileg) from 1226, which ruled that the merchants from Cologne and Tiel had to stop exacting illegal tolls from Lübeck merchants in London; Lloyd 1991: 18.

In the same year the merchants of Gotland successfully claimed in the curia regis
chants (mentioned in contemporary English sources) were actually Scandi-
navians or Germans is, I think, solved by the study of Detlef Kattinger
which proves that indigenous Gotlandic merchants and Germans colla-
borated in the so-called *gilda communis*, first in the Baltic region and
subsequently in trade with England too.\textsuperscript{31} They shipped furs and wax to
England where the goods were sold especially to the court and to noble-
men.\textsuperscript{32} We do not know whether these merchants travelled from the Baltic
Sea through the Sound to Norway and then onwards to England, or
whether they chose the Lübeck-Hamburg route. There is evidence of both:
at the turn of the thirteenth century for the route via Norway, and some-
what later, in 1237, for the Lübeck-Hamburg route.\textsuperscript{33} Here again is the

that they should be exempt from lastage and other customs throughout England,
and that they had never paid any before the last war, presumably the disturbance

In Boston and Lynn the earliest evidence dates back to the twelfth century and
*Estrenses* meant people coming from E(a)stland, i. e., the Baltic region or even “the
parts beyond the North Sea” including Denmark; see Nils Hybel’s article below, p.
221; Behrmann 1997.

\textsuperscript{31} Kattinger 1999: 233-264. Lloyd 1991: 17, emphasises that “it is quite clear that
merchants of Lübeck and other towns of the north-German mainland did not auto-
matically share in Gotland privileges in England,” which may be true concerning
the meaning of “automatically” but not concerning the close connection between
Lübeck and other north-German and Gotlandic merchants proved by Kattinger.

\textsuperscript{32} E. g., *Hansisches Urkundenbuch* 1, 1876, no. 475 a.a. 1255.

\textsuperscript{33} Norway route: Kattinger 1999: 233 f. This route was to become one of the most
important for the trade of the Wendish towns from Lübeck to Stralsund up until the
sixteenth century; see below.

Lübeck-Hamburg axis: *Hansisches Urkundenbuch* 1, 1876, no. 281; Kattinger
1999: 251-254. A charter granted in this year (1237) by King Henry III of England
to *omnibus mercatoribus de Guthland[ia]* was kept in the Lübeck archives. In the
archives of the town of Wesel, situated on the lower Rhine, and of the Westphalian
town of Soest, are copies of this charter, which show that merchants of these towns
traded in England together with Gotlandic merchants.

For the land route see, too, the charters granted by the counts of Holstein for
the burgurers and merchants from Riga in 1251 (*Hamburgisches Urkundenbuch* 1,
1907, no. 562), for *universis mercatoribus Romani imperii* in 1253 (*Hansisches Ur-
kundenbuch* 1, 1876, no. 454), for all merchants coming from Gotland in 1255
(*Hansisches Urkundenbuch* 1, 1876, no. 483); Kattinger 1999: 308-314, who inter-
prets these charters as a reaction to the charter which King Abel granted to the um-
question of what the first written evidence really proves. Perhaps the merchants of the *gilda communis* chose the direct way round the Skaw because the first written evidence of this is dated only fourteen years later, 1251.

Ever since the last third of the thirteenth century there is evidence of the import to England of bulk goods from the Baltic region by early Hanseatic and this means by Lübeck merchants too. Bulk goods were shipped to ports on the east coast, e.g., Boston and (King's) Lynn, and comprised many kinds of timber, woodland products like potash, pitch and tar, as well as copper (from Sweden), herring and stockfish. Norwegian stockfish, timber and herring were the only bulk merchandise originating east of England but not from the Baltic. Nevertheless, timber and herring were Baltic products too. The Baltic merchants also imported sturgeons, butter, grease, litmus, anise, wool, iron and silver; and they sold goods produced in the Hanseatic towns themselves, such as linen, hardware, products made of wood, as well as beer. The chief imports seem to have been raw materials, which may have superseded high-value items, though we have no firm statistical background for the assumptions.

melandfarer, p. 312 (see below). The Lübeck-Hamburg axis and then the transport from Hamburg to England is mentioned for the commodities of Lübeck merchants and other merchants from the *regnun theutonicum* in a letter from King Rudolf I to King Edward I in 1282; *Urkundenbuch der Stadt Lübeck* 2:1, 1858, no. 54 (= *Hansisches Urkundenbuch* 1, 1876, no. 892).

It is surprising that in London there are almost no records of fish and timber products, which made up the bulk of German imports on the English east coast. This was despite the fact that Lübeck merchants were among the permanent residents of London. And those northern products which do appear in the London customs accounts, viz. wax, furs and copper, were not imported directly but had been stapled in Flanders; Lloyd 1991: 38.

In 1295 a vessel belonging to Heinrich Rekelinchusen from Riga, loaded with ashes, was seized in England; *Hansisches Urkundenbuch* 1, 1876, no. 1179.

Jahnke 2000: chapter III.10.7 "Der Heringshandel nach England"; his results for the beginning of the fourteenth century are based on Hybel 1996. In 1291 merchants from Staveren, Friesland, Stralsund, Greifswald, Harderwijk and Lübeck seem to have imported herring to Lynn; Jahnke 2000, who cites Kunze 1891, no. 14, pp. 13 f. In 1296 German merchants named Wolf and Tidemann from Stralsund and Albert from Holland had sent three vessels loaded with herring and other commodities from Germany and from the Netherlands to Ravensworth in the county of York; *Hansisches Urkundenbuch* 1, 1876, no. 1207.

Kunze 1891: XLV, the list of imported commodities given above.
Until recently it was not known whether grain from the Baltic was exported to England in the thirteenth century, but now Nils Hybel has proved that grain, especially rye, was shipped to England some time in the thirteenth century, and that by the turn of the century this was a regular traffic. The chronicler Matthew Paris was the first to mention German grain in England; in 1258 the people of London were saved from famine by overseas grain. Probably the 50 or more ships which carried the grain to England were from the regnum theutonicum. Even if there is no proof that ships from the Baltic were among them, it seems highly likely because only a few years later, in 1262, there is evidence of English merchants purchasing grain in Rostock. A list of duties from 1275 shows that rye, wheat and barley were exported from Greifswald, mainly by Hanseatic merchants, and one can suggest that some of the Pomeranian grain travelled to England. A quarter of a century later it seems as if the closest connections between England and a Baltic port were those with the Pomeranian town of Stralsund. In 1278 Wislaw II of Rügen decreed that freight and

38 Lloyd 1991: 42, says that it is a moot point whether any grain came to England from the Baltic before the 1320s. Schulz 1911 (1978): 14, thought that a grain trade existed but only to a slight degree. Neither of these authors had the following evidence which, of course, makes a Baltic grain route to England not absolutely clear: in 1257 a merchant named Johann from Lübeck brought oats valued at 4 pounds, 10 s, 10 d to the king’s court, Hansisches Urkundenbuch 1, 1876, no. 502; in 1260 there is mention of grain and other commodities destined for London travelling in a ship belonging to Salomon from Hamburg, Hansisches Urkundenbuch 1, 1876, no. 554; see below the evidence of grain exported from Livonia by Lübeck merchants (note 85).

39 See Nils Hybel’s article below, pp. 233-240. I therefore only give evidence concerning the grain trade of Lübeck and the Wendish towns.


41 Mecklenburgisches Urkundenbuch 2, 1864, no. 953.

42 Hansisches Urkundenbuch 1, 1876, no. 746.

43 See Lloyd 1991, table 1, Hanse ships in Yorkshire ports, 1304-9; from Stralsund 32 vessels (from Lübeck 14, from Rostock 5); from Hamburg, the only port on the North Sea, 25 vessels of the total of 84 coming from eight ports.

Ships from Stralsund sailed to the harbours of Boston, Lynn, Kingston upon Hull and Ravensworth; Fritze 1984: 59. Stralsund seems to have been the Baltic port most favoured by English merchants in the fourteenth century; in the first half of this century grain, timber and herring were the most important export commodities; Fritze 1961: 137 ff.; 156 ff.
handling charges on typical Baltic goods including rye were payable half before departure from the port of Stralsund and half on arrival in Flanders or England. Without any doubt this evidence indicates direct overseas shipping from Stralsund to England and Flanders.

The same conclusion can be drawn from a treaty made between Edward I and Richard de Alemannia in 1283-84. Richard was a citizen of Lynn and a merchant of the King. He expected to travel to Estland and Norway to buy grain and other merchandise for sale in England. Grain which has to be (loaded in Lübeck and) unloaded in Bruges is mentioned among other Baltic bulk goods in the Lübeck ship and sea laws (mainly concerning the route to Flanders) of 1299. There is therefore no doubt that it was also shipped to England when there was need of it—and a possibility to profit from the trade. It seems that the grain of unknown origin that was exported to England by German merchants not only came from the hinterland of the river Elbe, especially from the Altmark, but from the Baltic region too. An agreement between the city of London and German merchants made in 1282 allowed that grain “brought into the city by Hanseatic merchants might be sold from their hospices and granaries within forty days, unless the king or the city authorities needed to order otherwise because of dearth.” Furthermore at the beginning of the fourteenth century German merchants co-operated closely with the grain traders of London to supply the people of this city in times of shortage as, e.g., in 1302 when Parliament was supplied.

From the beginning of the fourteenth century England imported grain annually from the Baltic—supplies coming from Lübeck in the west to Thorn in Prussia in the east—even if the quantities imported were very modest. Overseas trade was not restricted to years of poor harvests, years of warfare, or times when grain prices were high. Such factors only affected the grain trade. This result allows us to obtain a picture of the trade with England involving other Baltic products such as timber, pitch, tar, potash

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44 Hansisches Urkundenbuch 1, 1876, no. 868; Pommersches Urkundenbuch 2, 1881, no. 1091, pp. 367-68; cf. Nils Hybel’s article below, p. 219, note 13.
45 Public Record Office, C. 66, 103; see Nils Hybel’s article below, p. 216.
46 Urkundenbuch der Stadt Lübeck 2:1, 1858, no. 105, 20.
47 Lloyd 1991: 21; Hansisches Urkundenbuch 1, 1876, no. 902.
49 See Nils Hybel’s article below, p. 233.
50 See Wendy R. Childs’ article in this volume, passim.
and so on, for which there are no figures from the English poundage.

We do not know the volume of trade in other bulk commodities from the Baltic, though a few sources give a glimpse of it. It is worth noticing that the first ship from Lübeck recorded in an east-coast harbour occurs in connection with the export of wool in 1275 and therefore refers to the well known route Lübeck-Bergen-Eastern England-Flanders (in other cases Flanders-Eastern England)-Lübeck. In 1291 Johannes Hamer from Lübeck, as well as two other German merchants, were accused by the royal falconer of failing to hand over duties payable to him in the port of Lynn. Commodities belonging to these three merchants, it is said, were loaded on to 140 ships; e.g., herring, copper, butter, a variety of timber, ham, cheese, fells, ash and harpoys, a mixture of pitch, tar and resin for caulking vessels. Three years later in the port of Newcastle the mayor and bailiffs arrested eleven cogs belonging to the merchant Johann from Lübeck (was he identical with Johann Hamer?); during this action five barrels of herring, four barrels of beer, 20 shillings sterling and other commodities were stolen from a burgess of the town of Newcastle. In 1294/5 fifty merchants who had come ummeland on their way to Flanders were arrested in Ravenser; twenty-three came from towns in Friesland or Ijssel towns, sixteen from Stralsund, three from Lübeck, two from Greifswald, one from Rostock and one from Riga. Herring was the most important commodity for thirty-five

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51 For the volume of Norwegian stockfish imported to England, see note 15 above.
52 An account of the dues collected on wool, woolfells, and hides exported from Hull, 27 June 1275-27 April 1276: "La neef Jon Hegman de Lubike"; five of twelve merchants who had commodities carried by this ship came from Lübeck too; Gras 1918: 23, 229 f. Another six merchants "de Lubike" are mentioned in this account (237, 240-242) but no other ship coming from the same town. Detailed research in the account on merchant's names that do not reveal a region or town might show that other merchants came from the Baltic.
54 Urkundenbuch der Stadt Lübeck 2:1, 1858, nos 131, 132 (= Hansisches Urkundenbuch 1, 1876, nos 1165, 1166); see also Urkundenbuch der Stadt Lübeck 1, 1843, no. 633 a.a. 1293 (=Hansisches Urkundenbuch 1, 1876, no. 1184); Urkundenbuch der Stadt Lübeck 2:1, 1858, no. 133 a.a. 1296.—In 1295 the city of Lübeck complained about the seizure of seven of its ships at Newcastle, Ravenser and Yarmouth; Lloyd 1991: 37 (Public Record Office E159/68, m. 61).

Some time before 1307 Norwegian pirates stole 7910 pounds of copper and other commodities destined for England from two German merchants; Hansisches Urkundenbuch 2, 1879, no. 110.
of the merchants.\textsuperscript{55}

In 1303 beans and "pro brasio" (?) were exported from Boston on a "navis Hermanni de Lubik" as well as salt, cloth, honey and bed-clothes on a further three Lübeck ships and by other Lübeck merchants (in one case on a ship of "Gerardi de Rostok").\textsuperscript{56} In the same year stockfish, fish, oil and goatskins were imported to Boston on at least six Lübeck ships, which again refers to the route via Norway, England and Flanders mentioned above.\textsuperscript{57} Two cogs from Stralsund, \textit{una bussa} from Wismar, two cogs from Lübeck, as well as a vessel of unknown type from Stralsund, ran the blockade against the port of Lynn in the first half of 1303;\textsuperscript{58} we can therefore guess that the number of vessels from the Baltic visiting this port in normal years was somewhat greater.\textsuperscript{59} The amount of herring brought to the ports of Scarborough, Whitby and Ravenser between 1304/05 and 1308/09 by English fishermen and Hanseatic merchants ranged from 397 Last (4,764 barrels; 1308/09) to 806 Last (9,672 barrels; 1304/05). At the same time Hanseatic merchants also visited the ports of Lynn and Yarmouth and traded herring.\textsuperscript{60} Only in a few cases is it possible to decide whether the imported herring came from Scania or Norway, i.e., caught near Bohuslen and Marstrand. Apart from the English and Norwegian merchants, merchants from towns ranging from Zeeland (the Netherlands) to Lübeck were

\textsuperscript{55} Nedkvitne 1983b: 52 (\textit{Diplomatarium Norvegicum} 19, 1910, no. 395, note 1).
\textsuperscript{56} Gras 1918: 32, 275, 277, 279 (navis Arnaldi Crouse de Lubik), 282 f. (navis Johannis Wale de Lubik), 286 (navis Antonii de Lubik).
\textsuperscript{57} Gras 1918: 33, 289 (navis Henrici de la Porte de Lubik), 290 (navis Hermanni de Lubik), 291 (navis Frederici de Lubik), 292 (presumably a ship of Edbright de Lubik), 294 (navis Johannis Wale de Lubik; see note 56), 299 (navis Hermanni de Lubik), 300 (navis Antonii de Lubik; see note 56).
\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Hansisches Urkundenbuch} 2, 1879, no. 40; see Sartorius Freiherr von Waltershausen 1830: 306-311.
\textsuperscript{59} Further evidence of direct shipping from Lübeck and from the Baltic to England: A ship belonging to a London merchant loaded in Lübeck for England with wax and other commodities valued at 600 mark sterling was captured at the mouth of the river Elbe by people from Hamburg; \textit{Hansisches Urkundenbuch} 2, 1879, no. 166 a.a. 1310; see also no. 168. At the same time a vessel belonging to the merchant Heinrich Daniel from Kingston upon Hull loaded with ashes, timber, flax, \textit{pice} (pitch; \textit{picula}?), bitumen and other commodities for England, was attacked and robbed on its way from the Baltic (\textit{de partibus Estlandie}) near the isle of Heligoland by people from Kampen; \textit{Hansisches Urkundenbuch} 2, 1879, no. 167.
\textsuperscript{60} See Jahnke 2000 and Hybel 1996.
later engaged in this trade. On February 26th, 1323 129 Last (1,548 barrels) of Norwegian herring were imported to England by merchants from Lübeck and Harderwijk. Finally 1200 tons of stockfish sent to England annually by German merchants, especially Lübeck merchants in the first decade of the fourteenth century, would have been carried in at least 20 ships, a figure which is, of course, based on estimation. This figure fits the 22 German cogs that carried fish to the harbour of Lynn in 1302.

In summary, two factors were responsible for the increasing bulk-goods trade between the Baltic region/Norway and England in the second half of the thirteenth century. Firstly, the early Hanseatic merchants gained control of an ever-increasing part of the Norwegian export trade because of their grain imports to Norway, and, secondly, skippers and merchants became accustomed to the direct route from the Baltic to the North Sea region through the Sound and round the Skaw. With regard to the Norwegian-English connection, in the course of time the German merchants took over a well-established trading route but did not open up new markets. They were not the only merchants engaged in this trade. Up until the second decade of the fourteenth century there is evidence of English, Norwegian and Gotlandic merchants on this route and on the route from Norway to Flanders. The increasing amounts of grain available in the newly-colonised regions of the southern Baltic coast, gave the German merchants, from Lübeck to the Prussian towns, much economic influence on Nor-

63 The ships carried about 40 Last (1 Last = ca. 2 tons); Nedkvidne 1983: 579; one has to make allowance for the fact that ships carried mixed freight not just stockfish.
64 Hansisches Urkundenbuch 2, 1879, no. 40, p. 21.
65 See, e.g., Kattinger 1997: 163-172; Susse, who owned some ships, was engaged in trade between Gotland and Norway, England and Flanders with traditional commodities such as furs and wax as well as herring and timber for shipbuilding. His activities are recorded from ca. 1300 until ca. 1325. He became a burgess of Lynn where Hanseatic merchants accused him of having seized copper on the open sea.
66 Prussian merchants actively traded with Pomeranian towns, especially Stralsund and Greifswald, but also with Norway. It seems obvious that they sailed from Norway to England too. In the late thirteenth century it seems as if there was rivalry
wegian fish exports. Merchants from the Wendish towns in particular but also from Bremen appropriated much of the Norwegian exports of stockfish and winter herring. That Lübeck merchants tried to monopolise this trade can be seen from a complaint filed by the Englandfahrer from Stralsund who were hampered by Lübeck merchants in their trading. At all events, in the early fourteenth century the stockfish trade with England was dominated by Lübeck merchants, but merchants from Stralsund, Rostock, Hamburg as well as Norway were still engaged in it too. Stockfish was imported mainly at the ports of Boston and Ravenser (but only until the 1320s), herring at Hull and Lynn.

We assume that it was mainly the merchants of the Wendish towns situated in the Baltic region (Lübeck, Wismar, Rostock, Stralsund and Greifswald) that began to use the direct route from the Baltic to Western Europe from the middle of the thirteenth century at the latest. We do have evidence of this dating from 1275. Vessels which departed from ports east of the river Oder are only recorded by English sources in a few cases until the fourteenth century. Unfortunately we do not know whether timber from the Baltic, which was imported into England from the end of the thirteenth century, was shipped directly or whether it was unloaded and reloaded in Lübeck for transport on the Lübeck-Hamburg axis. As a return freight the Baltic vessels generally carried salt, which was exported from Hull, Boston and Lynn, and could be sold at the herring markets in Scania. Otherwise cloth was the only export to the east.

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75 LÜBECK AND THE BALTIC TRADE IN BULK GOODS

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See endnotes for further details.
The first evidence of the trading of Lübeck and Hamburg merchants with Flanders dates to the middle of the thirteenth century, therefore somewhat later than such trade with England. Probably the strong position of Flemish merchants trading with the east up until the middle of the thirteenth century, especially with Hamburg and the Altmark with its large amount of grain, was the reason for this. Their influence waned already in the second half of the century because the Flemish merchants were unable to recover their outstanding money. Their balance of trade was positive because there was not sufficient return commodities from Hamburg and the hinterland of the Elbe to Flanders. Merchants from Lübeck and Hamburg on their way to Flanders, paid duty in Utrecht in 1244 on grain, flax, hemp, tallow, tar, pitch, timber, potash, herring, stockfish and salt—bulk goods from the Baltic region except for the last two or three commodities. We have there is no evidence that Stralsund merchants or Stralsund ships traded in the name of the master of the Teutonic Order.

It seems that Flemish merchants had sent grain from the Altmark on the route through Hamburg to Flanders already at the end of the twelfth century; there is no definite evidence before 1238 when the Altmark grain trade is mentioned in a charter for the town of Aardenburg; Rörig 1940: 54 f. A customs account from the Utrecht fairs dated about 1178—forced but probably trustworthy with regard to its contents—gives evidence of merchants from the Rhineland, from Friesland, Saxony and Scandinavia as visitors, selling grain, wine, herring, salt from Zeeland, and ore; Henn 1989: 42.

For the activities of Friesian merchants in the Baltic during the thirteenth century see below notes 93-95.

Hansisches Urkundenbuch 1, 1876, no. 334. See further the list of commodities imported from and exported to the sea in the customs roll of the town of Dordrecht (1287); Hansisches Urkundenbuch 1, 1876, no. 1033. —The customs order issued for Hamburg by the counts of Holstein (1262/63) mentions primarily grain, moreover ashes, copper and other commodities. In connection with merchants of the margrave of Brandenburg, Flanders is given as destination for these commodities; Hansisches Urkundenbuch 1, 1876, no 573. The commodities came from the hinterland of the river Elbe because merchants from Lübeck, Gotland and Riga paid no duty in Hamburg and further because only merchants from the Elbe regions are mentioned in the order. This example shows how difficult it is to decide where certain bulk goods came from if their origin is not mentioned. Grain and ashes were products of the Altmark and Brandenburg, as well as the Baltic, while copper was
already heard of the freight and handling charges for Baltic bulk commodities laid down in 1278 by Wislaw II of Rügen; half had to be paid before departure in the port of Stralsund and half on arrival in Flanders or England, 75 which is evidence of the direct route round the Skaw in the last quarter of the thirteenth century. In 1294 Philip IV, the French king, in the course of his war against England, requisitioned in French ports numerous ships belonging to merchants from Lübeck, Gotland, Riga, Wismar, Rostock, Stralsund and Elbing, as too ships from Kampen and Hamburg. 76 The Count of Flanders granted liberties to the burghers of Lübeck in 1298 concerning their trade and the same rights as had had the Hamburg merchants for some time on the Zwin and in the other regions of Flanders, namely "...ubicunque navigio easdem contigerit applicari."

At the end of the thirteenth century the direct route round the Skaw became integrated into the legal security network built up by the towns since the third decade of the century. 77 In 1298 the bishop of Ribe granted the burghers of Lübeck the right to possession of all their goods if shipwrecked within the borders of his bishopric, to which the dangerous northwestern coast of Jutland belonged. A year later the archbishop of Lund granted them the same rights. 78 In the same year, 1299, the first fleet (of warships) from the so-called Seestädt, i.e., towns situated on the coast of the Baltic Sea and of the North Sea (exercitus Civitatum maritimarum), is mentioned in the waters off Harderwyk. This fleet consisted of ships from Lübeck, Prussian towns and other civitatibus maritimarum. 80 In the same year there is evidence in the Lübeck shipping and sea laws mainly concerning the route to Flanders, of the ummelandfart as well as of handling charges for the loading/unloading of commodities from the Baltic region:

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75 See note 44, Hansisches Urkundenbuch 1, 1876, no. 868.
76 Urkundenbuch der Stadt Lübeck 1, 1843, nos 517, 519 (=Hansisches Urkundenbuch 1, 1876, nos 1173, 1175).
77 Hansisches Urkundenbuch 1, 1876, no. 1279 (=Urkundenbuch der Stadt Lübeck 1, 1843, no. 677).
79 Urkundenbuch der Stadt Lübeck 1, 1843, nos 687, 691 (=Hansisches Urkundenbuch 1, 1876, nos 1295, 1303).
80 Urkundenbuch der Stadt Lübeck 1, 1843, no 728 (=Hansisches Urkundenbuch 1, 1876, no 1331). In 1309 cogs of the "Easterlings" did great damage to English and Scottish vessels; Hansisches Urkundenbuch 2, 1879, no. 143.
Concerning grain, there are the same problems for Flanders as for England. In the traditional view, exports of grain from the regions in the "far" east of the Baltic to Flanders, even up to the middle of the fifteenth century, were restricted to years of poor harvests and famine because of the high cost of transport. Comparable to the results achieved by Nils Hybel for English grain imports, a similar grain import to Flanders can be imagined when the demand for it was great even though there is only little evidence. The customs roll of the town of Dordrecht (1287) mentioned above, contains the first evidence of grain van Oestland as well as een Tra- [v]eton[ne] vlas, meaning a ton of flax from Lübeck. Moreover it is possible that Livonian grain was sold by Lübeck merchants to the regions of western Europe at the end of the thirteenth century; in 1299 they received a charter issued by the Landmeister of the Teutonic Order in Livonia, which permitted them to buy, sell and export grain and other commodities without any restriction. Two years earlier, in 1297, the Danish King Erik VI Menved had ordained "that restrictions on the grain export from Reval could only be imposed in exceptional cases." Herring was another bulk commodity imported to the northern Netherlands already before the middle of the thirteenth century as shown by the charter granted in 1251 by the Danish King Abel to the ummelandfarer.

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81 Urkundenbuch der Stadt Lübeck 2:1, 1858, no. 105, 10, 20, 21. The Hamburg sea law from 1292 provides evidence of the ummelandfar from Scania to Flanders; Kiesselbach 1900: 87 f.
82 Lesnikov 1957/58: 613 f.
83 See Nils Hybel's article below, pp. 227-241.
84 Hansisches Urkundenbuch 1, 1876, no. 1033.
85 Urkundenbuch der Stadt Lübeck 1, 1843, no. 701 (=Hansisches Urkundenbuch 1, 1876, no. 1309); grain (annona) is the only commodity mentioned explicitly in the charter. Moreover, as a result of new negotiations grain and the other commodities had been inserted as an addition in a charter granted a year earlier (Urkundenbuch der Stadt Lübeck 1, 1843, no. 688 = Hansisches Urkundenbuch 1, 1876, no. 1301, 06.01.1299). We can therefore assume that the Lübeck merchants were interested in the Livonian grain trade.
86 See Nils Hybel's article below, p. 233; Diplomatrium Danicum 2d ser., vol. 4, no. 260.
87 Hansisches Urkundenbuch 1, 1876, nos. 411, 423.
At the end of the thirteenth century much of the imported herring must have come from the Norwegian Sea where, near Bohuslen, there is evidence of burghers from Bremen and of the towns on the river Ijssel fishing for herring from 1288. But fishing must have taken place there far earlier (since progenitorum temporibus). Ships from the Wendish towns were also fishing for herring there.\(^{88}\)

The herring must have been an important foodstuff for the—in medieval terms—densely populated towns and countryside of Flanders.\(^{89}\) In Damme in 1323 a special staple for herring was even established.\(^{90}\) We do not know to what extent Hanseatic merchants exported herring from Scania to Flanders. There is no statistical data before the second half of the fourteenth century, when between 1374/75 and 1379 the imports of all merchants to Sluys, where a second staple had been established, ranged between \(1,060\) and \(2,482\) Last a year (12,720 and 29,784 barrels). The Sluys staple was less important than that at Damme. At the latter, between December 1382 and May 1383, Hanseatic merchants alone had to pay taxes for 612 Last (7,344 barrels) herring, whereas at Sluys their share was 279 Last (3,356 barrels).\(^{91}\) Unfortunately we do not know anything about the competition between the remarkable fisheries of the southern North Sea and English Channel, on the one hand, and herring imported by German merchants on the other, before the end of the thirteenth century. Norwegian stockfish, already mentioned in the oldest tax documents from Damme (1252), was also brought to Flanders by Norwegian merchants up until the 1320s. However, they were ousted by merchants from northern Germany in the following years.\(^{92}\)

Friesian merchants are first mentioned as “Friesians coming from

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\(^{88}\) Hansisches Urkundenbuch 1, 1876, nos. 1040, 1045, 1095 (a.a. 1292), 1153 (a.a. 1294), 1299 (a.a. 1298 = the Wendish towns planned to make a complaint in the name of all towns assembled in Lübeck in this year to the king of Norway against a herring tax which they thought was unfairly high), 1316 (a.a. 1299).

\(^{89}\) Jahnke 2000 (see note 2 above), chapter III.10.8 “Der Handel über Schelde, Maas und Rhein”, has no evidence before the fourteenth century. Nedkvitne 1983b: 51-54; in 1294/5 35 merchants who had come unmeland on their way to Flanders had been arrested in Ravenser with herring as most important commodity; see above, note 55.

\(^{90}\) van Werveke 1963: 71.

\(^{91}\) Jahnke 2000: chapter III. 10.8 “Der Handel über Schelde, Maas und Rhein.”

\(^{92}\) Bugge 1906: 96 f.
Eastland” in a customs roll from Utrecht, dated 1122.\(^93\) These merchants had probably chosen the route via the port of Schleswig on the North Sea axis up the rivers Eider and Treene to Hollingstedt and from there the short land route to Schleswig. The chronicler Heinrich of Livonia reported that around 1200 Friesian ships sailed in Gotlandic and Livonian waters, and in 1198 the *Alberti Chronica Slavorum* mentions that Friesians and people from other regions equipped themselves for their journey to Livonia with vessels, weapons and foodstuffs in Lübeck.\(^94\) For this reason one cannot be sure whether some of the Friesians had not already chosen the direct route round the Skaw. By the second half of the thirteenth century at the latest they sailed directly through the Sound to acquire foodstuffs, especially grain, from the southern Baltic coast. There is evidence of grain from Denmark and from *Slavia*, i.e., the coast of Mecklenburg and Pomerania, being exported to Friesland during the great famine of 1272; in 1273 the town of Greifswald is mentioned in this connection and in 1284 merchants of Rostock sold a large amount of rye to the town of Dordrecht.\(^95\)

Moreover the northern Netherlands, especially the counties of Holland and Zeeland but also the bishopric of Utrecht, were important for the Hanse merchants because the trading routes to Flanders passed through these territories, both by land and by sea.\(^96\) The towns of these regions played an important role in the trade with Scania from the first half of the fourteenth century,\(^97\) and with the towns on the southern shore of the Baltic\(^98\) as well as Norway\(^99\) and Sweden\(^100\) (from 1332 to 1360 Scania be

\(^93\) *Hansisches Urkundenbuch* 1, 1876, no. 8; Häpke 1913: 172. For the former period see Ellmers 1986.

\(^94\) Häpke 1913: 174.

\(^95\) Häpke 1913: 181-183.

\(^96\) See, e.g., the customs-privilege granted by Willem, count of Hennegau, Holland, etc., to all merchants “van Oestlande” (this included the regions south of the North Sea, too), who came over sea with “fully loaded” ships to the town of Dordrecht; *Bronnen tot de Geschiedenis van den Oostzeehandel* 1:1, 1917, no. 71 (= *Hansisches Urkundenbuch* 2, 1879, no. 232).


\(^98\) Before 1300 commodities belonging to merchants from Harderwijk were stolen and some burnt “super terram Gellandie, i.e., on the way between Pomerania and the isle of Rügen (it is unclear whether this concerns only the goods transported by other people or by the merchants themselves too?); *Bronnen tot de Geschiedenis van den Oostzeehandel* 1:1, 1917, no. 55 (= *Urkundenbuch der Stadt Lübeck* 1, 1843, no. 728; *Hansisches Urkundenbuch* 1, 1876, no. 1331).
longed to the king of Sweden and Norway). As for bulk goods, notwithstanding the early customs rolls there is only little evidence: herring was brought back by Dutch merchants from Norway and Sweden, wood (lignum), grain, pitch, tar, ashes from Prussia and train-oil from Estonia. Therefore there were close connections between Lübeck and the Wendish towns, on the one hand, and towns on the Ijssel and the Zuidersee, on the other, from the second half of the thirteenth century. In

No example of the direct route from Danzig to Harderwijk with furs is mentioned before 1370; Bronnen tot de Geschiedenis van den Oostzeehandel 1:1, 1917, no. 366 (= Urkundenbuch der Stadt Lübeck 3, 1871, no. 713); this shows, again, how difficult it is to interpret the evidence we have. One has to compare this late evidence with the fact that merchants from Danzig had paid no customs in Ipswich (?) at the beginning of the fourteenth century (see note 71).

Bronnen tot de Geschiedenis van den Oostzeehandel 1:1, 1917, no. 37-39 (= Hansisches Urkundenbuch 1, 1876, nos. 993, 996, 997) a.a. 1285 when “Lewart, Groninge, Stoveren, Campe, Swolle, Deventer, Sutphan, Herderwic et Mudhen” were involved in a conflict with the king of Norway on the side of (later) Hanseatic towns.

Eric, duke of Sweden, granted his protection to the Kampen burghers and their trade (1313) and granted them a charter concerning the tax on herring, the felling of trees and the “Rechtssprache” (1314); Bronnen tot de Geschiedenis van den Oostzeehandel 1:1, 1917, nos. 72 (= Hansisches Urkundenbuch 2, 1879, no. 234), 74 (Hansisches Urkundenbuch 2, 1879, no. 248).

Merchants from Harderwijk lost their timber (valued at 200 gulden) to soldiers of the “exercitus civitatum maritimarum ... super terram Gellandie” (see note 98) [about 1368]; Bronnen tot de Geschiedenis van den Oostzeehandel 1:1, 1917, no. 363 (Hanserecesse 1:1, 1870, no. 509); see also no. 504 (Hanserecesse 1:3, 1870, no. 486).

From Reval to Doesborg; Hansisches Urkundenbuch 4, 1896, no 815 a.a. 1385.

In 1313 two burghers from Zutphen sold some real property in Rostock; they had acquired it by law (in the court of the town) because of the debts of the former owner (“hereditatem unam cum iusticia prosecutam”); it seems obvious, that these were trade debts; Bronnen tot de Geschiedenis van den Oostzeehandel 1:1, 1917, no. 73 (Mecklenburgisches Urkundenbuch 6, 1870, no. 3647).

In 1346 and 1347 cogs from Kampen and Harderwijk, which brought cloth to Rostock, are mentioned in the account book of Johann Tölner, mayor of the town; Mecklenburgisches Urkundenbuch 6, 1870, no. 175, 183.

Later, in 1340, the towns of Lübeck, Stralsund, Rostock, Wismar, Kampen, Staveren, Harderwijk and the other towns of the Zuiderzee and all merchants were granted a privilege by Count Johan [III] of Holstein concerning conduct and pro-
this connection mention should be made of letters written by Zwolle and Kampen in 1294,106 well known to all students of Hanseatic history. Both towns thanked the council of Lübeck for trying to keep the Friesians and the Flemish out of the Baltic. According to a decision about wages for "schipmen", it seems to have been common for ships from Kampen to sail to Riga, Reval, Pernau and Stockholm (12 olde groten) as well as to Gotland and Prussia (9 olde groten) and to Kolberg, to the Wendish towns and to Lübeck (6 olde groten) in the middle of the fourteenth century.106 The same can be deduced from a Willkür of the town of Amsterdam concerning misdemeanours (torts) of its burghers in the Nordic kingdoms, in Prussia, in the Wendish towns, in the Oestersschen towns and in the whole of Oestlande.107 Around 1378 the Prussian towns made an agreement with the skippers from Kampen and from the towns of the Zuiderzee that shows that Prussian merchants commonly sent their goods on Dutch ships.108 A further sign of close connections is that a councillor from Danzig owned a sixth part of a ship from Zutphen.109

Regarding the second half of the fourteenth century, there is good reason to agree with the traditional view of the history of trade between the Baltic and the North Sea region. From this time there is a large amount of...
evidence showing that the direct route through the Sound and round the Skaw was used increasingly. Nevertheless, the evidence referred to above for England, as well as for Flanders and the Ijssel towns, proves that this direct route had by then already been in use, and probably in good use, for more than 100 years.

Trade with Bulk Commodities after the Second Half of the Fourteenth Century

What evidence do the figures for bulk trade in the late fourteenth and late fifteenth century reveal? Can they help to interpret the evidence from the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries?

The first surviving Lübeck poundage list is from the year 1368. Unfortunately the trade with bulk commodities is poorly recorded, because the list only shows goods for which the tax was paid in the port of Lübeck. The poundage on timber, ashes, flax and other bulk commodities had to be paid in the ports in the east from where these goods were exported and where the skippers were given a receipt for this. These receipts, which in Lübeck had to be handed over to the poundage clerk, have been lost (except roughly 3.5% of the Danzig receipts). Based on this imperfect evidence, ashes seem to have been imported to Lübeck in 1368 for not more than 303.5 Mark lübisch, timber for 189 Mark lübisch. For this reason it is useless to give further figures for eastern bulk commodities because they are far too unreliable for use in statistical interpretation. There are insufficient records for grain quantities too as grain was not liable to poundage. Here we can only rely on hypothetical prognoses, such as those already shown above, for any idea of the amounts in question.

The only reliable evidence of bulk goods is for salt and herring because these commodities originated in the town of Lüneburg and in Scania. In the Lübeck exports for the year 1368, Lüneburg salt took third place with 61,600 Mark lübisch after cloth (160,500 Mark lübisch) and fish (70,800 Mark lübisch). This is the equivalent of 7,600 tons, or about 56,000 barrels, and made up about 50% of Lüneburg’s production capacity, measured by production for the year 1388. As the salt needed for the processing of her-

110 For the poundage list see Die hansischen Pfundzollisten des Jahres 1368, 1935.
111 For the interpretation of the figures Weibull 1967 is very important.
112 See note 24.
ring on the Scanian markets amounted to 1,150 tons in 1368, and can be calculated to 2,040 tons by the end of the century, the majority of the salt exported via Lübeck must have been sent to the countries around the Baltic Sea.

Later the total export of Lüneburg salt via Lübeck fell from the 56,000 barrels to about 31,000 barrels on average annually from 1492 to 1496. At that time, however, Lübeck's trade was in deep crisis. In the first half of the sixteenth century the turnover rose enormously. An average of about 80,000 barrels was exported annually via Lübeck; the highest figure, 95,676 barrels, is for the year 1521. As shown above, this was the time that many granaries were converted into salt stores. In the last quarter of the century the number of barrels of salt exported annually fell to around 47,000, and in 1680/81 the level was roughly 30,000. This short survey reveals that the import of cheaper sea-salt (Baiensalz) from north-west France, and later also from Portugal and Spain, which had begun in the fourteenth century, did not threaten the trade with Lüneburg salt until the seventeenth century, and the greatest turnover was achieved in the sixteenth century. ¹¹²

Trade in Scanian herring fell from 76,000 barrels in 1368 to 15,000 barrels annually between 1492 and 1496, but unlike the salt trade it made no subsequent recovery. Dutch herring took over the market in both Central Europe and the Baltic Sea region. By the end of the seventeenth century only 3,000 barrels of herring were traded annually via Lübeck harbour, and to a large extent the provenance of the contents was Dutch rather than Scanian. ¹¹³

By the end of the fifteenth century, the population of Europe had largely recovered from the heavy losses caused by the Black Death. Figures were not as high as before, but the demand for foodstuffs and raw materials may have been nearly as high as in the early fourteenth century. However, changing patterns in production, technology and the way of life caused alterations in supply and demand. The carrying capacity of ships, for instance, had increased and it was now possible to send greater quantities of goods per shipment than one or two centuries earlier—a fact that may have influenced the volume of bulk goods sent from the Baltic to Western Europe.

¹¹² Hammel-Kiesow 1998a.
¹¹³ Hammel-Kiesow 1993b.
There is no doubt that direct shipping between the Baltic and the North Sea region increased enormously in the course of the fifteenth century. The question, however, is to what degree this development impaired the trading activities of Lübeck merchants and the trade via Lübeck. It seems as if during the first half of the fifteenth century the Lübeck merchants managed to maintain their strong position in trade connections between east and west. When, for instance, an English fleet captured the Hanseatic Bayen fleet in 1449, sixteen ships belonged to Lübeck merchants and fourteen to Danzig. I think that the number of Lübeck ships on the direct route round the Skaw decreased because of the withdrawal of Lübeck merchants from trade with England after 1468 in the course of the Anglo-Hanseatic disturbances, on the one hand, and the serious competition from ships and merchants (in that sequence) from Holland and Zeeland since the 1470s when these areas were forced to obtain all their grain from the Baltic, on the other. The paucity of sources means that we have no knowledge of the amount of commodities belonging to Lübeck merchants transported on, e.g., Dutch ships. Nevertheless it appears impossible for them to have kept their former position in the east-west trade during the second half of the fifteenth century, when the economy of Lübeck suffered a general decline.  

This decline cannot, however, be viewed merely as a consequence of the direct route by which eastern commodities now bypassed Lübeck. As we have seen, the direct route had been in use since the middle of the thirteenth century, later on though by an increasing number of ships. Therefore I think that in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries trade was organised less regionally and shipping more regionally. This means that much of the merchandise from the eastern Baltic, Livonia and Prussia was taken to the ports of the Wendish towns. There it was unloaded and reloaded on to ships belonging to these towns (as shown by the Stralsund freight and handling charges of 1278) and carried to its destination in north-western Europe. It seems as if only a small portion of the eastern Baltic goods was shipped directly from, e.g., Reval, Riga or Elbing to England and Flanders. The reason for this seems to have been the special organisation of the international seaborne trade (see Figure 9). At the same time we have evidence of a similar regionally based sea-traffic between the Bay of Bourgneuf and Bruges. There a similar development took place. In the course of the second half of the thirteenth century ships from Hamburg, for example, sailed to La Rochelle, but the bulk of Bayen salt was carried

by Flemish and French ships to Bruges where it was sold by, among others, merchants from northern Germany. It was not earlier than the last quarter of the fourteenth century that greater numbers of Hanseatic ships from the Baltic sailed directly to the salt harbours on the western coast of France and took over a great part of this trade.\footnote{Agats 1904: 48-52; Jenks 1996: 259 f.}

In addition, even Lübeck’s wholesale trade was organised regionally at that time. The entries in the register of merchants’ associations in the Lübeck Niederstadtbuch, which recorded private debts, as well as the account book of Hermann and Johann Wittenborg (the latter mayor of the town, decapitated in 1363) show that trade in the Baltic and trade with northwestern Europe was organised independently.\footnote{Cordes 1998: 214-25; Hammel-Kiesow 1982.} Johann Wittenborg, for instance, sold his Baltic goods in Lübeck although he was very active in

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{map.png}
\caption{The regionally organised shipping in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Note the central position of the Wendish towns in the seaborne trade between the Baltic and north-western Europe. Map: Jens Holst/Lars Berggren.}
\end{figure}
trade with Flanders too—and vice versa. There is no proof of any direct sales by Lübeck merchants of Baltic goods to England or Flanders, as was common fifty years later—as shown by the example of Hildebrand Veckincusen—but this may partly be due to the lack of sources. The evidence we do have allows us to draw the conclusion that the merchandise exported to these countries—except, of course, in cases where direct shipping has been proved—had been purchased in Lübeck or other Wendish towns. I presume that it was knowledge of this pattern of trade that led to the traditional view of a lack of direct shipping between the Baltic and north-western Europe.

When the mainly regionally organised shipping of bulk goods from East to West ended in the course of the fourteenth century (but continued for the transport of high-value goods), the Lübeck sailors and merchants lost the intermediary position they had held in this trade in the thirteenth and at the start of the fourteenth century. Merchants and sailors from the eastern Baltic now brought an ever increasing share of the bulk goods produced in their region to the countries in western Europe without Lübeck merchants being involved.

We have now seen that Lübeck merchants traded bulk commodities from the Baltic to Western Europe; what is still lacking is firm evidence that the bulk goods passed through Lübeck, i.e., were unloaded and loaded on to Lübeck ships. The idea that this was the case is based on the traditional view that, until the middle of the fourteenth century, nearly all merchandise on its way from the Baltic was given this treatment. Concerning grain there is, I think, no doubt about this, though we do not know whether the grain stored in the lofts of the Lübeck Dielenhäuser as well as in the granaries was imported only short distances, e.g., from Holstein, Stormarn, Lauenburg and Mecklenburg, or that the Livonian grain, mentioned above, was shipped using the direct route to Flanders. Salt and herring, which are recorded quite well, were not products of the eastern Baltic. And, as we have seen, the poundage list for 1368 shows fewer entries for Baltic bulk commodities, for known reasons.

Then the question is what the fifteenth-century evidence reveals concerning the situation at an earlier time. The sea traffic between Lübeck and Danzig, which had become the most important Prussian port from the end of the fourteenth century, was still very heavy up to the second half of the

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118 See note 85.
century. Not before 1475 did the number of Lübeck ships sailing to Danzig decline, though then rapidly.\(^{119}\) This means that there was plenty of cargo for the vessels on the Lübeck-Danzig route before 1475. Because of the structure of east-west Baltic trade, they must also have had sufficient cargo on their way from Danzig to Lübeck. This structure implies that, apart from Lüneburg salt and Scanian herring, only high-value goods of small volume were shipped from Lübeck to the eastern Baltic. In return, Lübeck imported foodstuffs and raw materials of large volume from the Baltic.

The change around the year 1475 was probably caused by the Dutch, who began at that time to import nearly all the grain they needed from the Baltic, because their grain import regions in France had been closed to them by the French King.\(^{120}\) They probably began also to carry other bulk goods besides grain on the direct route, as proved for the Wendish towns from the end of the thirteenth century. This could only have enhanced the overall development that intensified from the middle of the fourteenth century. Loss lists of captured or wrecked ships dating from 1438 to 1458 indicate that Danzig and Livonian ships of the Bayen fleet sailed west carrying the well known Baltic commodities as bulk goods.\(^{121}\)

On the other hand, the transport of bulk commodities such as timber, hemp, flax, pitch, tar and tallow is proved for the Lübeck-Hamburg axis for export by sea by the Zertifikate from the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries.\(^{122}\) Around 1500 the trade with bulk goods via Lübeck-Hamburg-Western Europe must therefore have been profitable in spite of competition from the direct route with its—as we seem to think—cheaper freight rates. So, until the beginning of the sixteenth century at least two trade routes from the Baltic to Western Europe still existed, also for bulk commodities. There are no statistics allowing us to compare the value and volume of the bulk goods on the different routes. There is none the less reason to believe that the direct route was much more important for bulk goods. With respect to high-value goods, Lübeck was able to keep its position as a port of transshipment until the nineteenth century, though with a slight decrease in volume of traffic.

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\(^{119}\) Schildhauer 1968.

\(^{120}\) van Uytven 1975: 1109-1120.

\(^{121}\) Bronnen tot de Geschiedenis van den Oostzeehandel 1:2, 1917, no. 2205, pp. 796-834 (damage lists; cargoes of Prussian and Livonian ships 1438-1458).

\(^{122}\) Vogtherr 1993, see especially 53 ff., edition of the Zertifikate; Jahnke 1996.
Final Remarks

It is difficult to trace the development of the direct shipping route from the Baltic Sea to the North Sea. It seems as if the first step was the route through the Sound to Bergen in Norway. We do not know for certain whether indigenous Gotlandic merchants, accompanied somewhat later by their German companions in the Gilda communis, were the first to use this route, or whether they were German merchants on their way from Gotland. Neither do we know which commodities they carried to Norway. It can only be assumed that they were the typical goods such as furs and wax, which were exported from Russia or from the hinterland of the river Daugava. The Gotlandic-German skippers and merchants did not sell their commodities in Norway (a demand for wax there is, I think, out of the question, and did the Norwegians really need furs?) but shipped them to Eastern England, at first presumably on Norwegian ships sailing the well-established route from Norway to Eastern England. Here there is sufficient evidence of merchants of the Gilda communis importing large quantities of furs and wax. Furthermore there is a lack of evidence that would prove that they all—as traditionally supposed—should have taken the southern route using the Lübeck-Hamburg axis. Of course, we do not know to what extent the Gotland-Norway-Eastern England route was used, nor when the merchants from Gotland began to cross the North Sea on the Bergen-Eastern England route with their own ships. The traffic through the Sound to Norway must have become heavier by the 1240s and 1250s at the latest. At roughly this time, merchants of the Wendish towns formed closer trade connections with Norway because of the grain exported from their hinterland stretching from Holstein to Pomerania, the Scanian fairs reached a climax, and merchants of the Wendish towns may have begun to visit the Bohuslen fisheries. The Scanian fairs had become attractive for merchants from the North Sea ports, mainly the Netherlands, but also from Friesland.

In this situation it is my opinion that increasing numbers of skippers did not take the relatively secure, but longer, route via Norway to and from Western Europe but chose to use the shorter though far more dangerous route round the Skaw. The first mention of the direct route—in the well-known and often-cited charter granted by King Abel of Denmark to the ummeldandfarer in 1251—is therefore purely incidental. Indeed it refers to a well-established route. The direct overseas route from Lübeck and the Wendish towns to England and Flanders, then seems to have been common already in the second half of the thirteenth century. There is some evidence, though slight, of ships from ports in the eastern Baltic too. Of
course, there are no statistics for this early time. But the quality of the evidence given above shows very clearly, in my opinion, that there was a regular traffic through the Danish Sounds and ummeland, the Skaw—as well as on the traditional route via Lübeck—Hamburg. From the beginning of the fourteenth century the evidence from England shows a fluctuating, but continuous, annual import of grain and timber from the Baltic. Large quantities of herring from Scania and Bohuslen were taken to England too. Merchants from the Wendish towns, including Lübeck, were those primarily engaged in this trade. The traditional view, which holds that the direct route was not regularly taken before the second half of the fourteenth century, must therefore give way to the new interpretation of the evidence.

The strong position achieved by the Wendish towns through their role as transshipment ports for the sea traffic from the Baltic to the North Sea region, and vice versa, fits the leading part they played in the organisation of the Hanse. A recent study points out that the constitutional organisation of the Hanse was comparable to that of an assembly at a royal court. The town of Lübeck played—cum grano salis—the part of the king, the Wendish towns that of the crown council, and all other members that of the Stände (assembly). Such political importance must have been rooted in economic strength. However, the basis of this economic strength is not clearly elucidated, nor is the reason why four rather large and densely populated cities (Lübeck, Wismar, Rostock, Stralsund) could develop in a relatively small region on the south-western coast of the Baltic in the thirteenth century and achieve such political importance. Herring and salt, which were, of course, very important for the origin of the first German settlements, followed by grain and beer after the rural areas had been colonised, as well as trade connections with central and upper Germany are not, in my opinion, a sufficient basis. Neither can these factors explain why the economic strength of the Wendish towns decreased after the fourteenth century and never recovered afterwards. But if these towns had the function, in a regionally organised trade system, of transshipment ports for goods travelling from the Baltic to north-western Europe, and only lost this function because of the increasing use of the direct route through the Sound and round the Skaw, they would originally have had the economic strength which led to political influence. The towns would have been the informa-

123 See Nils Hybel's and Wendy S. Childs' articles below, passim.
125 Schich 1997: 73 f.
tion centres for all trade matters for merchants from north-western Europe and from the eastern Baltic, and this too would have given them political power. But this economic strength would have been lost after the middle of the fourteenth century.

As mentioned above, I presume that the heavy population losses were the reason why the volume of Lübeck trade recorded in 1368 was only a fraction of that reached in the years before the Black Death. There is little statistical evidence but if one thinks of the fall in stockfish imports to England from 1300/10 to 1365/1400, one can get an idea of what may have happened, even if the reduction in such imports might indicate a change in the structure of North-European trade that could have occurred without the Black Death. Elsewhere I have shown that the economic strength, and hence the volume of Lübeck seaborne trade, fell drastically from 1368 up to the 1520s. It was not before the early 1530s that it recovered although without reaching the (recorded) peak of 1368 which, as we have seen, was probably only a fraction of the volume attained before this time.