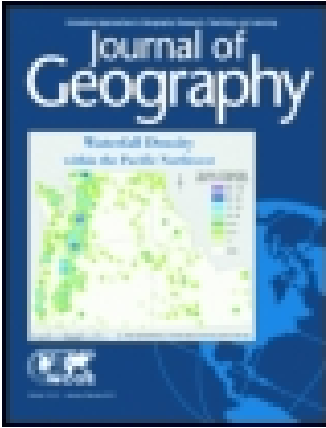


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Medieval Trade and Trade Routes

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77°, lowest noon elevation in December, 29°—difference, 48°. This gives of course 24° for the inclination of the axis of our earth. Ordinarily, perhaps, the result will not be so accurate as this. Thinking out the problem is the valuable part of the work, although care should be taken to get the very best result possible.

It may be granted at once that this method will take more time than to commit the ordinary text to memory or to explain directly the change of seasons. Our real object, it must always be remembered, is to develop thinking, self-reliant boys and girls, and to accomplish this we can afford to take time. Necessarily, little details have been omitted in this brief description of the plan of work. Any teacher interested can easily add them. It may possibly be well to remind teachers who begin this work at the December solstice that the increase in elevation of the sun is very slow for the first two weeks. The lack of a gyroscope should not deter any one from attempting to teach the subject by this method. Any top stands upright when it is spinning rapidly and can not be upset by any moderate blow. When it is not spinning it is almost impossible to balance the same top so that it will stand upright even for a second. Again, if one holds the wheel of a bicycle (taken from the frame) by the ends of its short axle, he will find it hard to change the direction of the axis if the wheel is whirling. Either the top or the wheel illustrates the same point as the gyroscope.

In the observation work that is carried along with these lessons the children will have noticed the change in the time of sunrise and of sunset and will have correctly given the short day as one cause of winter. They should also be required to show with the globes that an earth with a vertical axis has always and everywhere equal days and nights, and that an earth with its axis inclined has days and nights of varying length.

MEDIÆVAL TRADE AND TRADE ROUTES*

BY C. RAYMOND BEAZLEY, M. A.,

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IN the development of the world's commerce and trade routes, history meets geography very closely, and the geographical teacher can find in this subject many excellent lessons afforded him by historical research, just as the historical teacher cannot here neglect the suggestions, the conditions, and the limitations of geography. Trade routes

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can only run where the Earth-surface is favorable; but a sufficient amount of favor is shown by wide tracts of that surface; there is an extensive possibility of choice and change; and historical events have constantly modified, and sometimes revolutionized, the course of the great trade channels. At the same time, history has constantly neglected to consider adequately the mercantile, economic, and geographical elements in man's advance and the evolution of modern society.

If we look for the central principle in the history of the World's exploration, we shall find that commerce, the search for material gain, has been the most permanent, vital, and effective spring of progress. Religion, science, and politics—the missionary spirit, the pilgrim spirit, the spirit of adventure, the colonizing spirit, the scientific spirit, the political spirit—these have all played their part, they have all done much. But none of these has the importance of trade in the opening up of our world, in the development of geographical knowledge. Trade ambitions are the most powerful factor in bringing about a continuous, progressive enlargement of the horizon in making discovery a lasting gain to the race. Trade decadence marks the Dark Ages in Western Europe, more, perhaps, than anything else. Trade revival coincides with, and is a main cause of, that mediæval and modern Renaissance which begins in the eleventh century, on the eve of the Crusades, and has continued ever since.*

The ancient trade routes continue far into the Middle Ages—with changes, it is true, but only changes of masters, of products, of comparative importance. And these trade routes are mostly, both in pre-Christian and in early Christian times, from west to east, or from east to west, moving, like the great mountain ranges, along the length, or longitude, of the old world. The amber trade of the Baltic coast, the fur trade of the northern forests, and the gold, ivory, and slave trades of

* Contrast the permanent, effective discovery of China for Europe, by the mercantile spirit of the Polos, in the thirteenth century, with the comparatively ineffective religious discovery of the Celestial Empire by Nestorian missionaries from A. D. 635 or with the still less effective and permanent diplomatic discovery by Roman envoys in A. D. 166, 284, etc.

Contrast the permanent Columbian discovery of America, so largely inspired by mercantile ambitions, with the transitory discovery by the Northmen in the tenth and eleventh centuries, a discovery mainly adventurous (which essays colonization, but in vain).

Contrast the permanent attempts to circumnavigate Africa, before a settled commercial purpose inspired the enterprise, with the success of the same considered as the opening up of a new trade route of primary value in the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries.

the East African shore are the chief flank divisions of the great stream of international commerce flowing from Britain and Spain to India and China.

Looking, first, at these trade routes from a Mediterranean or European standpoint, we may instance among the more important the Black Sea way from the Bosphorus to Trebizond, and sometimes to other ports of Armenia and Caucasia. This route crossed the isthmus of the Caucasus, traversed the Caspian, and ascended the Amu or Oxus to the rich lands of Western Central Asia (Bukhara, Samarkand. etc.). Another branch of the same route passed over North Armenia and through North Persia, just to the south of the Caspian. In "Sogdiana" it met with other trade routes in profusion; for the Soghd was the true heart of Central Asia, at least from the ninth—probably from the eighth—century, and even in Ptolemy's time (*c.* A.D. 130) it had great mercantile importance. Upon it converged the three great Chinese western tracks, one of the most important routes from India, and various much-frequented roads from Southwest Asia. The Trebizond path of commerce is perennially active; but it is most important in the Mongol era, and for a century after the destruction of Bagdad and the consequent rise of Tabriz (*c.* A.D. 1258–1360).

The Euphrates route, uniting (at Rakka or Callinicum, in North-east Syria, on the upper course of the great river) with many shorter mercantile ways from the Mediterranean coasts, brought the traveler down to the Persian Gulf, and thence either by sea or land along that dreary south coast of Persia and Baluchistan to the Indus and Sind. By the former, Alexander's fleet returned to Mesopotamia; by the latter, his army.

The north and central Persian routes, skirting the southern edge of the Caspian, or running through Mosul and Northern Mesopotamia, passed through Merv to the Amu and Sogdiana. Till its sack by the Mongols, in the thirteenth century, Merv, "Antiochia Margiana," was one of the chief centers of the trade of upper Asia—from the age of Alexander the Great to that of Genghis Khan.

The Red Sea route, connecting Egypt and the Mediterranean world with India (and at times even with China), by way of Aden and the South Arabian ports, was also important as bringing the products of tropical Africa to the "Roman Sea." By means of this route the horizon of the Ancient World was extended (in the time of Pliny and Ptolemy, *c.* A.D. 50–170) to the Zanzibar Islands and the equator; while the early Moslem traders pushed on still farther along this path to Madagascar, the Mozambique Channel, and Sofala. Here the Europeans,

coming from the west, round the Cape of Good Hope, met the Moham-
medan traders of the Indian Ocean, whose southward terminus had
been Cape Corrientes.

The northern fur and amber trades followed, for the most part, the
courses of the rivers which formed the natural highways between Baltic,
Euxine, and Mediterranean lands—the Dūna or Western Dvina, the
Dnieper, the Vistula, the Memel or Niemen, the Dniester, or the Prut.
Easy portages, as in the backwoods of North America, connected the
upper courses of these streams or their tributaries. This route was
also followed by Norse, Danish, and Swedish traders, and travelers
to Constantinople, the Mediterranean, and the Holy Land, in the age
of greatest Scandinavian activity.

A route of minor importance, but of great historic interest, con-
nected with the main Black Sea avenue of commerce, ran from the
lower Danube round the north of the Euxine, thence moving eastward
either to the north or south of the Caspian: this was occasionally
employed by the Byzantines in their sixth-century intercourse with the
Turks, and became of great importance in the Mongol age (thirteenth
and fourteenth centuries).

The Tigris route from north to south was not very important
before the rise of Bagdad (*c.* A.D. 750). The Freshwater Canal route
from the Nile to the Red Sea, connecting the Mediterranean with the
Indian Ocean, was, on the other hand, prominent at certain periods of
the earlier Middle Ages. The canal, however, was often choked and
disused; it was finally abandoned A.D. 767.

Looking at these trade routes from an eastern standpoint, we may
distinguish three chief highways between China and the Western World
—one running to the north of the Tian Shan, the second to the south
of that range, while the third skirted the northern face of the Tibetan
Plateau, masked by the Kuenlun Range. All these met at the western
extremity of the Great Wall on one side, and in the Sogdiana oasis
(Samarkand, etc.) on the other. In Ptolemy's age (second century A.D.),
the Græco-Roman merchants who traded with the Silk Land seem to
have preferred the second and third of these routes, and especially the
Kuenlun way; most Chinese travelers to the west, on the other hand,
appear to choose the first, or northern Tian Shan road. From Fergana
and Eastern Turkistan the Kuenlun path (the third Chinese road to
the west just noticed) threw off an important sidetrack over the
Indian Mountains southward into the Indus Valley, where men, passing
down the river, reached a seaboard in direct communication with the
Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, and the Mediterranean.

The limitations of the Ancient World are always perplexing us; the successes gained by the pre-Christian civilization are constantly suggesting yet greater things unattempted or unachieved. In a sense, perhaps, the light that was in the world proved to be darkness. The Helleno-Roman World, as organized under the Cæsars, was so rich, so self-sufficient, so full of proud contentment, so weary of struggle after many centuries of conflict, that it made little serious effort to explore beyond its own limits. For instance, there was felt no want of a commercial route by water around Africa; the Phœnicians, six hundred years before Christ, claimed the discovery of that waterway; but, in the heyday of old civilization, no adequate attempt was made, under far easier conditions, to repeat the experiment. It could have been successfully carried through, without doubt, under the Julian or Flavian or Antonine emperors; but it had ceased to appeal to practical men, though it still attracted the learned and the imaginative. Again, while the ancient coast and overland routes—by caravan or river boat or coasting vessel—were in good order, even the most adventurous did not seriously think of the great voyage from west to east, "from Spain to India," which was believed in as a theoretical possibility (*e. g.*, by Aristotle), fully eighteen hundred years before it was realized by Columbus and Magellan. The discoveries of the Great Forty Years (1480–1520) were not anticipated in the times of Strabo or of Ptolemy, chiefly because the same suggestions of vital gain did not occur to the sublime self-satisfaction of imperial Rome. The compass and quadrant were then unknown, it may be said, and nautical science was in its childhood. But, if Greek thought and Roman perseverance had given attention to the problems of ocean travel, the progress of later centuries would certainly, in great measure, have been anticipated. But the intellect of the later classical time was interested in the theory of the world—its shape and size—far more than in the practical exploration of the same.

The ancient trade routes, as already noticed, continue far into the Middle Ages almost unaltered; but, as regards the west, their activity decreases, their scale of supply and demand is lowered, their good order and safety are seriously impaired.

In the sixth century A.D., the Byzantines try to divert the overland commerce (from China, India, and Central Asia) away from the Persian routes, which most of that commerce then followed. Two attempts are made with this object: (1) by the Indian Ocean routes, and in alliance with Abyssinia; (2) by the Black Sea and steppe routes, in alliance with

the Turks of Sogdiana. Both these attempts had special relation to the silk trade, important both under the Old Empire and in the Middle Ages; this trade had long been in the hands of the Persians as carriers.

The first attempt involved an alliance with Abyssinia, and with the Nestorians of Persia, South India, Sokotra, etc.; it brought about the visit of Nonnosus to the Negus' Court, and the visits of Sopater and Cosmas to Ceylon (before 545); and it produced the valuable writings of Cosmas on the regions of the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, etc. In these writings there is a great advance on previous Christian knowledge of South Asia and East Africa.

The second attempt involved alliance with the Turks, then ruling in Samarkand and over vast regions north of the Amu (the camps of their khans are always in motion; sometimes they are in the Soghd, or near Kokand, at other times near Lake Balkhash, or in the Lower Altai regions, etc.). This alliance produced many valuable travels between the Bosphorus and West Central Asia, and good records of the same. These travels really proved the Caspian to be an inland sea, and not a mere gulf of the Arctic Ocean; but this lesson was not properly drawn except, perhaps, at Constantinople—*e. g.*, St. Isidore of Seville at this very time repeats the old misconceptions. Excellent descriptions of the Turco-Tartar nomades were now given in Greek, recalling Herodotus, Hippocrates, and Strabo. Hence also comes one of the earliest notices of Lake Aral, and of the Rivers Ural and Emba; the better known Volga, Syr-daria or Jaxartes, Don, Dnieper, etc., are clearly described or referred to by the Byzantine historians of the sixth century. This intercourse lasts from 568 to 590 or 595; its central object is to "transfer the sale of silk from the Persians to the Romans"—*i. e.*, it is a commercial object that inspires the whole. Also, under Justinian (before A.D. 565), the secret of silk manufacture is transferred from China to the Byzantine Empire by Nestorian monks, who bring silkworms' eggs in a hollow cane to Syria. This remains the most permanent result of the new Byzantine enterprises. In Western Europe, during all the period of the earlier Middle Ages, commerce is extremely depressed; yet there is occasional surprising evidence of its vitality—*e. g.*, Gregory of Tours tells of merchants going from France to Syria, and of a merchant pilgrim coming from South India to France (about A.D. 550); also of Indian ships coming regularly at the same time to Suez "for the sake of merchandise." Note also the colonies of Syrian traders in Marseilles, Narbonne, Bordeaux, Orleans, Tours, etc., under the Merovingian Kings (sixth-eighth centuries), as well as the commercial prosperity of Venice, beginning in the sixth century.

The rise of Islam produces incalculable effects in commerce as in politics. Moslems now control the most important sections of the great international trade routes, and are practically masters of the world's carrying trade. A wonderful development of Indian Ocean trade and trade routes occurs under the early Caliphate, and before A.D. 1000 Moslem traders visit North China, Korea, and Japan. Already in A.D. 700 they are found trading in Canton; in 758 they head serious riots here; in 795 they transfer their main Chinese market from Canton to Khanfu or Hangcheufu, near the mouth of the Yangtse, the greatest Chinese port throughout the Middle Ages. Kala, in the Malay Peninsula, is their chief market in the East Indies. Ceylon is also important, and Arab merchants appear here long before Mohammed; even about A.D. 400. Arab trade colonies, also, on the Malabar coast and in North-west India, are pictured in glowing colors by early Moslem travelers and geographers before A.D. 1000. Within the Caliphate, the courses of the Tigris and Euphrates and the Persian Gulf routes acquire new and special value, and are indeed primary after the foundation of Bagdad (A.D. 750). Busra, at head of Persian Gulf, Maskat, Siraf, and Kishm, predecessor of Ormuz, close to the mouth of the gulf; Aden, the key of the Red Sea; Jedda, the port of Mecca; Suez, "where Egypt met India;" Mozdishu, on the Somali coast; and the far eastern harbors of Kala and Khanfu, or Hangcheufu, are the chief centers of the ocean trade of Islam down to the Crusading Age. On the other hand, the overland routes are somewhat depressed during the early centuries of Islam; but along the northern frontier of the Caliphate, from the Pamir and the Syr-daria to the Caucasus and the Volga, there is a surprising amount of commerce and a surprising variety of commerce avenues. Those already noticed—the Amu-Caspian-Caucasian-Euxine route, the steppe routes north of the Euxine and the Caspian, the South Caspian or North Persian road—are now of considerable importance, though quite secondary to the great maritime coast tracks of the south. The fur-trade route, running up the course of the Volga into the far north, is also valuable, owing to the passion of rich Moslems for furs; its chief terminus is at Bolgharar (answering to the modern Kazan).

All Moslem trade routes are summarized by Ibn Khordadbeh, about A.D. 880. Great importance is assigned by him not only to the routes noticed above, but also to the North African caravan route, skirting the north edge of the desert, from Morocco to Egypt. He also emphasizes the commercial position of the ports of France and Italy, even then, and of the market town of Rhé or Rai, near Teheran, where Slav, Khazar, and Levantine traders met. He also gives an elaborate account of a

Central European trade route from Southern Germany eastward, running through the Slav lands to the lower Volga, and thence on to Central Asia, India, and China.

The early triumphs of Islam, following on the barbarian invasions, for a time almost stifle the commercial life of western Christendom, and Moslem piracy for a moment apparently completes the destructive work of Moslem conquest. While the East and West Caliphates develop commerce of their own, of immense reach, depth, and volume, the Christian lands outside the Byzantine Empire seem commercially dependent on their more prosperous rivals. But gradually matters alter, the outlook changes, and the central period of the Middle Ages is marked by a mercantile development of decisive character; a new era in trade, as in politics and society, is created; and whatever the other fluctuations of European history, in commerce the Mediæval Renaissance, beginning on the eve of the Crusades, is an abiding and vital force. This steadily grows till Europe arrives at the discovery and trade exploitation of the entire world.

The new European mercantile life really begins as a continuously progressive force in Italy and the south of France during the ninth century—especially at Venice and Amalfi, and to a less degree at Marseilles. This mediæval mercantile life is superior to the ancient commercial activity in claiming greater privileges for the trader, in giving more attention to freedom of trade intercourse, in undertaking more daring and speculative operations, in devoting greater energy to the discovery of new markets. At the conclusion of the Crusading struggle it is evident that the solid results of the religious wars are mainly commercial—a new culture and material prosperity, a vastly extended knowledge, a well-informed and far-reaching ambition, whose results are seen in the great scientific and geographical discoveries of the latest Middle Age.

The Crusading States of the Levant, advanced bases for Christian trade, help the Christian travel-pioneers, especially merchants, to penetrate the inner regions of Asia. Thus Italian and Provençal merchants push up to Aleppo, Damascus, and the Euphrates before A.D. 1200. Some time before 1264 we find a Venetian trader in Tabriz, the North-Persian successor and supplanter of Bagdad. The conquests of the Mongols are first announced to Christendom by European traders in gems and spices who had gone up, about A.D. 1200, from the Syrian coast towards the Euphrates.

New routes and new markets are opened by the Latin capture of Constantinople (A. D. 1204), and the rise of the Mongols (from A. D. 1190).

Venetians are now established as commercial sovereigns on the Bosphorus and the Black Sea: their traders penetrate to Kiev, into the heart of Asia Minor, into Persia, into Central Asia, finally, with the Polos, into China, Indo-China, and India.

The Mongols open continental (overland) routes, as they have never been opened before, to Christian trade and travel. The opportunities given by Mongol rulers to European merchants result in that new knowledge of India and China which, above all else, inspires the great geographical discoveries. For Henry the Navigator, Dias, Da Gama, Columbus, Magellan, and the rest are all primarily in search of better and easier ways to Cathay and the Indies. The difficulties of the land routes are well known by the fourteenth century; the value of the objects and regions sought are also thoroughly apparent to the searchers; the first hopes of profitable overland intercourse (raised by the Mongols) have now been completely disappointed; therefore, men seek for maritime, oceanic ways. Hence the circumnavigation of Africa, the western route by voyages of Columbus, the reaching of East Asia by a western course from Europe (by Magellan), the incidental discovery of the unsuspected land-mass of America (by Columbus).

The importance (in the Mongol period) of the Trebizond—Tabriz and Lajazzo—Tabriz routes (from the Black Sea and the Cilician coast to North Persia, and so to China by the way running south of the Caspian) is very notable.

Only second to these come the steppe routes—*e. g.*, from Kiev or the Crimea to the lower Volga, and so to the Mongol capitals and China by tracks running north of the Caspian—while, again, the river routes are not to be forgotten—*e. g.*, the Don-Volga way into the Caspian (crossing over by the Kalach portage from one river to another); also the Amu route. But before the close of the Middle Ages both Mongol and Moslem alliances for commercial purposes are clearly seen to be futile experiments, ending in utter disappointment. Good examples of the latter exist in the attempts of European traders in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries to reach the Indies through an understanding with the Moslem rulers of Egypt. Some of these are temporarily successful—*e. g.*, the Pisans in A.D. 1175, the Germans about 1240, the Venetians about 1330—but none are permanent.

The routes of the Polos in their two great journeys (1260–1295) give an excellent view of the chief trade avenues in the Mongol period.

I. On the first journey the outward route was: Crimea, Volga, Bukhara, over the dividing mountains by the southern Tian Shan way, over the Gobi to the Great Wall, Kublai's Court at Shangtu. II. On

the second journey: Lajazzo, Erzinghian, Mosul, Ormuz, Badakhshan, over the dividing mountains by the Northern Kuenlun way, Great Wall, Pekin, various routes in China (*a*) to Southwest, (*b*) to Southeast, especially to Hangcheufu, the "City of Heaven;" home from Zayton, in Fokien, by the coasts of Indo-China, through the East Indies, along the Coromandel and Malabar coasts to Ormuz, Tabriz, Trebizond, Constantinople. The Red Sea routes are elaborately described in the Polo narrative, but not apparently from first-hand observation. We must notice the importance of the Nile and of Alexandria in international trade even at the close of the thirteenth century.

The persistence, daring, and success of Christian traders, even from the beginning of the Crusading Age, correspond to an ever-increasing weakness and decay in Moslem commerce, which from the seventh to the eleventh century had controlled the world's purse-strings. Commercially, as in some other respects, Islam never recovered from the Mongol convulsion; *cf.* Polo's evidence on the vast superiority of the Chinese ports over Alexandria at the close of the thirteenth century.

So the break-up of the Mongol Empire and the conversion of the Western Tartars to Islam destroy Christian hopes of effective overland trade through Asia. A thorough knowledge, we have seen, now prevails in the west of the riches of South and East Asia. These riches are accordingly sought by the longer but safer maritime routes. The chief stages in this search are the following: In 1270, European discovery in the African islands and off the African coasts begins again with the voyage of Lancelot Malocello to the Canaries; in 1291, we have the first overt attempt to reach India by an ocean voyage round Africa, planned for strictly commercial purposes; in 1341, 1346, 1402, etc., European voyages are repeated among the African islands, and renewed attempts are made to coast on beyond the farthest hitherto known. Valuable discoveries are made among the Canaries, the Azores, and the Madeira group, even before 1351; but permanent, continuous, effective Atlantic exploration only begins under the leadership of Henry the Navigator, 1415-1460; the route around Africa is practically opened up by 1486 (Bartholomeu Dias), absolutely by 1498 (Vasco da Gama). The greatest commercial revolution ever known is produced by this, by the discovery of America in 1492, and by the Ottoman conquest of the Levant, which last dealt a deathblow to Moslem commercial spirit, just as the Ottoman conquest of the Crimea and other coasts of the Black Sea dealt a deathblow to the old Christian trade by this route with Central Asia, China, etc.