



**Emporia and Hanse:
Modern Lessons
from Historical
Drivers of Trade**

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INTRODUCTION

The Hansa Projekt has, with considerable acumen and innovation, adopted as its name an organisation that encouraged intercommunal trade in an epoch of turmoil and protectionism. The example gives us much to reconsider today as we reflect on the swirling currents of contemporary trade politics. But the ambitious historian is also tempted to survey deeper eddies, and seek to divine hidden unbalancing currents in our continent's commerce.

The Hanseatic League, variously known in shorthand as the Hansa or Hanse, was an innovation of considerable importance at a troubled period in the Middle Ages. Its existence secured trade routes across sovereign, linguistic and ethnic divides – at a time when travel was difficult, local politics often fractious, and law otherwise enforced only by the sinister applications of the cultish Vehmic courts. Its operations ensured trade remained profitable, and therefore survived the great dynastic revolutions of its times. Its power provided sufficient counterbalance to limit or even avoid disruptions during times of conflict. In doing so, it played a key part in fostering Europe's wealth at times where whole regions might be crushed by war, famine, and pestilence – and in its defence, it might conversely be said that if its shipping contributed to the latter, by the time the Plague reached Hanseatic vessels most of the continent was already overborne by the Grim Reaper.ⁱⁱⁱ

More than this though, the trade routes supported by this largely North German bloc meant that political ties were fostered between peoples and nations. It helped share cultural experiences as new trends emerged. Its reach meant that basic trade rules and codes of conduct became widely established, arguably making the League one of the early dismantlers of

Technical Barriers to Trade (TBTs). The League itself meanwhile operated a dispute mechanism that kept the peace between its members, without ever turning into an overweening or politicised central Court of Justice.

Rather than fleeting congregations of seasonal visitors, Hanse representatives were in a position to form standing nuclei of expats. Thus was created the Kontor, whose nearest familiar equivalent today may lie in the Concessions granted to Western powers by China. In London for example, their enclave was known as the Steelyard. This enduring presence and wealth made them as important an influence in trade terms as the Italian bankers of Lombard Street were for local finance.

In these concessions, there was a practical distinction between a minority of long-term residents who largely got involved in management, and a larger group of passing visitors who came to conduct business and then escorted their merchandise back home. The transitory nature of most of the community meant the collective kept strong personal ties to their homes. Officials were not left in a position to 'go native'.

The settlement itself was divided up almost like a college, with sections partitioned amongst groups of towns. Conversely there was a physical and social barrier with the natives, governed by a series of strict rules. The whole was peculiarly reminiscent of a mix between gentleman's club, Oxbridge, and a monastery. The establishment was hierarchical and formed a self-governing and self-financing fraternity. While social status and reputation counted for much in the League, at least in the knotor it seemed that there were opportunities to break glass ceilings and this appears to have been encouraged – we might speculate that doing so discouraged abuse or favouritism through personal or city ties.

The full extent of the League's power is difficult to gage today, and was not that much easier to formally define even in its own day. By the mid fourteenth century there are documents listing 77 signatory towns, but the actual number of members was subject to selective interpretation and the list varied over the years. Yet that figure alone should point to

the scale and geographic range of this mercantile association, spread not only across the coasts of Northern Europe but also to a surprising degree into the fluvial hinterland. A key meeting in the League's history for example took place in Cologne, a good 150 miles from the North Sea, but it long enjoyed as we shall see historic trade reach with far flung European neighbours. The footprint of the League petered out in states where direct access to the Mediterranean trade routes began.

Just as the weight of the League varied across the continent, so too did its nature. One of the more informative examples is provided by its base in Bruges, which of course throws in a gentle irony as that city would subsequently lend its name to the banner of Margaret Thatcher's criticisms of the European Union model of doing business. In any event, in Hanse terms, the League's influence here was comparatively slight. The Hanse system in Bruges operated, not as it did in other sites as an edifice for its own monopoly, but as a competitive node and linking trade hub. Its merchants had residency rights but did not set the rules. Its merchants competed and cooperated but did not oppress. This all happened in an environment that was innovative and wealthy, and happy to see its visitors. Bruges provides us an example of the best of the Hansa, generating an opportunity for the exchange of ideas, fashion, and even ways of doing business. However, this wasn't the only way the League ran its affairs, and the closer it came to holding absolute power, the more oppressive its administration became. That too is a lesson for our times.

This short paper then looks at the development of the Hanseatic League, at its strengths and weaknesses, and what those can tell us about trade and connectivity in the continent today. But the Hanse is not a narrative for the whole of Europe, and much can also be learned from how trade developed from such sources as provide a greater reach back into the recesses of time. And so we seek also to put the Hanse into its own context.

The Baltic and the Mediterranean have both been arteries, though the connections that Europe's great Northern and Southern inland Seas

fostered were also affected by very different climates, environments, resources, and even level of access to the hinterland offered by great rivers. What was it that encouraged the competing merchants of the German towns to unite as a consortium, while fostering the enduring, ostentatious, and peculiarly constructive rivalry of the Italian Republics? How did the irony come about that the towns that united in the League did so in the Cologne Rathaus, a few yards away from the still-hidden remains of Imperial Rome's frontier Palace that symbolised the monopoly of power in the hands of a single man?

The significance of the Hanse cannot be isolated. It forms one symptom of a greater truth: that the continent of Europe has faced a perpetual struggle, between the natural order of commerce between individuals regardless of background, and the leaden hand of government that seeks to control it or tax it. But to put the League into context, we first have to traverse the seabed of our continent's historical setting, and then lift our written histories from such scattered shores as the scribes of the time did yet harbour.

HEARTH, HOME, AND HAIRY CHESTS

The problem with exploring pre-history is that the history, by definition, is lacking. There are snapshots captured within the historic narratives of other states, as when a Caesar might briefly enter stage left, leading army and scribbling autobiography. For the rest, we are left with interpreting the footprints – long limited to the clutter of archaeology, echoes slightly hanging in the air through oral histories, the thread of place name survivals, and now to the exciting and aeon-deep puzzle that DNA brings.

So to grapple with understanding societies as civilisation emerged is to tread a desolate marshland, rather than the dusty paths littered with cuneiform bricks.

Let's consider for a moment the entertaining illusion of our past generated by that genre beloved of Hollywood. Take, for a fanciful moment, the Cimmerians of Robert E. Howard. The focus of the Hyborian age is a series of tales based on sword and axe, for a simple reason. A series of books relating the epic story of Conan the Farmer wouldn't have sold, any more than Jack and the Beanstalk would have been of interest if he had gotten the going market rate for a cow. Conan the Merchant Venturer may only have been a marginal improvement in the bookshop owner's ledger. The narrator is drawn by the act of telling into focusing on heroism, destruction, despair, triumph and death. The genre thus focuses on transit and transition based on edged metals rather than precious ones, traded by force rather than by negotiation.

For all that, we do still get glimpses of an underlying current of 'sword and sorcery economics'. Caravans provide places of refuge and anonymity, strangers quaff alcoholic beverages purchased in pilgrim town bars, while sailing ships trade jewellery and silk. Of course, they exist in narrative terms to provide ready prey to villains and pirates rather than demonstrate the interconnectivity of society, but the presumption of existence for the reader exists all the same.

Such features are obviously no more factually accurate as the trading Lakemen of Dale and the top sails of Númenor. Still, as powerful images set within a tangible narrative, they do prompt us to consider the nature and extent of the interrelationship of our own ancestors in times before borders were known or drawn. The genome now tells us that Neanderthals and early humans had a more intimate relationship than had been suspected. We cannot know whether that was the result of a little cave romancing by the camp fire or some early Patrick Swayze pottery-making scene, or alternatively a darker legacy that has left so many descendants of Genghis Khan populating the earth. But what we do find in Palaeolithic graves is evidence of a different kind – seashells. The oldest evidence of the use of small gastropods as beads comes from the Levant, perhaps collected as decorative items as early as

100,000 years ago. From a European perspective what is of interest here are those sites that are some distance from the shore. The Upper Palaeolithic produces evidence of material travelling some hundreds of miles before finding their final resting place, particularly the marine bling but also the more practical flint. This points to an element of trade that crossed immediate communal barriers. And it happened in the absence of a governing Directorate General.

We might correspondingly suggest that the greatest barriers of the times were obvious and natural. Distance precluded great trade routes until the later Neolithic period; but into those distances the detail of simple numbers also wandered. As the pre-Colombian experience in North America reminds us, geographically disparate and mobile societies can (subject to the constraints of geography) have functioning interrelationships. Perhaps a problem in those more glacial years was rather one of market opportunity. One estimate of the potential number of people living in Ice Age Europe runs at around 5,000 people. When things warmed up, the population perhaps expanded to around 29,000, and even these may have been concentrated in pockets (incidentally also explaining concentrations of type finds like models of fat naked ladies). In any event, the main obstacle to trade in the real land of Conan likely wasn't an obstructive warlord, but living on a continent with neighbours who were as accessible as people living in the backwoods of Karelia on a bank holiday.

MONUMENTAL CHANGE

By the Neolithic era we can start to gain a clearer perspective. For all the shadows that still mask our perceptions, we can begin to appreciate a greater interconnectivity across parts of Europe. Moreover, while there are clearly societal structures in place (shifting hundreds of tons of stone or raising hills of earth implies not only cooperation but also leadership), this is clearly not blocking connections between different societies and across significant distances.

Geography clearly remained an obstacle, but ingenuity made of its rivers and shorelines a highway. It is now tempting to speculate on the part now played by Babel in hindering links between distant shores. The relics of the Basque tongue, the most famous of today's language isolates, and the fragments of Etruscan that have passed down to us both demonstrate the great gulfs that may have existed in those times; but the very divergence of the centum from the satem within proto-Indo-European – merely five thousand years ago – and the huge range of offshoot tongues that have fanned out and diversified since then should be enough to alert us to the impact of centuries of social separation and the obstacles in communication that arise.

On one of the Canary Islands there survives today a most peculiar means of communication. Indeed, it is listed by UNESCO. Silbo Gomero is a system designed to be relayed long distances by residents of a rugged valley landscape, by whistling. The message is inevitably alien to those not taught what those warbles mean, since each sound replaces a phoneme equivalent (today, in spoken Spanish). But this simple mix of two vowels and four consonants is remarkably effective at the role for which it is intended. The exact origin is unclear, but this ancient mobile phone certainly predates colonisation. It also cautions us to be prescriptive in our assumptions as to the linguistic abilities of old agrarian societies.

We might presume that at least for intermittent trade and the niceties of barter terms – 'pointy pointy' – language proved a surmountable Technical Barrier to Trade, at least until government got involved (examples being the Académie Française, and the modern British schooling system). The "monolithic culture" proved anything but. Clearly migration was happening, and evidence exists for population flux, potential cohabitation, and genetic dispersal, coupled with the wider distribution of technological advances in pottery and agriculture.

Much ground-breaking work is ongoing in this field which we tactfully leave to those far better versed. We are in any case on clearer ground with the advent of metal.

One of the most intriguing finds to come out of Salisbury Plain in recent years has been the grave of the Amesbury Archer. Aside from the unusual dynamics of the abundance of grave goods, and the very location in the general vicinity of the Stonehenge monument, analysis of his teeth suggests he was originally from the Alps. His copper knives came from Spain and France. The presence of a metalworking aid, and so early in Britain's history, implies he was more than just a Bowman. A highly valued artisan perhaps, maybe even associated with the raising of a new phase of the local stones.

Clearly by the second half of the third millennium BC, there was a degree of flexible connectivity linking Central Europe with a periphery, subject of course to your vantage point. One theory associates the presence of worked gold in the tomb with a unique skill set possessed by its occupant. Arguably, this might in turn be interpreted as a marker of clear societal openness to welcoming skilled workers. Another mooted idea, which is just as exciting, is the prospect of him coming to the location as a pilgrim, suggesting in turn that Stonehenge was a location of far-flung cultural significance. There is another wild card element also in play in the shape of an associated grave from around the same time.

This contains an individual sharing a congenital condition, who had spent a number of years in Britain, and quite possibly additionally for part of this time in the north of it. This, speculatively, means a son brought up locally – adding an extra level of complexity to interpreting this snapshot of migration.

In recent years, archaeologists have sought to reconsider the population dynamics associated with this period. The grave comes from, or slightly predates, the start of an influx of artefacts from the Beaker people on the continent. Rather than considering these items to have come into the country by invasions, the thinking is now that it was because of a perceptible expansion in trade. It now looks like there was a good thousand-year surge of what to us would be international commerce, resulting in a spread of pottery, metalwork, but also styles and ideas.

Foremost amongst these would have been sharing of the knowledge of brewing – critical as we know to Western civilisation, Friday night socialising, and combating academic deadlines.

Europe four thousand years ago was a far more interconnected, and self-aware, continent than had ever been suspected. From Ireland to Italy, Portugal to Mitteleuropa, trade linked its communities. We can also, rather happily, appreciate a number of Scandinavian petroglyphs that have survived down to our age, portraying the very ships that would have carried these ancient travellers. Alta Fjord may have been home to the Tirpitz and Scharnhorst during the Second World War, but the site is also one of several with carvings that show an earlier maritime presence. Here we find images of 2-3 man boats hunting, fishing and at anchor, the earliest perhaps dating back to the fourth millennium BC. A larger vessel, depicted as capable of holding a dozen or so people, dates to around the middle of the third millennium BC. Reconstructions can today reveal to us the hazards that must have been associated with prehistoric travel.

While we can't with certainty style it the golden age of free trade, what seems clear is that it happened naturally, and without the deliberate intervention of (proto) government. Might that, in turn, make the Amesbury Archer the first identifiable international venture merchant?

MYTHS AND METALS

Oral history provides us with some brief flashes of folk memory from the Bronze Age. Two examples, from opposite ends of the continent, offer hints at how trade and interconnectivity was looking fifteen hundred years later – Irish mythology, and Homer. Neither, of course, yet take us to the Baltic and to the ancestral shores of the Hanse, but the gap grows closer.

Both sources are problematic. The former in particular are clearly tainted by changes in society, with St Patrick himself popping up to converse

with the last hangers-on from the heroic age – hardly surprising when you consider the scribes capturing the tales were monks. Even with the telling of the Trojan War, perhaps four centuries had passed from the events being related before the story as we know it had coalesced, with a further gap before the lines were set down, and obviously not even then by the purported author himself. For all that, take the description of the Homeric chariot: as was pointed out by Professor Martin West (of whom this author was once a student), the description of the style of fighting does not seem to be understood by the narrator, talking as he is of tactics that were long out of use. Indeed more than that, the language of the movement itself implies a level of incomprehension on how the machines worked. Yet the original descriptions had survived. This suggests a level of deep authenticity to the narrative that should also be taken into account.

What then can we glean of trade in this world? A limit to our horizon is set by what can be seen from beneath the rim of the visor. Both groups of narrative are largely about heroes struggling against challenge, adversity, hostile supernatural beings, and indeed fate. Most rely on strength, weapons, and allies or retainers; less often it is by guile or stratagem. Of these latter, the most famous has nothing to do with merchandise but is rather a gift horse that really should have been looked in the mouth.

We do, however, get important glimpses of a world beyond the blade. Odysseus relates a story on his final arrival, saying he had fallen in with a Phoenician merchant travelling to Libya for trade.^v Elsewhere, a stranger is challenged as to whether they have sailed into the area for business or for piracy.^{vi} Athena, operating under cover, pretends to be a ship captain who has journeyed across wine-dark seas to lands of strange languages, bringing iron to exchange for copper.^{vii} Most striking of all perhaps is the rebuke made to the incognito Odysseus, when the latter turns down the challenge to engage in a sporting challenge:

"Then again Euryalus made answer and taunted him to his face: 'Nay verily, stranger, for I do not liken thee to a man that is skilled in contests, such as abound among men, but to one who, faring to and fro with his benched ship, is a captain of sailors who are merchantmen, one who is mindful of his freight, and has charge of a home-borne cargo, and the gains of his greed. Thou dost not look like an athlete.'" ^{viii}

We can read in such lines a measure of contempt for the trader, particularly when it is associated with a tinge of what we would today identify with xenophobia. The prestige from being a merchant clearly falls below what is achievable in a heroic age, particularly amongst those who are either well-born or well-built. Even so, the value of the trade itself does appear to be recognised and supported. Beyond the hierarchical assumptions of a society that values physical prowess and renown gained in competition (for which battle is the supreme test), there is still a differentiation between those who provide valued and needed goods and those who bring their ships from afar to raid – piracy being a form of mere brigandage, and no true test, perhaps as it targeted the weak. From Homer, the glimpse (which may be more appropriate to the ninth century BC than to the thirteenth) is a world of trade connections, but also one where there are no obvious and deliberate trade barriers.

We might divert ourselves briefly by comparing this scene with the Irish myths, dimly silhouetted by the oral twilight. Here, the field is sadly less fertile. The reader of Lady Gregory's anthology is swiftly overwhelmed with an attrition rate of heroes matching any Tarantino movie. Cattle rustling is clearly more of an incentive for neighbourly interaction in the tales than any hope of barter. The lessons to be drawn largely involve avoiding love triangles with kings; not letting your staff fry your magic fish; not overnighing in places that pop out of nowhere; if you do, making sure if you make a flying visit back home so that your feet literally never touch the ground; being careful what animals you throw things at in a world of shapeshifters; and always following any weird personal taboos suggested by druids.

While these may supply a measure of advice of varying levels of modern application, they are not particularly useful for anyone seeking insight on trade. That said, the general absence of information is itself information.

There are passing references to ships and to perils for sailors, and there are taverns for travellers such as the one where Cormac is ambushed in the Ulster Cycle. But otherwise the commercial horizon is noticeably closed. When Deidre and Naoise go into exile, they stick within their cultural milieu and head towards Alba (earlier in the tale clearly described in terms that refer to Gaelic Dal Riata). Encounters with outsiders tend to come as invasions, a key exception being the Herculean quests set for Tuireann's sons. These suicidal missions indeed do send the heroes out into the wider world, but they go as Celtic Argonauts to steal the objects of the task. When they do apply guile, they notably don't pretend to be merchants, but first claim to be travelling poets and then impersonate mercenaries.

These narratives, however, are too heavily adulterated by the passage of time. We can though draw one useful lesson. Within the Celtic pantheon, there is a notable peculiarity in there being an array of deities associated with such issues as war and death and fertility, but only one covering trade. That is Manannan Mac Lir, whose merchantly brief clearly emerges from his portfolio covering the sea.

As we set out from the outset, perhaps part of the answer lies in the 'Conan focus'. Just as with the 'Homeric gap', a contextual limit arises from the nature of the narrative form itself. There is another intriguing speculation. The range of assigned times for the original characters in the tales, if they are indeed historical narratives, spreads across perhaps a thousand years. The significant amount of them that overlap with Roman era Britain at first sight makes the absence of clear trading references more striking. But might the advances into the Celtic world from Caesar onwards, however, and subsequent assimilation also account for a growing cultural and economic retreat from the continent? We enter neck deep into speculation, exacerbated by the very peculiarity of some

of the hard evidence. Just what do we make of the Barbary Ape skull uncovered at Navan Fort in County Armagh, which is clearly in an Iron Age context? It could only have been a pet, a gift, or a sale that had come with a trader.

Those less content to sieve through pages of "rosy-fingered dawn" might thus instead, and more productively, reflect on the archaeology of the Bronze and Iron Ages. The seasoned museum veteran can compare the displays of the continent's museums and recall, notwithstanding the Otherness expressed in the Irish lays, clear evidence of a cultural commonality through the Bronze and Iron Ages. Consider the chariot models with wheels mounted on the horses – the Trundholm Sun Wagon in the National Museum of Denmark is the most striking and exceptional example and perhaps even the earliest surviving of the genre. By the late Bronze Age, these items (which appear to the modern eye to be children's toys) can be found from central Europe down to Portugal. Clearly there is no isolation of ideas going on. Working down into the bone evidence, we find the Egtved Girl, dating from a time when Odysseus's grandfather might have been playing with such wheeled horse models. This individual, judging again from the skeletal evidence, appears to have travelled repeatedly, and at some speed, between Denmark and Southern Germany. Her dress itself seems to have come from the Black Forest area; the bronze from her mirror came from the Alps. To quote the scientists involved in the analysis, "Our findings compel us to rethink European Bronze Age mobility as highly dynamic, where individuals moved quickly, over long distances in relatively brief periods of time."^{ix} And this was a girl aged around 16-18.

Even if we assume that the individual was of high status, this appears to suggest that, firstly, societies were open to outsiders in a way that would facilitate trade rather than obstructing it; and secondly, the nature of transport however rudimentary was such that trade could have been enabled by natural geography as much as channelled or obstructed by it.

Perhaps what we are really lacking is the (perishable) evidence.

Rather than the stories of heroism conveyed around the fire in the chieftain's halls, it turns out that the most astonishing stories are whispered in northern bones.

It is into this context that sit such discoveries as the Dover Bronze Age boat, and the three vessels found at Ferriby by the Humber. Limited testing of reconstructions suggests that they were seaworthy, demonstrating a capability extending further than just an afternoon's light paddling. Meanwhile, the continued and indeed growing obsession with ships in Scandinavian rock art confirms a deep-seated presence in the psychology of the artist, to the point that researchers at the Tanum Rock Art Research Centre have identified vessel depictions that have been altered as ship design subsequently changed centuries later. The larger vessels are clearly being used for transport: whether of the rowers themselves (none of the boats have sails), or items carried within the vessel, must remain conjectural. Clearly with a crew of 25 and individual boats showing armed figures, the supposition must be in a particular case that a raiding party is depicted – as the suspicion is with the later, Early Iron Age, Hjortspring Boat and the associated votive armour and weapons. But that does not apply uniformly to all the glyphs, even if we also take into account the depictions of fishing.

Meanwhile while we do not, unfortunately, have a series of documents from royal tablets spelling out what the limits on trade were (beyond the physical threat of desperate, or plum crazy, neighbours suddenly paddling into the neighbourhood), we do have clear evidence that despite the immense physical constraints, 'Metal Age' societies were linked by extensive trading networks supplying goods that were either highly practical or highly valued.

It is the type of finds themselves that are really informative, and demonstrate the extent to which far-ranging trade was going on. Amber we will encounter again later, as a unique Baltic trade good that clearly

did cross formal and increasingly demarcated frontiers. But particularly remarkable is the discovery by plasma-spectrometric analysis that one of find of glass beads unearthed at Ølby in Denmark, from the same timeframe as Egtved Girl, had travelled a very long way. It came from Egypt, and it would also appear that others had been transported from Mesopotamia. Some form of link had long been known from amber finds in Pharaonic tombs, but this evidence demonstrated a two way direction and perhaps hints at a more direct level of connection that previously suspected – it hints that end consumer tastes were understood.

We might usefully here make passing reference to two other known connections between the Mediterranean and Northern Worlds. Direct Phoenician interest in the British Isles has been postulated from the tin trade, of critical importance in the manufacture of bronze. Speculation has associated these islands with those of the 'Cassertides'; and while they might as equally be connected with the tin-producing regions of northern Spain, both identifications demonstrate a trading connection, even were it to have happened through intermediaries. A fleeting reference in Avienus also however points to a Carthaginian expedition, perhaps in the fifth century, that turned north at the Gates of Hercules (the entrance to the Mediterranean) at the same time as a more celebrated expedition turned south. The northern team presumably lost kudos by not returning with the curious gorilla skins the southern expedition did. Yet their trailblazing was sufficient to encourage Pytheas of Marseilles in the fourth century to travel to Britain and explore more widely the cold northern regions. Whether he did so in search of geographical truth or the wealth of the amber route is just one of many questions left open.

The Egyptian bead is not an isolated item of bric-à-brac esoterica. Fast-forward to the high era of the Etruscans, and the British Museum holds an item from the late seventh century graveyard at Vulci. It's a carved ostrich egg, of Phoenician or Punic origin. The BM holds a collection of them in various levels of fragmentation, ranging in date from the

Trojan to the Samnite Wars. The taste in such art had been around in Mesopotamia for millennia, and survived in South Asia for millennia more, but these objects provide an unchallengeable proof of prestige imports travelling some distance at least in southern Europe. What we cannot tell is the extent that trade and taste followed individuals. A curiously plain tomb to be found in Capua's museum dates from perhaps the fifth century, and despite being set up in an Italic community clearly held someone originally of Spartan origin.

What is intriguing in all this and of relevance to the future destiny of the Hanse is to observe the demonstrable growth of trading hubs. Greeks who were literally less laconic and broth-eating established a range of colonies in the south eastern Mediterranean, settling in what would become major cities in Southern Italy and Sicily. But they also created the important stepping-off point of Massilia, and the Empurias that gave its name to emporium. Carthaginian colonies in Spain (particularly Gadir/Cadiz) also secured trading connections that reached across continents. In each circumstance, the social and political connections with their founding states remained strong in both directions.

By contrast, the trading networks of northern Europe that are now entering view seem to come across as more communal. Fourth century BC reporting appears to place traders in modern Portugal as middlemen with British trade. As the Romans strike northwards and more light is cast, such links continue to appear to be tribal and founded on geographic advantage. Caesar's description of the Veneti (in latterday Brittany) and also of the tribes operating in the vicinity of the Rhine both suggest societies taking advantage of their location to operate as key intermediaries. In the case of the former, Caesar (the first commentator on the scene available to us today) has this to say:

"The influence of this state is by far the most considerable of any of the countries on the whole sea coast, because the Veneti both have a very great number of ships, with which they have been accustomed to sail to Britain, and thus excel the rest in their knowledge and

experience of nautical affairs; and as only a few ports lie scattered along that stormy and open sea, of which they are in possession, they hold as tributaries almost all those who are accustomed to traffic in that sea."^x

This would appear to be the first recorded evidence of monopolistic or dominant practices in Northern Europe. It was, of course, superseded by a new monopoly of which the emperor was himself the advanced guard. As for the German economy, we are first struck by the reporting of a clear differential in markets. Gauls prefer to spend their money on fine cattle, the Germans on the border (the Suevi) on slaves. These latter consider wine to be degenerate – something of a dampener for Gallic export opportunities.

All things considered, trade on the cusp of the historical era in this part of Europe displays a number of peculiarities: talking of the Suevi, "Merchants have access to them rather that they may have persons to whom they may sell those things which they have taken in war, than because they need any commodity to be imported to them."^{xi} By contrast, their neighbours the Ubii have assimilated more with their Gallic contra-riparians, and are much more involved in trade precisely because of the Rhine.

Of Britain, we find confirmation of its place within a trader network, but in a manner that suggests a rather parcelled middleman system. Considering an attack on the island, Caesar did some research but didn't get very far.

"For neither does any one except merchants generally go thither, nor even to them was any portion of it known, except the sea-coast and those parts which are opposite to Gaul. Therefore, after having called up to him the merchants from all parts, he could learn neither what was the size of the island, nor what or how numerous were the nations which inhabited it, nor what system of war they followed, nor what customs they used, nor what harbours were convenient for a great number of large ships."^{xii}

It is significant that his enquiries leak: "In the meantime, his purpose having been discovered, and reported to the Britons by merchants, ambassadors come to him from several states of the island".^{xiii} This seems to happen within a matter of months, since his scouts have not yet returned and his ships have not had time to assemble before these delegates start to appear.

It is, of course, possible that the general was exaggerating the extent of the unknown he was setting out to face. He was writing his own history in order to glorify his own deeds. Or again it might be that his merchant associates were keen to protect their markets and their friends and were less than cooperative. But if we are to take him at face value, what we see developing here is a shift from a system dependent on middle men physically occupying key transit locations, to a trade scenario that culturally and sociologically divided the 'them' and 'us'. In any event, Caesar's arrival undid the first North Sea Hanse. Two millennia later, it would ultimately prove to be repeated.

DEUX HEURES MOINS LE QUART AVANT JESUS-CHRIST^{xiv}

Obstacles to trade clearly existed before the Romans came. The inclination as we have seen, given the limited available information, is to attribute the earlier barriers to geography; and then as populations grew and travel became easier, for later issues to be centred on inherent monopolies, such as where the ore physically sat in the ground, and who occupied the natural harbours. With the advent of Rome, things would change.

Perhaps the earliest warning sign was the shift in northern Europe to an economy involving coinage. Currency bars had long been in existence. Caesar himself notes of the Britons, "They use either brass or iron rings, determined at a certain weight, as their money,"^{xv} and the visitor will be able to observe examples (resembling half-finished swords) in the British

Museum. The idea of using valuable metals at set weights as a form of currency of course goes back much earlier, and we know from Roman tradition that the Republic's earliest currency in the same of bronze ingots was issued to soldiers kept away from their fields by the Siege of Veii at the end of the fifth century BC.

Greek trade introduced coins to the Gallic world, or at least that part adjacent to it. But coinage, however, really surged with and in short advance of the legions, allowing us incidentally to snatch from oblivion a handful of names of monarchs beyond the Roman limes who had a chance to advertise their rule before it was removed from them. Coinage also significantly provided not only a more portable form of wealth and at settled rates of exchange, but also a more readily divisible tool for the arithmetic of taxation.

The literary sources suggest a Celtic focus on kinship, obligation, and generosity, with service liberally awarded by the chief. Traders as outsiders might perhaps have rewarded their host with a gift, but as long as the trade was beneficial and generated advantage, it might still be that the concept of taxation (at least as a regular burden for ordinary citizens in unsubjected communities) remained alien. The appearance of a merchant was useful and to be encouraged, as after all it provided the chief in turn with an opportunity to pay his social dues to VIPs and generally keep his people happy – a form of barbarian eBay.

If that is indeed the case, then the concept of taxes, like that of APR on personal debt, came like a hammer blow when imposed with brute force on the Iceni. The Boadicean Revolt is perhaps the first tax revolt north of the Alps (though it also shares the elements of cultural and anti-colonial revolt with that of Arminius two generations earlier).

From a trade perspective, however, Roman taxation became both an obstacle and a burden of varying scale and weight over the years. The most extreme exposition lay in the excesses of the tax farming system itself, which we might style the first Western example of Public Private

Partnership gone bad. In addition to personal and property taxes and even moral taxes, we also note two taxes of direct relevance to trade. The portoria was a customs or harbour tax, of particular significance to trade with India, though one has to wonder the extent to which the harbours of the North Sea might also have been subject as it provided a ready funnel point for collection. To this, Constantine added the collatio lustralis, essentially a wealth tax on those involved in trade or the service industries. The weight of this latter was particularly felt.

The further reality was that the Roman state shifted over time, burdened by the double costs of a bread dole for the city of Rome and the silver dole for the legions. Demands generated demands, with Vespasian infamously resorting to the principle of "pecunia non olet" (money has no smell) for his tax on urine, an industry staple.^{xvi} The residents of Europe beyond Italy would have been expected to pay for the privilege of being in the Empire without many of the same advantages, particularly tax exemption and the free baps.

So with the advent of Roman governance, there was a new player in town – government itself. The beast needed funding. This meant a bureaucracy, a mechanism for policing, and a mechanism to pay for these. Contentiously, one might argue that the first EFTA-EU split thus arose in the first century BC.

Rome was a customs union. It did, perhaps, have some internal borders, since it is possible that the portaria intended as customs duties on an external border continued to be maintained on shipments from other provinces, particularly Egypt (though arguably this only applied to goods originating from further afield). The literary references do not seem to imply this was to any significant level a two way street with the barbarians levying similar amounts. This might have reflected the trading reality, where it was in the interests of chiefs to maintain supply of high demand craftware, especially if merchants were already having to pay taxes at source.

What is extraordinarily striking, however, is the indication that there had been number crunching undertaken after Caesar's day as part of a cost-benefit analysis over invading Britain again. Strabo, writing in the century gap between the invasions of Caesar and that of Claudius, observes of the British chiefs,

"they submit so easily to heavy duties, both on the exports from there to Celtica and on the imports from Celtica (these latter are ivory chains and necklaces, and amber-gems and glass vessels and other petty wares of that sort), that there is no need of garrisoning the island; for one legion, at the least, and some cavalry would be required in order to carry off tribute from them, and the expense of the army would offset the tribute-money; in fact, the duties must necessarily be lessened if tribute is imposed, and, at the same time, dangers be encountered, if force is applied."^{xvii}

The context is clearly that of the situation as it had been analysed in Augustus's time. The reckoning is made explicit elsewhere, and extended even further;

"For it seems that at present more revenue is derived from the duty on their commerce than the tribute could bring in, if we deduct the expense involved in the maintenance of an army for the purpose of guarding the island and collecting the tribute; and the unprofitableness of an occupation would be still greater in the case of the other islands about Britain."^{xviii}

Meanwhile of course, those within the customs union (subsequently including the province(s) of Britannia after the Conquest) were engaged in direct internal trade. The distribution of samian ware – or terra sigillata from Gaul – over the first and second centuries has left archaeologists with disappointingly small but usefully dateable slithers of exquisite pottery across North Western Europe, which is not bad going for a breakable commodity notwithstanding the Roman road system. Visitors to Rome might equally reflect with awe at an entire hill made up of

discarded amphorae, the Monte Testaccio on the Aventine. Arguably that also makes the Romans the first to introduce into European politics both the wine lake and an olive mountain in one go.

Clearly, despite the external barriers, some cross-border trade did go on. Imports of amber, particularly in the first and second centuries, maintained a connection that had existed for millennia, but remained subject to Rome's internal and external tensions. More significantly, Indian emeralds, Afghan lapis lazuli, and Chinese silk travelled west. That fact alone should not astound us: the earliest fragment of silk found outside China was recovered in a Scythian tomb, while tumuli of steppe dwellers in the west have been found to contain spectacular artwork of Greek craftsmanship – in turn hardly surprising as comedies reference a troop of Scythians being recruited to act as an Athenian police force. Those recently exploring the British Museum's exhibition on the Scythians will have seen the physical evidence of trade connections that fed into the steppes from as far as Southern Italy, India (via Persia), and China.

Though trade would naturally have operated in Northern Europe on a different scale to the Mediterranean world given the relative paucity of resources to exchange, it is clear that the existence of a state is not necessary to encourage trade to happen. It may even hamper it. Trade follows profit, and as the pattern of coins found in Germany during the later imperial era suggest, it dries up where profit fades (did the decision to debase the coinage play a part?) or political and border stability is removed. Treaties arising from the end of the Marcomanni War do include references to trade, but these are (perhaps understandably, given the context) very restrictive in terms of what we might today call recognised border crossing points and the timings (or rather dates) of access. It looks as if East Germany in Cold War days had more latitude over access to its western neighbour. ^{xx}

So what of the impact of those frontiers? Did the detachable 'dragon prow' found in the British Museum once adorn a vessel that sailed the Rhine, or was the captain a more ambitious trader?

With Hadrian's Wall it's thought that the gateways served as much to channel trade as to allow egress to 'sort out' troublemakers on the other side. If true, it served the same purpose as the Channel did when Augustus decided not to invade Britain and to tax trade instead. To what extent meanwhile was the German border also as much about managing customs?

We can gain a measure of additional insight from any of the major frontier cities that lay within sight of 'free Europe', literally just beyond bowshot on the other side of the river. ^{xxi} The impressive funerary carving of the Neumagener wine ship (a rowed vessel with four wine tuns poking out) which can be surveyed in Trier museum reminds us of the importance of key fluvial arteries in trade. ^{xxii} On the other hand, the fact that such a large part of the Roman border sat on the two greatest rivers of Europe (the Rhine and the Danube) was both an asset and a hindrance, since it only left lesser routes available to facilitate trade access deeper inside foreign territory. One is left to ponder the extent to which the Rhine's function was rather to supply Roman urban markets and support military centres rather than as a springboard for trade into the hinterland. This is not to exclude the latter, but to ponder the possible dominant weighting of Rive Gauchisme in the fluvial traffic that was clearly going on.

We know from funerary inscriptions that there was a direct trade link operating between York and the wine exporters of distant Gascony; but to what extent did tariffs discourage exporters from selling on the Eastern bank of the upper Rhine rather than the Western bank, with its concentrations of ready urban consumers? We can only speculate. But the absence of Roman roads, which as every schoolboy knows all went to Rome (and not to the capital of the Heruls), must have been a contributory factor as a serious Technical Barrier to Trade; and by extension, the presence of roads elsewhere surely encouraged trade diversion. ^{xxiii}

Cologne's outstanding Roman museum is home to a number of artefacts that certainly demonstrate the nature of frontier existence over the second to mid third centuries (which is just as well, given the paucity of literary records). Clearly despite conflicts further East, the German

border was at the time open to trade. The coalescence of the Franks is then associated with a conflict surge, followed by Constantine placing a bridge whose purpose is clearly military. Franks occupy the city twice during the latter part of the fourth century; and with Germanic settlements increasingly surrounding it in the fifth, the Riparian Franks conquer the city itself in AD 455.

Obviously in four centuries of frontline environment we can expect the dominant cultural presence to be that of a garrison. But it is striking that as early as the Claudian era, a full decade before the colonia itself is established, we find such an impressive multi-storey monument such as the tomb of Lucius Poblicius, described as "VETERA[NO] LEG[IONIS] V ALAVDA[E]".^{xxiv} Where did a man who was merely a former soldier make so much money before the expansion of the rather provincial Oppidum Ubiorum? The initial ambition appears to have been to make the town a hub of a bigger German province as the Empire expanded. It is this pre-Arminian phase that is perhaps the most intriguing, as 'Rome beyond the Rhine' formed part of an informal Empire that was clearly subject to cultural assimilation (not unlike the shift that Algeria witnessed in the first half of the twentieth century).^{xxv}

In any event, we do find gravestones of traders. Lollius Iustus was a "negotiator" in the city, perhaps in salt (the inscription is nugatory). Caius Aiadius Mango may have been a slave dealer, or might have simply found himself bullied at school for an unfortunate surname. Sextus Haparonius Justinus was a trader dealing in perfumes. It's not clear how far the goods travelled, but people certainly did: Horus of Pabecus was originally from Alexandria, and died here possibly still serving in the Fleet.^{xxvi} A piece of Coptic fabric would later line the armour of a Frankish prince buried under the cathedral.

What is particularly interesting are the elements that suggest wider connectivity. A dedication to Apollo by Gaius Aurelius Verus, a freedman, references that he didn't trade with free Germany, but rather made his living trading with Britain. A votive stone that has been found shows a

goddess with a bread basket and a hunting dog; this is interpreted as depicting Nehalennia, who looked after sailors travelling to and from Britain: similar ones have been found in the Scheldt region including one dedicated by a Cologne salt merchant.

By the close of the Roman period, glimpses of cross-border trade dry up. A rather scratchy marker recalls Viatorinus, a bodyguard (perhaps of the commander who set the stone up) who had been killed by a Frank "IN BARBARICO IUXTA DIVITIA" – that is to say in barbarian territory right outside the walls of the eastern outpost.

Add these together, and the seeming reluctance to build a lasting conduit across the Rhine suggests the river's key value lay more as a North-South artery and as an East-West barrier. Even so, goods did percolate. Take the words put into the mouths of the Tencteri who lived on the east bank in AD70.^{xxvii} True, they bear the marks of the historian's rhetoric – but they tell a tale held to be true by the author all the same. The speaker is inviting the city to switch allegiance to their side after a revolt:

"We give thanks to our common gods and to Mars before all others that you have returned to the body of the German peoples and to the German name, and we congratulate you that at last you are going to be free men among free men; for until to-day the Romans have closed rivers and lands, and in a fashion heaven itself, to keep us from meeting and conferring together, or else — and this is a severer insult to men born to arms — to make us meet unarmed and almost naked, under guard and paying a price for the privilege."

The speaker continues,

"Both we and you are to have the right to live on both banks, as our fathers once did. Even as Nature has always made the light of day free to all mankind, so she has made all lands open to the brave. Resume the manners and customs of your fathers, cutting off those pleasures which give the Romans more power over their subjects than their

arms bestow. A people pure, untainted, forgetting your servitude, you will live the equals of any or will rule others."

The cultural division that underpins this appeal is quite striking. We are reminded of those captive Germans who slew themselves rather than fight as gladiators (Seneca cites one case of death by toilet brush, and another by jamming his head in a cart wheel). Unsurprisingly, contenders for where the name of the tribe of the Franks later came from suggest both "free" and "bold".

The citizens of Cologne in response noted that, some generations on now from conquest, they had merged with the original settlers; and so they declined the offer and stayed Roman for four centuries more.

They may not in some regards have been doing their descendants too many favours. Domestically, the economy would yet be hit by inflation; heavy taxation; debasements (to the point in the mid third century where silver content was so notional the currency was actually fiduciary); and (with the latefundia) an agricultural system that makes the CAP look like allotment support. Bad money not only drove out good; it actually seems to have sucked out any good money from beyond the Empire as well. In response, the Edict of Diocletian at the start of the fourth century introduced a measure of overarching regulatory controls that one suspects inspires whole floors in the European Commission even today. These revolved around fixed prices, including shipping rates. Unfortunately, managing the Single Currency by fiat did for the ancient Greeks (and the rest) much of what it has done for the modern ones.

The Roman economy in the West never fully recovered. Roman weakness and more unified German tribal allegiances combined to destabilise matters further, all in the meantime driving a wedge between the two sides of Europe. We can see hints of the consequences in the evidence of Mediterranean links still to be found in Sub Roman Cornwall, and by contrasting such with the Eastern gate at Silchester that was walled up with the advance of the Saxons. We recall the visit of St

Germanus to a mid fifth century Britain still deemed to be part of his world (as a by line in sorting out a heresy, he led a warband to maul some marauding barbarians in the "Halleluia Victory"); and we can contrast that with what seems to have been a hugely differentiated impact with the sixth century pandemic that hit Britain, suggesting the two communities were divided by a very effective social barrier. In such a world, the Byzantine plate and spoons of Sutton Hoo might only represent an early bridge across such divides, generated by a new commonality only introduced through royal Christian conversion.^{xxviii}

We might thus observe that far from being a great unifying force for Europe, the Roman Empire sundered the continent. Initially, it facilitated trade by widening access to technical innovation, improving transport links, and generating legal and physical stability between provinces. But it came at the cost of a heavy customs burden for those outside of the Empire, and an increasing membership cost for individuals and families within. Areas of limited economic value possessing socially irrelevant raw goods were not a priority, except in defence terms (including perhaps essentials that might supply nearby frontier posts) or what might be dropped into an amphitheatre.^{xxix}

That meant the mass of Roman trade links were drawn out of Europe eastward instead. It is rather telling in this regard that German ambassadors were dumped at the back of the amphitheatre while others were accorded privileged seats near the front – a principle that lasted until the miffed Germans plumped themselves down at the front anyway, looking presumably too huge and scary for the ushers to move.

For reasons of assets, civilisation, and profit it was hardly surprising Rome looked rather in the direction of Alexander the Great's successors, rather than those of some rumoured proto-Odin with a fondness for birds and a history of self-harm. But is meant a continental divide all the same. Some would argue that – culturally, ethically and certainly linguistically – it survives today.

In that historical context, it is unfortunate that the founders of the EEC deliberately and symbolically chose the Capitoline as the site for ostentatiously signing their treaty. Especially as three of the paintings in the room portray scenes of the local residents assaulting their neighbours; while the statues of the popes, surveying the room with blank marble gaze, postdate the Reformation split.

THE BOOK OF ARMAMENTS, CHAPTER TWO, VERSES NINE THROUGH TWENTY-ONE

Of course, those politicians in front of the cameras in 1957 also had in mind another European Empire, an authoritarian regime whose decline would yet provide a carapace to the early Hanse. It is to Charlemagne's age that we now briefly turn.

(We trust the reader will excuse us our interest in some of the contents of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, which does have bearing on the wider continent and modern contingencies. Where else would one discover that the first apparent incident of Bird Flu in Europe was in AD 671?)

The spread of Christianity, with its fraternal undertones and common moral code, ultimately ended up providing a more far-reaching link that any administrative empire ever could. The single biggest extension in that regard was Britain. Before the Merovingians had been deposed, or England even became a unified state, the island increasingly slotted back into a wider consciousness. Part of this was clearly down to the retreat of the Britons and the end of the Roman Empire, both generating a Germanic supremacy in their respective regions. But the process of conversion was subsequently key to developing bonds. East Anglia was converted in the mid seventh century by Felix of Burgundy. Theodore of Tarsus (the last known student of the School of Athens, though the point is contested) was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury in AD 668. He was

facilitated in his work by the arrival of Hadrian, who was originally from North Africa. The profusion of imported senior foreign clergy, such as Importunus and Agilbert as first bishops of the West Saxons (and who would later end up as bishops of Paris) should hardly surprise us given the relative youth of the local church and the early absence of local colleges. At the same time, we also conversely learn of the development of an English Quarter in Rome – the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records it catching fire in the early ninth century.

The English themselves would later return the favour by supplying missionaries to their kinsmen in Frisia and Germany. Willibrord founded the see of Utrecht. Lebuin based himself in Deventer. Willibald, after touring the Near East and Holy Land, proselytised around Eichstätt. The best known is St Boniface of Mainz, who rose to considerable prominence but met a sticky (or rather, stabby) end amongst his parishioners.

The importance of these Germanic and religious ties carried across into the age of Charlemagne. The school of York was of such prominence that Alcuin was invited over by the King of the Franks to pep up standards in his court. There, he rubbed shoulders with eminent scholars from the Spanish marches; and from within the Empire, Italians, and of course Germans. We know also of Irish priests in the German church. Anglo-Saxon England was also though a bit of a special case. It shared a military frontier with Celtic/Britonic people, like the Empire. And while linguistical divergence had sundered the old Germanic tongues that were mutually intelligible in the fifth century, the socio-cultural ties that united New and Old Saxons made the former from Britain ideal interlocutors in assimilating the pagan strongholds of North Germany. ^{xxxii}

While the historians have long focused on the fascinating dynamics of these human links, we should not be too surprised that trade also went beyond the Empire's borders, at least Westwards. Offa, King of Mercia, styled himself Rex Anglorum as the dominant power in England – he was certainly powerful enough to create a fleeting and now forgotten in-house Archbishopric at Lichfield. His status (and religion) was sufficient

to ensure that he was the only Western ruler with whom Charlemagne corresponded as an equal, even if the actual status may have been more nuanced. What emerged from this relationship was arguably Europe's first FTA, signed in AD 796. On review of what little we can glean from it, it was more akin to setting out the very basic rights that arose in an ATECEC – an Agreement on Trade and Commercial and Economic Cooperation, such as the one signed between the EEC and the USSR. But it was an advance.

The agreement covered TBTs: it guaranteed the protection of traders by the local authority and by its legal system – of relevance to the modern Brexit talks, seemingly by somehow applying the laws of both lands. It also appears to have established norms for cloth and clothing exports.

We know from at least one saint's life that expat trade communities existed in England at this time: so this agreement settled what must have been at times a precarious situation for non-subjects who enjoyed fewer rights, including (if we track later mediaeval laws backwards) significant risk of asset confiscations.^{xxxii} It is unclear the extent to which this agreement really removed much of the privileged advantage local traders would have enjoyed through feudal control over markets, but at least it removed major disincentives to turning up in the first place.

What is also significant is that the deal arose in the aftermath of a trade war. Relations had strained over the case of a number of Anglo-Saxon exiles, whom Charlemagne wanted to see return home. Matters may have been exacerbated by a perceived insult through Offa asking to marry off his son to Charles's daughter. In any event, trade was embargoed on both sides (or perhaps depending on the reading, foreign trade vessels were forbidden from leaving port). This is probably the nearest we will ever get to the Hard Brexit 'Project Fear' stories about airplanes being grounded.

We might also reflect on the two sides of the coin associated with the Carolingian Single Currency. Introducing a level of harmonisation made

sense when trading was becoming easier between regions of the Empire, and markets started to take note of very different rates of silver content. But the act also generated a single authorised standard. The drop in finds of foreign coins (particularly Anglo-Saxon and Arab) may of course be accidental, or it might reflect a tighter control over legal tender. In turn this must have generated a risk of fixed exchange rates and associated fees. In any event, the new currency regime was a different world from later times of Florins, various regional Livres, or Ecus (not the Euro type), with different levels of credibility that traders could turn to when rulers debased or policies soured.

The standardisation of internal trade processes has been associated with theories of subsequent retreat from external trade. Should we, for instance, take the apparent decline of the great northern trading post of Dorestad as a marker of the expanded and standardised Empire turning inward? Further archaeology may yet show the town to have been another early example of the pre-Hanse spirit being quashed by imperial introversion, and state policies bearing unforeseen and damaging secondary impact.^{xxxiii}

The jury has been out for a century on the extent to which the Arab Conquest forced Western Europe in on itself. We might equally ask the extent to which such horizons were inherently reduced by the very nature of trade obstacles that were assumed to come with sovereign power, when the original power (Rome) was divided. In any case, the building blocks from Merovingian days seem to have remained regional and largely rural; with hubs interconnecting, sometimes across political borders, but largely within Christendom.

We might argue that Christianity opened up new horizons while delivering new boundaries. Europe's political borders in Charlemagne's day lay with heathens to the North and East, and Islam in the South. Christian Hungary would have to await the arrival of missionaries, but first the Hungarians themselves. We know the Empire's eastern boundaries were regulated, because of references to customs posts enforcing a

ban on the export of military hardware to the Slavs (seemingly the first 'Everything But Arms' trade arrangement).

We might perhaps contrast these vistas with those broached by the Vikings as their settlements spread. The temptation is again to contrast the statism and protectionism of a continental customs union, with a more decentralised, divergent and entrepreneurial Northern interconnectivity. This would be simplistic, failing to take into account such issues as taxation (whose details are sadly largely invisible), advances in maritime technology creating new market opportunities, and the very constraints in resources that drove sailors beyond horizons in the first place. But it is fascinating to observe the multipolar interconnectivity between the scattered Viking colonies, and in particular how the expansion of a town like Hedeby was clearly down to distance trade while Ribe's advantage lay in linking the Baltic and North Sea routes. (In Hedeby's case, it was further assisted by the deliberate assimilation of its competitor Reric in a particularly early hostile takeover: this involved the aggressive poaching of staff, namely kidnapping them.) We might, furthermore, also speculate on the selection of the site of Normandy for the Viking colony in France. It is tempting to question whether the choice was considered useful for both sides because of the track record of Rouen as a trading emporium, linking the region (including Paris) into the wider Norse trading world while also tying down the inhabitants into 'going legit'.

Might one have found the sort of silk caps that turn up in tenth century York if the Vikings hadn't been around? Possibly. But one wonders if without the Volga trade routes developed by the freebooting Scandinavians, creating supply lines to oriental markets that circumvented the royal tax men and market managers of central Europe, it wouldn't have cost a lot more. Perhaps the Baltic operated as a version of the later North West Passage, only with more silk and profits, and less frostbite. If so, it did so without the help of any administrators sent over from Aachen.

THE TIME OF THE LEAGUE

The Hanseatic League did not spring up overnight. It was an institution that developed and was moulded by its times, and by the changing threats and opportunities of its days.

Its early forms remind us of similar prototypes under the Romans. First, it was a club or association; then a trades union; next a guild with rules. In the tenth century it was enough to be a subject of the Emperor to mean that the merchant was granted equal protection under English law. However, the role of the German merchants themselves was such as to develop into something far more powerful as they emerged distinct from the shadow of the eagle's wing. The merchant associations coalesced into a corporate lobby, which became the dominant parties in towns. These subsequently formed self-defence leagues, as a sort of 'militarised EFTA'. In turn, competing Rhenish and Baltic elements crucially united into a single collective trade bloc in the 1280s, in the process becoming a sort of 'merchant NATO'. Peculiarly, and of relevance to the modern reviewer, the political extent of this coalescence was limited. There was no real territorial aggregation achieved militarily so there was no Veneto to the Venice; nor was it done politically, since apart from the matter of whether any partner would have approved a single city becoming utterly predominant, such a union would have been contrary to the rules and form of the Holy Roman Empire, and furthermore drawn unwanted attention from the notional 'feudal line manager'.

The Hanse's powers grew by steady increments over time. In return for grants, loans and help in crises, merchants gradually built up a range of local privileges, seemingly with a long-sightedness to their descendants normally witnessed in members of the long-landed nobility. With the decline of central Imperial power, the merchants preserved for their own towns their ancient privileges rather than allowing any fellow Imperial subject to share in them. The increasingly advantaged towns formed a

self-policing club, applying a rather early form of the EU's Suspension Clause by Unhansing any recalcitrant members who were then faced with a crippling trade embargo.

By 1367, we see a much more formalised system of collective decision-making. Circumstances demanded it, since the party needed to collectively stand up to a serious competitor in the form of a unified Scandinavia. Despite this, there was even so still no formal foundation, an administrative nightmare for anyone seeking to interpret member obligations decades later.

It is about this time we first see the term 'Hansa' being used. The origin remains conjectural. A possible suggested etymology is that the term was first applied to merchants collectively as a 'band' or 'society'; then it became associated with the membership fees of a more formalised organisation; and then migrated across to the organisation. The transition is no more astonishing than if you consider the word for the room known as a toilet comes originally from a piece of cloth that used to cover a water basin inside it.

Officially, it owned no property; it employed (at least for the first decades) no staff; and did not even possess its own corporate seal. There was no common government, since decision-making first required representatives to be sent. There was no fixed venue for its Hansetag 'diet', nor fixed times for it to meet. There was even no fixed membership – at least in official terms, though non-attenders who had been expected to turn up could be fined. It was not until the mid sixteenth century that the burdens of administration led to the appointment of its first 'Hanseatic Commissioner', the Syndic.

The peculiarity of this set of circumstances correspondingly provides us with a unique intergovernmental model, involving what were the nearest things to modern democracies, operating in an era otherwise of absolutism, weak legal protection, feudalism, and banditry.

It shows an early example of international cooperation in combating piracy, the Op Atalanta of its day being the fight against the likes of the Victual Brothers. Even the anti-piracy campaigns of the eighteenth century Caribbean and nineteenth century Barbary Coast tended to be unilateral efforts.

Above all, it shows us a case study in success. The League was a collective wealth generator that resolved its members' disputes internally. And in its external ambitions, Informal Empire and the maintenance of access was what counted: a remarkable concept perhaps not truly revisited until Peel's day.

It did its work without members removing themselves from their respective crowns, but while pursuing highly devolved policies. A similar model might be seen in policies to develop free ports today. Moreover, though collectively associating, members remained devolved and were overwhelmingly self-governing. "Pooling of sovereignty" was not part of the deal, a reality that clearly contributed to the organisation's drive.

It had its moral strengths. It was a law-based, rights-based organisation. It resisted absolutism, since such rulers grew greedy and ambitious. Members freely adhered – though there were fees, and an acrimonious departure would trigger a trade war. Notwithstanding that, collective decision-making was guided by domestic influences and democratic mandates. Decisions were reached by a practice familiar to more modern Brussels times: unanimity, but with a more than a hint of the obligations arising from 'loyal cooperation' (if you are in a minority, go with the flow but receive special favour in the application of the decision).

Pride in individual cities remained and was not suppressed – within trading posts, citizens formed separate mini-communities. This then fostered the competitiveness seen within the Italian city states, but with less of the powder and sharpened steel.

Then there was its economic vigour. It created wealth for participants by

fostering trade links. It facilitated international trading by adding value to products. The extent of its appeal can be judged by its attraction to foreign capital – it drew in outside investment. Strikingly, it was able to maintain the value of its currency even as other mints debased their own. Lubeck coin remained so constant and trustworthy, it gave its name to the English counterpart (Sterling < Easterling, ie the Baltic Hansa). The trade itself was managed through tight guild-level standards. There were very strict quality controls, and breaches would be pursued back to its original source for punishment. Its application of standards ran counter to numerous subsequent applications of the principle designed merely to hinder trade rather than ensure trust, and the trust generated by this unwritten CE mark was of clear benefit for merchants of the time (even to the peculiar extent of generating criticism that Hansa export drained the best material from local markets).

The end result was wealth, and wealth indeed with purpose: like the modern moral capitalist, its merchants supported charitable establishments through endowments.

There was the civilisation element too. The commercial circuitry established by the Hanse made it an important medium to spread culture. That included fashions, art (Holbein's earliest commissions included work for the London Steelyard), literature and ideas (especially with printing), architecture, and even food (again, the Steelyard had a reputed restaurant). But it also meant friendship and mutual understanding. The managers of the kontor were steadfast in keeping women out, but personal friendships involving VIPs did clearly develop.

DUE CONTEXT

It would of course be a serious mistake to view all this with rose tinted glasses.

This was a period where there was an international default of limiting the right of stay for foreign nationals. To this, the League added a ban on forming international joint partnerships with people who were not of the Hansa.^{xxxiv}

It might very reasonably be argued that the triumph of the Hanse lay in the trade that it developed by circumventing these and similar obstacles, so very much and for so long the norm of the continent (many are reminiscent of the obstacles faced by the Viking in Constantinople). The establishment of the permanent kontor created a secure hub and a rivet on the trade route.

But to these positives must be added the flip side as the League became too dominant. It ran different trade policy in different areas depending on the extent of its local power – where it held absolute power, it could itself be absolutist; where it was weak, its role was more productive and more complementary. So if outlying Bruges was a marker of its capacity to be a constructive piece in the trade jigsaw, that role changed further east. Where it forged monopolies it could bitterly fight to hold on to them. Embargos were pursued ruthlessly and pitilessly. When it was awarded privileges, it rarely reciprocated and even then its members never enforced. Where it suited, it was happy to pursue a policy of price controls. Where there was no competition in portage, suppliers were abused.

Monopoly meant the suppression of local competitors, which stymied the creation of local middle classes. Those with wealth focused on limited horizons, largely on raw production (such as mining, wool, furs) – in England this meant wool exports were largely in Hanse hands, and even the wool tax ended up at one point being farmed out to cover a loan. This, despite the symbolism of the Wool Sack as the very embodiment of England's strength.

For all the internationalism, the interconnectivity and the wealth that the Hanse fostered, it also nurtured with it a level of hostility against foreigners who were seen as privileged abusers. In some cases, this

inevitably ran with the territory. The Grand Master of the Teutonic Order was unusual in holding a personal affiliation to the Hanse by dint of his role, and that institution was not best loved amongst the objects of his crusading zeal. But in any event, it is an unfortunate recurring feature of Hanse history that its administrators seem to be involved in efforts to obtain redress and retribution in the aftermath of tavern fights and lynch mobs. For all its disinterest in building physical empires, its wealth underwrote the aggression of kings. Edward III infamously had to do a runner to stay ahead of his Cologne creditors chasing after the loans that had allowed him to kick start the Hundred Years War: the Steelyard in turn strengthened its own position by coming up with the money to secure his pawned crown jewels – a case of Hanse effectively underwriting Hanse to support a four generation war.

These too are lessons.

Arguably, some of this could have been expected in even the most advanced state in such unenlightened times. We might perhaps compare these merchants favourably with their counterparts in the Adriatic. While the Hanseatics despatched elected Burgomasters to debate and vote on communal action, the Venetian Doge was appointed for life, and by a hereditary clique of old families. It wasn't a Burgomaster that diverted a crusade to sack Constantinople.

DECLINE, AND SLUMBER

All things ultimately are one with Ninevah and Tyre. The Hanse's decline was inevitable. It was perhaps more remarkable that it was able to achieve and maintain its status despite not owning the means of production. Ultimately that meant that producers who found themselves able to replicate distribution were eventually able to assume it.

Many factors contributed. The fall of Constantinople shifted focus from

the east into Italy itself, and within a lifespan across into the Atlantic seaboard with globalisation. The importance of Columbus was already foreshadowed by the vision of Henry the Navigator. At the same time, first France and then Spain united into great states, headed by great dynasts, with consequences for the balance of the Holy Roman Empire. Power shifts here proved seismic. The Reformation shook loyalties, links, and perceptions. The embodied high point of the League's power came with the launch of one mighty warship, which while highly symbolic turned out to have been commissioned too late in a conflict to ever be of any use. The Hanse's CSDP proved wayward. The growth of nation states outpaced it, accompanied by the growth in royal power, and – as significantly – the stabilisation of the king's finances.

Meanwhile, the Hanse members failed to adapt. They retained their inherent divisions, and failed to provide mutual support for the communal interest. This is not an encouragement to draw from it the lesson of supporting ever-closer union in the EU today, but rather the need to place your political aspirations in the context of your age rather than those of the previous century's. The Hanse failed to do so. It strove to maintain the Staple when it should have sought to become the lead at the Exchange. It failed to become the liberator and in key markets retained the reputation of the oppressor.

Ultimately, it declined due to its failure to adapt to a new global reality, and through being too rigid in seeking to protect its rights. It did not help that with the apparent shift of the herring shoals, it also became an early victim of proto-CFP access issues; nor that the opening of the White Sea route by intrepid Dutch and English explorers broke the Baltic Sea monopoly on which it so depended.

Despite the decline, you can tell a lot of an institution by how people later look back on it within their own times. It says much of the remembered values and power of the League that three major cities clung onto its name even so. The growth of Prussia was the fatal blow in undermining

the Hanse rump. Its more free trade outward instincts were opposed by the protectionism of Berlin. Remarkably, both Hamburg and Bremen still managed to avoid the Zollverein until the astonishingly late date of 1888 – an inspiration to those who wish to confront one-model EU integrationism and support variable symmetry in Europe today.

A THREAD THROUGH THE AGES

Our survey has by necessity been swift, sweeping, and swervy. But it has hopefully been enough to demonstrate that the incredible story of the Hanseatic League is not an isolate. The push for European trade and interconnectivity is a default, suppressed by circumstances driven by conscious policy. We should not, correspondingly, be grateful today for the European Union for supplying us with an opportunity that is the prospect and right of Europeans; instead we should be instructing the Commission to stop getting in our way.

Already by the time of Hanse, long generations of intrepid traders traversing their continent had faced and overcome numerous obstacles. They began by mastering geography and distance itself. Then came the Age of Metals, and natural monopoly positions emerged. Rome brought a Customs Union that united residents at a price, while erecting frontier barriers that were physical, economic, and psychological. The place for Europe's barbarian 'otherness' was as dejected statues on triumphal arches. The Age of Faith gradually expanded the community of identity and belonging, but the recoalescence of great states again inserted high politics and managed protectionism into the path of the outside trader.

So in a sense, the conflict between merchant and sovereign in the age of the Hanse is but a phase in an ancient struggle. It would in turn be succeeded by new conflicting interests; between the resident in the guild versus the outsider; between the state and the individual; the

interests of the grower of corn against those of the consumer; the policy for the abstracted collective, set against those of the wealth maker (and those, forgotten, who invisibly benefit from the wealth); the property-less versus the property owner; and the contemporary ideological clash between the Customs Union and the Free Trade Area.

Today's European Union, alas, is institutionally on the wrong side of the divide in history. It pretends to encourage trade, and to be perfectly fair at its founding and in the context of the world of that age it did just that. But it has acquired too sovereign and imperial a taste to serve the interests of the marketplace and of the consumer. It assumes the bad portion of the Hanse spirit and neglects too much of the good. Our route must be the reverse.

It would take a different paper to properly consider the free movement of people in all this, not simply in terms of settlement waves and mass migration (though such concepts are relevant today) – the Goths were, after all, refugees from the drive of the Huns; but rather the movement of skilled workers and of intellectuals or even VIPs. AD 1400 saw the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II in England, the first sight of the purple since Constantine III. The future (Anti-)Pope Alexander V was born in Crete, but studied in Oxford. Societies weren't completely isolated, nor was trade. But as the power of the state grew, so did its hold upon the levers of trade.

The fact of Edward III holding the Gascon territories facilitated the great wine trade between South Western France and England, and the export in turn of grain and wool, just as it did in Roman times. Despite their being two separate parliaments, administration (to a point) and law courts, the commonality of the crown eased trade. But that link was also hindered through an established tax system of tunnage and poundage, quite aside from the levied sums; and also by the requisitioning of vessels to move expeditionary forces across the Channel (which sometimes never in the event even turned up due to a shortfall in funds). The loss of the Gascon lands to the French monarch of course did not wholly interrupt this market, but rather created a shift in state obstacles from the internal to the external.

We might add two peculiar footnotes on the pitfalls in that specific shifting frontier of sovereignty and trade. Bordeaux museum holds a letter from the descendants of those same traders, petitioning the French King after the loss of Québec that their access to the fur trade was again being stymied by the change in ruler. But the Gascons were the lucky ones. The staggered restoration of central royal control over mediaeval France was accompanied by a very mixed bag of privileges and deals. That meant that a number of what had previously been semi-external borders, abutting quasi-independent duchies, still retained customs posts while others had seen them removed. The most notorious example of this lay in the administration of the gabelle or salt tax, set at different rates across the country. Gascony did reasonably well. But the evident inequality and enduring grievances this fostered meant those fifteenth century customs burdens went on to contribute to the French Revolution three centuries later.

This example is not to say that the state does not have a useful role to play in supporting trade. Often that will involve the state ensuring that it stays out of the way, focusing on policing safety and standards within its own borders. Such an approach is far more prudent than exacting an additional set of obligations on imports that are already determined to be of sufficient quality within another well-supervised market. Since the days of the journeyman, a core problem has long been the tension between facilitation and proof, with the latter being used to add TBTs to block outside competition. The demands of the Commission and of MEPs to add riders to TTIP are not that different from the closed shop mentality of the mediaeval guilds facing effective competition, and distorting the principles behind quality controls as an excuse for protectionism.

Alienism borne of unfair mercantile privilege or hostile protectionism bears inherent risk. Pick a Shakespeare tale to embellish the tale of trade and one is drawn towards the Merchant of Venice. That story though is really less about the free market than about (inevitably) love, plus a cautionary word about vehicle insurance and APR. Rather less well

known is the play Sir Thomas More, to which scholars attribute a measure of authorship from the young playwright.^{xxxv} The narrative dramatises the events of Ill May Day, a riot by London apprentices in 1517 – a time when perhaps a twentieth of the city was foreign.

John Lincoln (a real character, who would be executed for his part in the events) is a mob leader who is encouraging the throng to burn out foreign merchants (he is also as it happens a broker by trade, suggesting an early need for regulating the activities of the City). Thus he calls out,

*"Then, gallant bloods, you whose free souls do scorn
To bear the inforced wrongs of aliens,
Add rage to resolution, fire the houses
Of these audacious strangers. This is St. Martins,
And yonder dwells Mutas, a wealthy Piccardy,
At the Green Gate,
De Barde, Peter Van Hollocke, Adrian Martine,
With many more outlandish fugitives.
Shall these enjoy more privilege than we
In our own country? let's, then, become their slaves.
Since justice keeps not them in greater awe,
We be ourselves rough ministers at law."*

We might gently point to this dark attitude as expression enough why the deal on citizens' rights needs to be fairly and equitably reached after Brexit. Any perception of there being a newly privileged group in a country, whose special status is upheld by foreign courts as the Commission has been proposing, would be democratically unhealthy.

The text of More's subsequent response shows young Shakespeare's hand. More spells out the reciprocal damage such attacks would bring.

*"As but to banish you, whether would you go?
What country, by the nature of your error,
Should give you harbor? go you to France or Flanders,*

*To any German province, to Spain or Portugal,
Nay, any where that not adheres to England,—
Why, you must needs be strangers: would you be pleased
To find a nation of such barbarous temper,
That, breaking out in hideous violence,
Would not afford you an abode on earth,
Whet their detested knives against your throats,
Spurn you like dogs, and like as if that God
Owed not nor made not you, nor that the claimants
Were not all appropriate to your comforts,
But chartered unto them, what would you think
To be thus used? this is the strangers case;
And this your mountainish inhumanity."*

The story is more about xenophobia than about the merchants, but it reminds us of the positive role the state can today play and has always played in policing and protecting. The problem for free trade comes when those protections are heightened into barriers.

This was a detail observed in the eighteenth century, which the independent United States had to grapple with. The colonies had rebelled in large part over not being fully part of a Customs Union (whence the Boston Tea Party), but now realised independence meant they were completely a third party in terms of trade with the United Kingdom. Quite how far this would go was still being negotiated. John Adams, the future Second President but in 1785 the first Ambassador to the Court of St James, warned of the consequences of one now-obscure element of post-Amerixit protectionist in a letter to Jefferson;

*"The English are Sacrificing the Bread of thousands of their best
Manufacturers to the interested Schemes of a very few Individuals
and to a narrow Prejudice and a little Jealousy: but I dont believe the
Delusion will be durable. Time will Shew, both them and the French,
that it is better to buy our Oil and Candles and Fins, and pay for them
in Buttons and Ribbons. If they dont discover their error, We will lay on*

*Duties upon Buttons and Ribbons, equal to the Alien Duties, and grant
them out again in Bounties to our Whalemens.*

*"We must not, my Friend, be the Bubbles of our own Liberal
Sentiments. If We cannot obtain reciprocal Liberality, We must adopt
reciprocal Prohibitions, Exclusions, Monopolies, and Imposts. Our
offers have been fair, more than fair. If they are rejected, we must not
be the Dupes." xxxvi*

The lessons of the Hanse have never been just of, or for, our time. Their case reminds us of the greatness of the merchant venturers of the past, of the wealth and cultural riches that they brought and shared. But also of their excesses when their power became absolute, and they held in their hands a monopoly of power in the management of the trade of the continent.

As EU negotiators grope towards new trading arrangements with the United Kingdom, they would do well to remember the caveats and burdens of the past. Our continent now finds itself with a fresh choice arising between two models. We can observe the warning signs showing a return to Imperial barrierism and protectionism, and of prioritising internal trade, but in so doing over time adding ever more costs and rules that undermine prosperity.

But we can also now see an alternative prospect, one that encourages freedom, innovation, and choice. It rejects bureaucracy for bureaucracy's sake relying instead on the informed consumer deciding for themselves.

Europe's happy fork in the road is now restored. The nations of this continent can take the best of the Hanse in free and competing association, or assume the very worst of it.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Lee Rotherham is by background an historian and linguist. He is a leading expert on Brexit, having advised a very large number of Conservative Front Benchers over many years on EU matters, on which he has written very extensively. A Reservist, he has served on three overseas deployments with the British army.

During the 2016 UK referendum campaign, he was Director of Special Projects at Vote Leave. He is now Director of think tank The Red Cell, and Executive Director of Veterans for Britain.

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ABOUT PROJEKT HANSA

Projekt Hansa is a Policy Group formed from the European Conservatives and Reformists Group in the European Parliament. The group is concerned with opportunities for trade and sharing cultural exports across Northern Europe, from Greenland to Finland. We will be encouraging the links between businesses and communities that will drive the future prosperity of our region. We will be campaigning for the changes that businesses need to trade freely. All whilst celebrating our shared cultural heritage across Northern Europe.

We take our name and inspiration from the Hanseatic League. This was a powerful trade alliance, which dominated commercial activity in Northern Europe for centuries between the 13th and 16th centuries. Beginning with individual German merchants and guilds before climaxing in 200 cities and towns across Northern Europe. The principle and the name of the league represents collaboration for mutual advantage and a combines drive for economic growth, values that still remain current today.

Projekt Hansa operates out of the office of Chairman Rupert Matthews MEP. Projekt Hansa exists to foster debate, contacts and communications and holds no corporate view of its own. Speakers at events or writers of papers express their own views as a contribution to debate and understanding of the issues at stake.

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ⁱWith apologies to Coluche.

ⁱⁱWith apologies to Idle, Cleese, Chapman, the keepers of the Holy Hand Grenade of Antioch, et al.

NOTES

ⁱⁱⁱThe Plague, for example, entered England by way of Dorset and a vessel from Gascony rather than courtesy of the Hanse.

^{iv}"Estimates of Upper Palaeolithic Meta-Population Size in Europe from Archaeological Data", Bocquet-Appel/Demars/Noiret/Dobrowsky, *Journal of Archaeological Science*, 2005 (figures here cited are centre of the core range).

^vBut where his fellow voyager had intended to sell him into slavery. *Odyssey* 14, 295. Phoenicians appear again, selling trinkets in 15, 415.

^{vi}*Odyssey* 3, 71-74.

^{vii}*Odyssey* 1, 181-185.

^{viii}*Odyssey* 8, 159-164. The translation is taken from Murray's edition.

^{ix}"Tracing the dynamic life story of a Bronze Age Female," Frei, K.M. et al., *Sci. Rep.* 5, 10431

^x*Gallic War* 3.8. From the Devitte/Bohn translation and taken from the excellent *lacus curti* website. Their reach was sufficient to be able to hire (and presumably, transport) auxiliaries from Britain to help resist.

^{xi}*Ibid.*, 4.2.

^{xii}*Ibid.* 4.20.

^{xiii}*Ibid.* 4.21.

^{xiv}With apologies to Coluche.

^{xv}*Ibid.* 5.12.

^{xvi}Technically speaking, it was a charge on something in the state's possession that had previously been accessed for free.

^{xvii}Strabo, *Geography*, Book 4.5. Taken from the Jones Loeb.

^{xviii}*Ibid.*, Book 2.5. Moreover, the garrison force calculated was optimistic.

^{xix}Who were, at least at the outset, genuinely foreign. See Elizabeth Baughman, "Scythian Archers," in C.W. Blackwell, ed., *Dēmos: Classical Athenian Democracy* (A. Mahoney and R. Scaife, edd., *The Stoa*: a

consortium for electronic publication in the humanities (www.stoa.org) edition of January 30, 2003.

^{xx}Cassius Dio, *Book 72*, 15.

^{xxi}The visitor to Trier can still see the marked outline of the fort on the East Bank and very much get a sense of its exposure.

^{xxii}It's also not entirely clear what the vessel is actually doing since the rowers seem to be facing the wrong way in relation to the steer board: perhaps they are mostly drifting downstream and admiring the view.

^{xxiii}Notwithstanding the derogatory statement in the Vindolanda Tablets about how bad the roads were in Northern Britain in winter. Indeed, it rather underlines how terrible they must have been where unpaved.

^{xxiv}I take the inscriptions from the fine Roman-Germanic Cologne by Gerta Wolff (J. P. Bachem Verlag, Cologne, 2003), which is essentially an illustrated museum guide for finds from the whole city.

^{xxv}Algeria's first president grew up speaking no Arabic. Like Arminius, he too served in the colonial army.

^{xxvi}The numerous stamped tiles in the Alteburg area point to a military maritime presence rather than a trading one.

^{xxvii}Tacitus, *Histories*, IV, 64 (Moore translation).

^{xxviii}See "The Byzantine Silver Bowls in the Sutton Hoo Ship Burial and Tree-Worship in Anglo-Saxon England," *Papers from the Institute of Archaeology* 21, Bintley, M.D.J., (2011), pp.34-45.

^{xxix}Both men and beasts. Plutarch styles Crixus's army that broke away from Spartacus as "Germans", though this may have to some extent have been a cultural appropriation following the Gallic Conquest.

^{xxx}With apologies to Idle, Cleese, Chapman, the keepers of the Holy Hand Grenade of Antioch, et al.

^{xxxi}Some degree of mutual intelligibility is still assumed, but not the level Gibbon assigns to the various Germanic travellers meeting in an Italian tavern in the fifth century.

^{xxxii}The example of the Frisian traders in York in the 770s is cited in the *Life of Liudger*. See *Charlemagne Empire and Society*, Joanna Story, Manchester University Press, 2005, p199.

^{xxxiii} Also by being sacked eight times in thirty years by Vikings didn't help. But the start of serious decline preceded that. One is further drawn to reflect if any reduction in trading opportunities didn't of itself create the preconditions for the switch to Norse adventurism.

^{xxxiv} By comparison, we might review the treatment offered to Germans in Italy (incidentally, from beyond the Hansa) at the Fontego dei Tedeschi. These included temporary access through the year, oversight by local secretaries, use of official weights, and the obligation that they could only trade with locals. This was in circumstances where the Germans were supposedly quite liked. (I am grateful for the albeit rather antiquated Helen Zimmern's *The Hansa Towns* for this and similar anecdotes: the copy in the London Library was appropriately bequeathed by Liberal peer Lord Riddell.)

^{xxxv} The text can be found online at <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/1547/pg1547.html>, taken from the Harleian MS. 7368 in the British Museum.

^{xxxvi} Letter of 4 September, 1785.

