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Patterns in Medieval Trade: The Commerce of Amalfi Before the Crusades

THE long and glorious commercial history of Amalfi, which began some time about the middle of the eighth century, came to an abrupt end on November 24, 1343.[1] On that day a raging storm accompanied by a tidal wave destroyed the lower town and swallowed all the harbor installations, including the famed sea fortifications. From that blow Amalfi never recovered. The present lovely resort appears as a most unlikely setting for a republic which was once a great maritime town in the western Mediterranean.

The long history of medieval Amalfi covers two distinct periods, the first extending from the eighth century to the definitive Norman Conquest (1100), the second from 1100 to the storm of 1343. Of these two periods, the most significant by far is the first one. It was then that Amalfi emerged as the leading commercial center of Christian Europe in the western Mediterranean, sharing with Venice the role of intermediary between East and West. The fact that the rise to preeminence of Amalfi corresponds with the period in which Arab power in the western Mediterranean reached its zenith (from the ninth to the early part of the eleventh century) was no coincidence. Friendly relations with the Arabs permitted Amalfitan merchants

This is my second paper in a series of studies on Amalfi and her role in the economic life of southern Italy before the Crusades. The first article, "The Relations of Amalfi with the Arab World before the Crusades," *Speculum*, XLII (Apr. 1967), 299-312, contains some basic premises and conclusions to which I found it necessary to make several references. The chronological limit of this article, as in the case of my first study, is the end of the eleventh century.

[1] For the bibliographical notes on this episode, see Citarella, "Relations," p. 299, n. 3.

to be active in the ports of Sicily, Tunisia, Egypt, and Palestine, allowing them to be the first westerners to maintain one permanent establishment in Jerusalem[2] and one in Antioch.[3]

Although the commercial activities of Amalfi in the Middle Ages have been the subject of several excellent works,[4] a critical study devoted exclusively to the trade of the Amalfitan republic before the Crusades has not yet been attempted. Moreover, the conclusions reached by previous investigations do not vary significantly from one another. This is the result, no doubt, of the fact that basically the same sources of information were used. They were, in truth, the only ones available until quite recently, when a few very significant documents came to light.

The traditional evaluation of Amalfitan trade was first proposed by Heyd, who was undoubtedly influenced in his conclusions by the obvious parallel with the contemporary commercial activities of the Venetians. This traditional view may be summarized briefly as follows: The fortunes of Amalfi, like those of Venice, were due to her trading privileges within the Byzantine empire and to the quasi

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 311, n. 85.

[3] The often unreliable *Cronica Amalfitana* mentions a settlement in Antioch in the tenth century. Such an early date must be doubted. A Ruga Amalfitanorum is found there, however, at the time of the Crusaders' capture of the town. This and other similar establishments of Amalfitan merchants in all the main ports of Syria and Palestine are attested by William of Tyre, *Historiae Rerum in Partibus Transmarinis Gestarum*, in *R.H.C. Occ.* (Paris, 1844), Vol. I, Part I, Book I, ch. x, and Part II, Book XVIII, ch. iv.

[4] M. Camera, *Memorie storico-diplomatiche di Amalfi*, 2 vols. (Salerno, 1876); W. Heyd, *Histoire du commerce du Levant*, 2 vols. (1885, reprinted, Amsterdam; A. M. Hakkert, 1959) 1, 98-108; A. Schaube, *Storia del Commercio dei popoli latini fino alle Crociate* (Ital. Transl., Turin: Unione Tipografica, 1915) pp. 41 ff. More recent accounts are by G. Monti, "Il commercio marittimo di Amalfi fuori d'Italia nell'alto-medioevo," *Rivista Storica del Diritto di Navigazione,*" VI (1940), 389-401 and *idem., L'espansione mediterranea del mezzogiorno d'Italia e della Sicilia* (Bologna: N. Zanichelli, 1942); G. Coniglio, "Amalfi e il suo commercio nel medioevo," *Nuova Rivista Storica,* XVIII-XIX (1944-1945), 100-114. The works of M. Berza, "Amalfi Preducale," *Ephemeris Dacoromana,* VIII (Rome: Libreria di scienze e lettere, 1938), 349-444 and G. Galasso, "Le cittá campane nell'alto medioevo," in *Archivio Storico Napoletano,* XXXVIII (n.s. 1959), 11-42, XXXIX (n.s. 1960), 11-57 stand apart. It is in fact with Berza that the early history of Amalfi has received for the first time the scholarly treatment that it deserves. The more recent works by Galasso have cast new light particularly on the social and economic aspects of the history of the towns of Campania in the High Middle Ages. Neither Berza, however, nor Galasso was aiming at a systematic study of the commerce of Amalfi, particularly in the period preceding the Crusades. Thus while some of their observations on the subject show fresh insights, their main point of view remains in line with the traditional account. "L'occidente e l'Islam nell'alto medioevo," in *Settimana di Spoleto,* XII (1965) contains articles by U. Rizzitano, C. Cahen, and R. S. Lopez which have contributed to the point of view expressed in this study.

monopoly of the sale in Italy of eastern goods that resulted. Direct contacts with the Arab markets were acknowledged but, as for Venice, trade with the Arabs was considered to be a sideline, albeit a very remunerative one.

The traditional evaluation of Amalfitan trade was first proposed fundamental questions: What was the basic pattern of Amalfitan trade? What were the products exchanged? What were the main lines of communication with the Byzantine empire and North Africa? Where did the capital needed come from? Finally, since gold was needed for the purchase of the very costly items that Amalfitan merchants brought back from Constantinople, where and how was this gold obtained? The aim of this article is an attempt to offer answers to some of these questions and to show that the trade of Amalfi was based on a triangular pattern: Wheat, timber, linen cloth, wines, and fruits and other agricultural products of southern Italy were exported to North Africa where they were exchanged mainly for oil, wax, and gold in the ports of Tunisia and for oriental spices and gold in Egypt.[5] The gold obtained in these transactions was in turn used to obtain in Byzantium ceremonial clothes, eastern goods, jewels and "objets d'art." These were imported in Italy and exchanged for agricultural products with the profits probably invested in real estate and land.[6]

This pattern, which, I am confident, can be conclusively proved,

[5] A distinction must be made on this point. Beginning with the Fatimid conquest, Amalfitan merchants began to frequent in increasing numbers the markets in Egypt. This shift of operations to Egypt increased, no doubt, during the eleventh century mainly as the result of two causes: (1) the liberal policy toward foreign merchants practiced by the new rulers of Egypt and (2) the end of the prosperity of Tunisia caused by the disastrous invasion of the Hilāl and Sulaym tribesmen in the middle of the eleventh century.

[6] The diplomas of Amalfi are full of transactions for the purchase of land and real estate, sometimes for very considerable amounts. The following is a sampling of the more relevant deeds. In 860 a vineyard is sold for ". . . auri tremissi viginti quinque monete domini Arigis Benebenti principis" (R. Filangieri, *Codice Diplomatico Amalfitano* [Naples: Stab. Tipografico S. Morano, 1917], II, 292 [DLXXXIV].) In 977 a group of people from Atrani buys a very large bloc of lands for the impressive amount of 1010 pounds of silver, and, sometime later, another bloc of lands for 1050 pounds of silver (*Codex Diplomaticus Cavensis*, II, 106 [CCXCVI] and III [CCXCIX].) In 1018 there is a purchase of lands for 97 gold tari, in 1060 another for 120 gold tari, and in 1062 some chestnut groves for 185 gold tari. In 1098 a whole estate is sold for 1000 tari, ". . . unde accepimus a vos . . . sanationem idest auri solidos ducentos quinquaginta de tari boni ana tari quattuor per solidum" (Filangieri, I, 49 [XXXIV], 105 [LXVII], 101 [LXIX]; II, 302 [DXCIV].) As for real estate, in the city of Amalfi in 970 a house "sita in plano," i.e., near the harbor, with two shops is sold for the very considerable sum of 70 mancusi, ". . . auri solidos mansi [sic] septuaginta ana tari quattuor per mancosum" (*ibid.*, I, 13 (VIII).)

should add another element of great interest to our view of the economy of the Mediterranean in the High Middle Ages. In Italy, indeed, besides Amalfi and Venice, a large number of centers were active in trade: Ravenna, the ports of Apulia, Sicily, Naples, Gaeta, Salerno, and interior markets like Rome, Pavia, Benevento, Melfi, and points along the routes connecting these localities. In the case of Italy, the evidence affords scanty possibility to oscillate between Pirenne's pessimism and Dopsch's optimism. Amalfitan trade, in particular, as early as the ninth century shows organization and a routine of exchanges supported by steadfast political and diplomatic action. The coherent and unflinching foreign policy with the Arab world[7] and the Byzantine empire, for instance, shows a continuity which allowed almost no deviation at all in the course of a history covering over two hundred and fifty troubled years. Such unwavering policy was not the result of the pressure of some interest group, which might occasionally prevail, but, because of its length and consistency, must be regarded as the consequence of communal interests overriding any political, confessional, or other consideration.

The present study was almost completed when three documents concerning Amalfi from the Cairo Geniza, lately edited and translated by S. D. Goitein,[8] were made available to me. Their importance may be gauged by the fact that they represent one half of all the contemporary evidence that we have from both Arab and Christian sources concerning the presence of Amalfitan merchants in Egypt during the tenth and eleventh centuries. They are indeed of extraordinary significance and add reassuring evidence in support of the thesis on the close relations between Amalfi and the Arab world that I offered in a former study.[9] On the other hand, if these documents are all we can expect dealing with Amalfi out of the Geniza papers, hopes that this source would provide the type of evidence which would cast definite light upon the more practical aspects of Amalfitan trade, such as contracts, products, medium of exchange, routes followed, and markets frequented, will not be realized. It is comforting, however, that our overall knowledge of the ninth and tenth

[7] Citarella, "Relations," pp. 303-12.

[8] References to these documents appear in S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: I Economic Foundations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967). I owe to Professor Goitein a great debt of gratitude for allowing me access to and permission to use the material in this article, as well as for advice on a number of problems relating to the Geniza papers.

[9] Citarella, "Relations," pp. 303-12.

centuries has been making steady progress through a long and distinguished series of studies covering the political, economic, social and cultural life of the peoples of southern Europe, North Africa, and the Levant.[10]

The most vital contribution that these Geniza documents make to our knowledge of the economic history of the Mediterranean in the High Middle Ages is the explosion of the myth of two societies, Christian and Muslim, narrowly confessional, confronting each other in an unrelentingly hostile posture. The Arab conquest, and the long history of Arab predatory activities along the Mediterranean coasts of Europe until the early eleventh century, added to the confessional difference, made the equation of Muslim with enemy almost universally accepted in Christian Europe. In the Muslim world, on the other hand, this attitude does not make its ugly appearance before the Crusades, except in sporadic and largely local episodes. The testimony of the Geniza papers fully supports this. In fact, unprovoked hostile measures by Arabs against non-Muslims are extremely rare and of exceptional nature.[11] Until the Crusades there is no evidence of judicial discrimination or restriction of personal freedom; the flow of merchants and merchandise from India to Europe and from the Byzantine empire to Morocco is free from any restriction to either people or goods. Indeed, the picture of the society represented in the Geniza papers fully justifies Goitein in defining the Mediterranean world of the High Middle Ages as a *free trade community*.[12] It is on such a newly emerging view of this crucial period that this study must find its justification.

I

At the basis of the maritime destiny of Amalfi stand decisive environmental factors: lack of territory, difficulty of communication with the interior, and access to a good supply of excellent ship timber. The beginning of the commercial ventures of the people of Amalfi antedate her political autonomy from the duchy of Naples.[13]

[10] Any attempt to give here even an abbreviated bibliography of the vast material available would be clearly outside the limits imposed by this article. Two of the better general bibliographies are in *The Cambridge Economic History*, II, 537-43, 555-56, and in R. S. Lopez and I. W. Raymond, *Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955), pp. 427-45.

[11] The persecution of non-Muslims by the Fatimid Caliph Al-Hākim (*c.* 1012) was brief and quite extraordinary.

[12] Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I, 61, 66.

[13] Citarella, "Relations," p. 300, n. 5.

Ever since the first part of the ninth century the Amalfitan merchants had had, in fact, a commanding position in the commerce of southern Italy. This is confirmed by the testimony found in the treaty of 836[14] between Naples and Sicard, the ruler of Benevento. Of this most important document, only the first and nineteenth chapters are preserved in their entirety. The rest of the text of the treaty is missing and only the titles up to the forty-ninth chapter survive. Of these titles that of the forty-fourth chapter, *De Amalfinis qualiter peragantur*,[15] is of great importance to us. In fact, the existence of a whole chapter dedicated exclusively to Amalfitan activities is a testimony to the singular importance of their trade within the domains of a prince who at that time controlled nearly the whole of southern Italy.

It is, moreover, interesting to note that the commercial and maritime importance of Naples declined sharply at the very time that Amalfitan commerce began to develop vigorously.[16] Galasso notes that the colonies of oriental merchants in Naples, who controlled most of the overseas commerce, found themselves cut off from the ancient markets of the Levant by the Arab conquest and consequently declined sharply.[17] This is, of course, true but it does not explain why the void left in the commercial life of the chief port of southern Italy was not filled by native merchants. In fact, the reasons for this contrast between the fortunes of Naples and Amalfi are not altogether clear, but one may argue, with good reasons, that political and diplomatic considerations as well as territorial preoccupations prevented Naples from following that strict philo-Arabic policy which lies at the basis of the commercial successes of Amalfi.[18] In point of fact, the real beginning of the meteoric rise of Amalfitan commerce from an important but largely local and subordinate role to an overseas and overland trade extending

[14] "Pactum Sicardi," in G. Padelletti, *Fontes iuris Italici medii aevi* (Turin, 1877), pp. 308-24.

[15] The verb *peragere* is used with the word *negotium* in another part of the document (ch. v). The obvious meaning of this title is therefore: In what manner should the Amalfitans carry out their trade.

[16] See Schaube, *Storia*, pp. 41 ff.

[17] Galasso, "*Le città campane*," XXXIX, 25-26.

[18] Whereas the policy of Amalfi with the Arabs remains linear, Naples, at times, departed from it. Two episodes at least attest to this. In 915 Naples took part in the operations to dislodge the Arabs entrenched at the mouth of the Garigliano River. The Arab attacks against her in 928 indicate a state of open hostility. In both of these episodes Amalfi was on good terms with the Arabs and remained unmolested (Citarella, "Relations," pp. 309-10).

from North Africa to the Middle East and Byzantium and expanding in Italy to Rome and along the via Francigena to Pavia[19] coincides with the Arabs' conquest of Sicily and their appearance in force in the Tyrrhenian sea.

There is no doubt, of course, that Amalfi "cooperated" with the Arabs.[20] Can we explain, however, the great expansion of her trade simply as the result of this "cooperation"? It seems obvious that it takes more than a set of fortuitous circumstances like these to stimulate and then continuously sustain a commerce the volume of which, in the tenth and eleventh centuries, only Venice was able to rival. There were, in fact, in North Africa and in the maritime towns of Campania, interests strong enough to lay the foundations for a pattern of exchanges so mutually profitable that it lasted until the Norman conquest put an abrupt end to the autonomy of Amalfi.[21] The key to the understanding of this situation rests, of course, on the identification of the products that formed the staples of the commerce between Amalfi and the Arab world. This trade was indeed the cornerstone on which the prosperity of the small republic rested.

The main products used by the Venetians as exchange on the oriental markets are well known. They were slaves, timber, iron, and agricultural products.[22] On the other hand, no one has so far given any definite explanation of what were the chief items of exchange used by the Amalfitans. There was, of course, an abundant supply of timber in the large forests of southern Italy and even in the very vicinity of Amalfi.[23] There is little doubt that the Amalfitans,

[19] A. Solmi, "Honorantie Civitatis Papie," in *L'Amministrazione finanziaria del regno italico nell'alto medioevo* (Pavia: Tipografia Cooperativa, 1942), pp. 107-8. There is also a very interesting example of a contract "a colonna" for a trading voyage from Amalfi to Ravenna, via Sicily (*Cod. Dipl. Amalf.*, II, 304 (DXCVI).

[20] Citarella, "Relations," pp. 309-10.

[21] Here we must also add that Norman Conquest marks really the beginning of the end of the "gran commercio" of Amalfi. To Coniglio ("Amalfi," pp. 104-7) it appeared to be still flourishing throughout the thirteenth century. As a matter of fact, its importance was only relative to the enormous progress made by western trade in the Mediterranean after the Crusades. The conquest, in truth, precipitated that steady decline, in relation to the great maritime states of Italy, which reduced Amalfi to a role of decisive dependence in the overall expansion of western trade, as already justly noted by Galasso ("Le cittá campane," p. 46). On this point see also G. Luzzatto, *Storia Economica d'Italia: II Medioevo* (Florence: Sansoni Ed., 1963), p. 100.

[22] Heyd, *Histoire*, I, 113; also Luzzatto, *Storia Economica*, p. 80.

[23] The industrial value of the forests of southern Italy was very low due, no doubt, to their abundance and to the difficulties of transportation. For these reasons, lumbering concessions were granted at very low prices. There are two interesting

like the Venetians, were steady suppliers of timber to the Arab markets of North Africa, and timber was a material always in chronic short supply.[24] There is also enough evidence to indicate that the Amalfitans had little scruple in practicing the slave trade.[25] Amalfi, however, unlike Venice, was not in direct contact with the great supply market of Central Europe; slaves, in short, were more an occasional than a regular item of trade.

In Italy the main production centers of iron, the other strategically important material, were in Tuscany and in the region of the eastern Alps.[26] Their location, therefore, also favored the Venetians rather than the Amalfitans[27] in any volume export of this important material. The famous letters of Leo III[28] seem to indicate that the bulk of the trade of Amalfi with the Arabs consisted chiefly of strategic materials. The fact that lumber especially was an important item of exchange is quite beyond dispute as the sequel will show. On the other hand, while it may be conceded that iron, because of its exceptional exchange value, was traded whenever possible, the available sources show no evidence of this. There is, however,

documents in the *Codex Cavensis,* II, 315 (CDXXXVII); IV, 80 (DLXXXVII). In the first one (May 991) ". . . Disiio et Lando germani filii Inghelgardi presbiteri" grant to "Petri magistri da Cilianu, qui facit materie de barche ipsa montania nostra cum silva et quertietum que habemus in loco falezzu et cetara et carvonara et ferolitu, et licet eum inde lignamen abscindere et faciendum indi materie de barcha amodo et unum annum completum unde modo debit nobis inde quinque auri tari." In the second document (1006) the same grantors give similar concession to Petrie de Amalfi f. Ursi for a "censum duo auri tari".

[24] The Byzantines strongly disapproved of all traders that carried war materials to their enemies. The embattled Macedonian emperors were particularly strict. In 971 John Tzimisces threatened immediate destruction by fire to all ships caught in this trade. The Venetian doge immediately forbade the sale of these forbidden materials to the Saracens on pain of a very heavy fine and even death. See Heyd, *Histoire,* I, 113. There is no mention that the authorities of Amalfi ever took a similar step.

[25] Charlemagne in 785 chided Pope Hadrian I saying that he permitted the sale of slaves. The Pope excused himself saying that the sale of slaves was practiced by the Lombards and the Greeks of Campania *(Codex Carolinus,* ed. Gretser, epist. 75). See also *Liber Pontificalis, Vita Zachariae Papae,* ed. Vignoli, II, 79; and Cenni, *Monumenta dominationis pontificiae,* I, 369 ff. The most important document, of course, is the "Pactum Sicardi" which states unequivocally the existence of this slave trade along the borders of the principality of Benevento and puts as condition of peace that the Neapolitans and their allies, including the Amalfitans, will not sell Lombard subjects overseas. See Padelletti, *Fontes,* pp. 318-24.

[26] J. U. Nef, "Mining and Metallurgy in Medieval Civilization," in *Cambridge Economic History,* I, 434.

[27] In spite of the great encouragement given to mining and metallurgy by Swabian and Angevin kings, pig iron was still imported by the Angevin kings (G. Yver, *Le commerce et les merchands dans l'Italie meridionale au XIIIe et XIVe siècle* [Paris: A. Fontemoing, 1903], p. 82).

[28] Cenni, *Monumenta,* II, 60 ff., 72 ff.

a great deal of evidence, most of it indirect, it is true, but nevertheless impressive and convincing, which indicates that the agricultural products of southern Italy—grain, linen cloth, wines, and fruits—formed the main staple of Amalfitan exports to North Africa, the Middle East, and the Byzantine empire. Of the products mentioned above, wheat must have been very important.

The grain trade of southern Italy, from the Arab conquest of North Africa until the fourteenth century, is of great importance not only to economic history but also to political history. The tormented history of North Africa after the Arab conquest made famine conditions through the land almost endemic. We know of terrible and prolonged famines for the period from 1004 to 1022.[29] Conditions became disastrous after the invasions of the Hilāl and Sulaym Bedouins in the middle of the eleventh century. A letter sent to Egypt by Lābavāt b. Moses b. Sighmāv, chief Jewish judge of Mehdia, dramatizes this situation. The significant passage reads: "Most of Sicily is already conquered [by the Normans]. We are very much disturbed because this country [Tunisia] relies for its grain supply on it."[30] From the rest of the letter we learn that Messina had already been taken by the Normans but that Palermo was still in Arab hands. Because of this situation the surplus grain production of southern Italy became a powerful political as well as economic weapon.

We have, unfortunately, only sporadic and fragmentary allusions to this grain trade before the Norman period.[31] Its existence, however, cannot be doubted. The Normans after all did not invent these exports to North Africa. The eagerness, however, with which they and their successors, Swabian and Angevin kings after them, seized upon the grain export and made of it a royal monopoly shows clearly how valuable they considered it both as a source of revenue and as an instrument of their political ambitions in North Africa.

[29] The most terrible and prolonged famine period in North Africa was recorded from 1004 to 1022, as reported by M. Amari, *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia* (Florence, 1854), II, 358-59. Other periods of famine occurred in 1033-1034 and 1040-1042. See H. R. Idris, *La Berbérie Orientale sous les Zirides, Xe-XIIe Siècles* (Paris: Librairie d'Amerique et d'Orient, Adrian Maisonneuve, 1962), II, 658.

[30] This important letter published by S. D. Goitein in *Tarbiz, XXXVI* (Sept. 1966), 67, 72, was brought to my attention by the publisher, who very kindly translated it for me from the original Hebrew.

[31] On this point see Anon. Salern., *Chronicon,* in Muratori, *R.I.S.*, II, 2. In 947, Crinite, the Byzantine commander in Calabria, bought large quantities of wheat in order to resell them in Sicily at a much higher price (Amari, *Storia,* II, 203).

Norman, Swabian, and Angevin kings collected a princely tribute of 33,000 gold bezants from the rulers of Tunisia for allowing the export of grains to North Africa.[32] In a treaty of 1206, confirmed in 1221, Frederick II obtained from Abd-el-Ouahid, the ruler of Tunis,[33] not only the confirmation of the tribute but also great privileges for the merchants of the Swabian kingdom trading in the ports of North Africa. The diversion of the crusade of Louis IX from Egypt to Tunis, according to Villani,[34] was instigated by Charles I of Naples to obtain the reestablishment of the tribute which had been suspended at the death of Manfred, and also to secure to the merchants of his kingdom the privileges they had enjoyed under Norman and Swabian kings.[35]

The antiquity and importance of the export of cereal products from southern Italy to Africa, the Orient, and even Rome was demonstrated with ample documentation by Yver.[36] Two interesting bits of contemporary evidence prove that it was very old and that it was practiced on a scale large enough to attract the attention of the world powers of the time. The emperor Louis II (d. 875) accused the Neapolitans of providing the infidels with "arma, alimenta et cetera subsidia,"[37] while Liutprand of Cremona went to the heart of the matter when he said: "the merchants of Amalfi and Venice need our wheat to live and in order to obtain it they provide us with these ornaments."[38]

The chief centers of production of grains in southern and central Italy at this time were the Apulian plateau, Conca degli Abruzzi, the Campanian plain, and Sicily. It is interesting to note that in all the main centers of production the Amalfitans were firmly entrenched with resident colonies of merchants established long before the Norman Conquest. In 1231 Frederick II confirmed all privileges and exemptions[39] that the Amalfitans had enjoyed in Puglia "from times immemorial"; there are also patents granted by Charles I and

32 *Historia Sabae Malaspinea*, V. ch. i, in Muratori, *R.I.S.*, VIII, 859.

33 J. L. A. Huillard-Brèholles, *Historia Diplomatica Frederici Secundi* (Paris, 1852) II, 277.

34 Villani, *Chronica*, VII, 38.

35 All large purchases of wheat, since the Norman period, had to be made through the royal fisc, which in this way controlled exports from the kingdom. The Angevin kings found ways of effecting sales abroad through their own agents (Yver, *Le Commerce*, pp. 28-29, 104 ff.).

36 *Ibid.*

37 Anon. Salern., *Chronicon*, II, 2.

38 Liutprand, *Legat. Constan. (MGH,SS)*, III (1839), p. 359.

39 Huillard-Brèholles, *Historia*, III, 300.

Charles II of Anjou[40] which indicate that these Amalfitan establishments were very ancient. Thus we find colonies of Amalfitans throughout the duchy of Benevento.[41] In San Germano there was an "area mercatorum Amalphitanorum,"[42] and in Capua, where there was a "plathea Amalphitanorum."[43] At Rhegium, an inscription on one of the city gates commemorates their presence.[44] In Brindisi their colony had its own church named S. Maria Amalphitana.[45] We find them in large numbers throughout the agricultural centers of Puglia: Bari, Trani, Molfetta, Giovinazzo, Monopoli, Conversano, Bitetto, and Terlizzi.[46] In Melfi they built a Benedictine monastery with a chapel, reserving for themselves the privilege of worship there and burial rights.[47] As mentioned above, the special privileges that these merchant colonies enjoyed were maintained and "confirmed" by a succession of Norman, Swabian, and Angevin kings.[48] We find similar Amalfitan commercial colonies established in all the main cities of Sicily in the twelfth century, but they all clearly go back to the Arab period.[49]

At this point one may ask what these merchant colonies, which the evidence proves continued to exist and prosper well into the fourteenth century,[50] were doing in these areas from which surplus

40 S. Loffredo, *Storia di Barletta* (Trani, 1893), I, 179.

41 See "Pactum Sicardi," in Padelletti, *Fontes*. As late as 1120 the great opulence of the Amalfitan colony of Benevento was a source of wonder to the visiting Pope Callixtus II (Camera, *Memorie*, I, 208).

42 E. Gattula, *Historia Cassinensis* (Venice, 1732), II, 749.

43 O. Rinaldi, *Memorie di Capua* (Naples, 1756), II, 168.

44 Camera, *Memorie*, II, 351.

45 *Ibid.*, 351-52.

46 F. Carabellese, *Saggio di storia del commercio della Puglia* (Bari, 1897), p. 117.

47 Mabillon, *Annales ordinis S. Benedicti*, IV, 421. The act of donation, which shows that all signatories are from Ravello, was published in Camera, *Memorie*, I, 207.

48 The patents granted by Swabian and Angevin kings to these Amalfitan establishments are always in the form of confirmation of privileges and rights which had pertained to them for a very long time, longer, in fact, than anyone could assess. See Loffredo, *Storia* I, 179, and Yver, *Le Commerce*, p. 187, nn. 2, 3, 4, 5.

49 Documentary evidence of the commerce of Amalfi in Sicily is of the twelfth century, when we find streets and quarters named after them in most of the main towns. When we consider, however, the close relations with the Arabs since the latter's conquest of the island, it appears logical that these establishments go back to the Arab period. Luzzato (*Storia Economica*, p. 99) is of this opinion. On this point, see also among many others: Yver, *Le Commerce*, p. 184; Schaube *Storia*, p. 45.

50 The loss of political autonomy after the Norman Conquest led to an exodus of merchants and entrepreneurs. From Amalfi they went to strengthen their commercial colonies of southern Italy (Camera, *Memorie*, I, 533), and the Middle East (Coniglio, "Amalfi," p. 104). As the fortunes of the little republic declined, the role of these Amalfitan merchants in southern Italy became a subordinate one. They were

wheat was traditionally exported? Are not these, in fact, what Boccaccio, who was familiar with the economy of the region, calls "procaccianti in atto di mercanzia,"[51] that is, what we would call today "incettatori" or buyers? We have other bits of evidence that can be added here. We know for instance that in the Angevin period grain storage facilities[52] beyond the needs of the community existed in Amalfi together with a large number of mills.[53] Because, however, of the complete lack of direct documentary evidence before the Norman period the conclusion that these Amalfitans scattered through the main production areas of cereals were mainly buyers of "derrate meridionali" to be used for overseas exchange can be offered here only as a reasonable deduction. This deduction, however, is strengthened by the following five points for which contemporary evidence has been given: (1) the dire needs of European foodstuffs in Tunisia from the opening years of the eleventh century; (2) the continued economic deterioration of North Africa of which Norman kings and their successors were going to take full advantage; (3) the fact that from the ninth to at least the third quarter of the eleventh century the Amalfitans were clearly the most prominent group of western merchants in North Africa; (4) the existence of a large network of Amalfitan colonies in all the main cereal-producing areas of southern Italy; and (5) the existence of Amalfitan establishments in all the principal ports of Sicily in the twelfth century which clearly go back to Arab period.[54]

Before the Norman Conquest, Amalfi had been the only rival of Venice in the trade in southern grains. She was, in fact, the only center in Italy, outside of Venice, having the organization to use these agricultural products for overseas exchange. This included a

no longer the principals in the "gran commercio" but only the agents of the great northern merchants from Genoa and later on from Florence. In 1336 the Bardi bought corn at Manfredonia from "diversis personis," one of whom at least was from Ravello (R. S. Lopez, "Trade of Medieval Europe: The South," in *Cambridge Economic History*, II, 262). Genoese firms imported large quantities of agricultural products from southern Italy, especially salt pork, through Amalfitan merchants who bought them all over the south of the peninsula (Camera, *Memorie*, II, 42-43).

[51] Boccaccio, *Decameron*, II, 4.

[52] Yver, *Le Commerce*, p. 29, n. 2. It is doubtful that these storage facilities were built during the Angevin period, since ports better favored by nature and more accessible from the hinterland than Amalfi were available to the Angevin kings.

[53] A considerable number of diplomas from Amalfi, dating as early as 907, contain numerous transactions for the sale or lease of milling time for considerable amounts. *Cod. Dipl. Amalf.*, I, 1 (I), 2 (II), 15 (IX), 71 (XLVI), 119 (LXXIV); II, 295 (DLXXXVI).

[54] Luzzatto, *Storia Economica*, p. 99.

chain of merchant colonies, endowed with liberal privileges and local exemptions, located in the great production centers, storage and milling facilities, access to overseas markets, harbor and shipping facilities and, most important of all, the capital needed to engage in this trade. The Norman Conquest robbed Amalfi of her political autonomy and set limits to her freedom of trade by dictating the direction of her commercial enterprises from political rather than economic considerations.[55] The crisis of Amalfi in the twelfth century must be sought in this situation.[56] Thus, in spite of their entrenched position in the centers of production as well as in the overseas markets, the Amalfitan merchants were soon forced into a subordinate role after the grain trade became a royal monopoly. Their new role was that of "runners" for the great northern merchants rounding up the large quantities of grains that these merchants could export by means of royal patents secured through economic as well as political deals.

II

Besides grain, timber was an item of export of enormous importance because the Arabs of North Africa lacked access to a good and convenient supply. Fulminations, entreaties, and threats of reprisals from Byzantine emperors and western world powers[57] had little effect on the flow of this strategic material to the Arabs because they were unenforceable, and when some government, like Venice, attempted to put them into effect they led to grave internal troubles.[58]

Among all the Arab states, Egypt was a particularly good customer, since lack of good timber had been a national problem from the very beginning of her recorded history. The Geniza papers, which are such a rich source of evidence for hundreds of other products, are almost mute on this point, since, as we have seen

[55] Retaliatory measures were not long in coming. Following the conquest of Amalfi by his enemies, the Normans, the Byzantine emperor Alexis Comnenus forced all Amalfitan owners of shops in Constantinople and the empire to pay a yearly contribution of 3 hyperpers to the church of St. Mark in Venice (Heyd, *Histoire,* I, 108).

[56] On this point see especially E. Pontieri, "La crisi di Amalfi Medievale," in *Archivio Storico Napoletano,* XX (NS), 37. My own conclusions, however, are different. In another study in this series I hope to bring more light on this very important point.

[57] On this point contemporary sources are particularly plentiful. For the bibliography, see Heyd, *Histoire,* I, 385-88; R. S. Lopez, "Silk Industry in the Byzantine Empire," *Speculum,* XX (1945), 38-39; Citarella, "Relations," p. 305, n. 44.

[58] Lopez, "Silk," *ibid.*

above, the Jews did not trade in this commodity. Among the items of furniture listed in the Geniza papers we find, however, Rūm chests, bedsteads, and cupboards of clear European origin.[59] The presence in that country, from the tenth century at least, of Amalfitan merchants, sometimes in surprisingly large numbers, is well-established by six contemporary documents of exceptional importance. The first comes from the archives of the S. S. Trinitá of Cava and testifies to the voyage of Leo Amalfitanus in Egypt in the year 978.[60] The second, going back to the year 996, reports an episode of cruel reprisal in which 160 or 107 Amalfitan merchants were killed because of the suspicion that they had set fire to some warships, which were being readied in Fustat, the port of Cairo, for action against the Byzantines.[61] The next three, as yet unpublished, come from the Cairo Geniza and are now in the Taylor-Schechter collection, University Library, Cambridge, England.[62] The first mentions the arrival of a ship from Amalfi, about the middle of the eleventh century, carrying silk and honey.[63] The second is a letter sent from Amalfi to Mehdia.[64] The writer had to travel from Egypt to Amalfi by way of Constantinople because of the danger of pirates. When he reached Amalfi, in some 70 days, he found that he could not dispose of his merchandise, consisting of pepper and incense, because political disorders had brought business to a standstill. While in Amalfi, where he had to spend the whole winter, our traveler visited an Amalfitan by the name of Juhanna, to whom he delivered a letter from the recipient of this letter. This episode also took place in the middle of the eleventh century. The third document[65] deals with the arrival (c. 1060) at Alexandria of some Amalfitan merchants offering for ransom three Jews whom they had apparently purchased from a party of Rūm. The latter had captured and robbed a ship on which the three Jews had been traveling. The final document, which also comes from the Cairo Geniza, was published for the first time by S. M. Stern.[66] The document is a letter addressed

59 Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I, 46.

60 Actually there are two consecutive acts that mention this voyage, CCC and CCCI of the *Codex Diplomaticus Cavensis*, I, 114-15.

61 C. Cahen, "Un texte peu connu relatif au commerce oriental d'Amalfi au Xe siècle," *Archivio Storico Napoletano*, XXXIV (N.S.), 61-67.

62 See n. 8.

63 Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I, 46, 402, n. 33.

64 *Ibid.*, pp. 325, 484, n. 80.

65 *Ibid.*, pp. 329, 484, n. 14.

66 S. M. Stern, "An Original Document from the Fatimid Chancery concerning

to the Caliph al-Mir (1101-30) and after the usual preliminaries reads as follows:

> The slave kisses the earth before the noble and exalted prophetical presence, may God double its light and may God extoll its beacon, and reports the *continued arrival of the Rūm merchants who came bringing the timber* and whose coming the slave had reported. They are: *Sergius the son of Constantine, . . . the son of . . . , Grasso* [?] *the son of Leo* [?] *the Amalfitan, ... ,* and Bon . . . the Genoese, and their companions who are with them. They say that up to the time of the slave's writing it had not been established . . . . . the timber . . . reached them.[67]

The finding of these contemporary documents, which attest to the presence of Amalfitan merchants in Egypt in large numbers, and the routine form by which the writers describe the arrival and departure of ships and people for Amalfi, are not mere coincidence. In fact, while these papers place Amalfitans in Egypt from 978 to 1060, or thereabout, it is almost certain that Amalfi, which had very friendly relations with the Fatimids when they ruled Tunisia, co-operated with them in the conquest of Egypt, at least to the extent that she could provide the strategic supplies they needed to equip the invading fleet: ship timber, hemp, and possibly iron. The period covered by the six documents corresponds to the first one hundred years of Fatimid rule in Egypt. The Amalfitans, therefore, must have come in the train of the conquerors and taken full advantage of their favorable position. In fact, it was at the beginning of the eleventh century that with the help of the Fatimid rulers the Amalfitans established merchant colonies at Jerusalem and throughout the Middle East.[68] But Egypt especially must have been a Mecca for them in this period. The Fatimid were making every possible effort to attract merchants in Egypt. Political troubles in Persia and Iraq were causing a shift of the Indian Ocean trade from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea.[69] Prices of spices and other oriental goods were considerably lower in Egypt.[70] Moreover, Fatimid dreams of world conquest made the presence of merchants who could supply them with timber and iron extremely welcome. These facts made Egypt

Italian Merchants," *Studi orientalistici in onore di Giorgio Levi della Vida* (Rome: Istituto per l'Oriente, 1956), II, 529-38.

[67] *Ibid.*, p. 533.

[68] Citarella, "Relations," p. 311, n. 85.

[69] A. R. Gibb, "The Caliphate and the Arab States," K. Setton (ed.), in *A History of the Crusades* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1958), I, 96.

[70] Heyd, *Histoire*, I, 385.

a focal point of attraction in Mediterranean trade in the eleventh century. With the start of the Crusade, Egypt of course became the primary enemy of Christendom, and trade sometimes declined. It would revive, however, at every opportunity because of the fabulous profits that could be made.[71] Benjamin of Tudela, writing in the twelfth century, mentions the presence of Amalfitans in Damietta and Alexandria,[72] and as late as 1259 we have a contract for the voyage of an Amalfitan to Alexandria.[73]

Of the other agricultural products of southern Italy, the linen cloth of Naples and Cava was justly famed and very highly valued on the markets of North Africa.[74] In 928, for instance, the Arabs demanded from Naples a tribute to be paid in linen cloth.[75] Ibn-Haukal,[76] the famous Arab traveler, visited Naples in 972-973 and gave a description of the linen cloth industry, praising the high quality of its product, and Al-Edrisi[77] calls Naples: Nab,l al Kaltan, that is, the city of the linen cloth.

Together with linen, wines, seasonal fruits and especially hazelnuts, walnuts and chestnuts found great favor in the markets of North Africa. These exports were large enough to result in the progressive rehabilitation and specialization of the agricultural production of the hinterland of Capua, Naples, Benevento, Caserta, and Salerno. Viticulture especially, together with wheat, became one of the two main products of the agriculture of southern Italy. This is proved by the fact that on lands newly put under cultivation from 950 to 1025 an exceptionally large number of contracts *"ad pastinandum"* and *"ad portionem"* show that viticulture prevailed in a 3:1 ratio over any other new culture introduced.[78] This quite extraordinary increment clearly indicates that this crop was very

71 A letter from the Geniza of August 28, 1140, mentions the arrival at Alexandria of one in a convoy of twelve Genoese ships (Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I, 317). Moreover, the notarial acts of Giovanni Scriba show that during a ten-year period (1154-1164) Alexandria was the destination of no less than sixty-six commercial contracts (M. Chiaudano and M. Moresco, *Il Cartolario di Giovanni Scriba* [Rome: R. istituto storico italiano per il medio evo, 1935]).

72 Heyd, *Histoire*, I, 388.

73 Camera, *Memorie*, I, 435.

74 On the importance of this industry see, M. Schipa, "Il ducato di Napoli," in *Archivio Storico Napoletano*, XVIII (1893), 262.

75 Amari, *Storia*, II, 178, n. 8.

76 Amari, *Biblioteca Arabo-Sicula*, I, 24-25.

77 Al-Edrisi, *L'Italia descritta nel "Libro di re Ruggiero,"* p. 95.

78 See the relative table in A. Lizier, *L'economia rurale nell'età prenormanna nell'Italia meridionale: Studii su documenti editi dei secoli* IX-XI (Palermo: A. Reber, 1907), p. 125, n. 1.

remunerative and had a high commercial value.[79] In fact, the wines of southern Italy were exported to Africa as late as the thirteenth century. In Africa, of course, the prohibition of the Prophet[80] had meant the destruction of a wine industry whose products were famous in Roman times. Sicily also experienced the same decline in viticulture; thus the island was still importing wines from the mainland as late as two hundred years after the Christian reconquest of the island.[81]

Besides the seasonal fruits that were exported, chestnuts, walnuts, and hazelnuts figured most prominently.[82] They still are one of the more valuable crops in Campania, particularly in the triangle formed by Sorrento, Salerno, and Nola. A considerable number of contracts *"ad pastinandum"* for the introduction of this culture can be found in acts from Amalfi, Cava, Salerno, Sorrento, and Nocera from the tenth to the twelfth century.[83]

III

On the question of lines of communication followed by the Amalfitan traders, the evidence is quite scant. Much has been made about the privileged position of the Amalfitans in Constantinople, of the wealth and importance of their establishments there.[84] This is of course true enough, but it does not mean on the other hand that there were "regular sailings" from Amalfi to Byzantium, as from Venice. It is very doubtful in fact that the maritime contacts with the great eastern emporium were on a regular basis. We know of course that early medieval traders always avoided mention of the destination of their journeys, routes, and any other information that could be of value to any would-be competitor. Thus the formulas used in Amalfitan legal documents: *"esse ad navigandum," "esse foris de istam terram," "non posse hic venire"*[85] are just as cryptic

79 Amari, *Storia,* II, 445.

80 *Koran,* V, 92-93.

81 Amari, *Storia,* II, 445, n. 6; *idem., Guerra del Vespro Siciliano* (Florence, 1851), p. 209.

82 Heyd, *Histoire,* I, 96, 97, n. 1; M. Schipa, "Storia del principato di Salerno," in *Archivio Storica Napoletano,* VII (1882), 227; F. Pegolotti, *La pratica della mercatura,* A. Evans (ed.) (Cambridge, Mass.: The Medieval Academy of America, 1936) pp. 72-73, 134, 176 ff., 185 ff.

83 See Lizier, *L'economia rurale,* pp. 122-23.

84 Heyd, *Histoire,* I, 98-108; Schaube, *Storia,* p. 47; Monti, *Il Commercio,* pp. 389-401; Coniglio, "Amalfi," p. 104.

85 *Cod. Dipl. Amalf.,* I, 33 (SSI), 64 (XLII), 69 (XLV), 74 (XLVIII), 77 (L), 97 (LXI), 108 (LXVIII), 110 (LXIX), 119 (LXXIV).

as those found in the diplomas of the other maritime centers of the period. They are, therefore, useful to us only insofar as they show how common an occurrence long overseas voyages were at this time and how routinely they were reported. The document which mentions the voyage of Leo Amalfitanus to Egypt[86] is exceptional for two reasons: first it mentions the destination; and second, the routine formula indicates an enterprise which is not unusual. Thus the fact that no mention at all is found of sea voyages to Constantinople, either in the Amalfitan papers or in contemporary chronicles, should not be considered surprising. On the other hand, the length of the voyage alone presented difficulties great enough to make such an enterprise an exceptional rather than a common one. Furthermore, the very nature of the business activities of the Amalfitan merchants at Constantinople bears on this point. They went there to obtain ceremonial clothes, "objets d'art," jewels, and spices. In short, they went there mainly as buyers rather than sellers. This, indeed, must have been the position of most of the foreign merchants who traded in Constantinople and is reflected in two policies of the Byzantine customs. The first was standard. Every ship entering the harbor of Constantinople was assessed 2 gold bezants as opposed to the 15 gold bezants that were levied on each departing ship,[87] a clear indication of the difference in value between incoming and outgoing cargoes. The second was extraordinary. The Golden Bull of 992 by the emperors Basil and Constantine, while granting a reduction of port dues to the Venetians, at the same time forbids them from loading merchandise belonging to Amalfitans, Jews, and Lombards from Bari. The qualitative rather than the quantitative nature of the goods purchased in Constantinople made the land-sea route along the via Egnatia, across the Adriatic, to one of the Apulian ports and then through Melfi and Avellino to Campania more attractive. The presence, already noted, of well-organized colonies of Amalfitans in Trani, Bari, and Brindisi, which were the normal ports of departure and arrival for voyagers to and from the Eastern empire and the Holy Land,[88] and the large and

[86] See n. 46.

[87] Luzzatto, *Storia Economica,* p. 102; M. Lombard, "Les bases monétaires d'une suprématie économique. L'or musulman du VIIe au XIe siècles," in *Annales, Economie, Sociétés, Civilisations,* II (1947), 154.

[88] An interesting episode shows how relatively easy it was even for an innocent pilgrim to travel in safety through Arab lands. During the Arab domination of Bari, the monk Bernard took himself to said town. There he proceeded to buy a safe-con-

very ancient Amalfitan establishment at Melfi,[89] a key point in the route connecting Apulia with Avellino and Campania, are good indications of this. The expensive items imported from the eastern empire were committed to this traditional route which was shorter and much safer.[90] The problem of safety, of course, must have outweighed any other consideration, particularly when the merchandise was very expensive. The episode of the spice merchant who, having to travel from Alexandria to Amalfi with a costly cargo of pepper and incense, chose the much longer and roundabout route via Constantinople is an excellent example of this situation.[91]

On the other hand, in their trade with the Arabs the sea was, for the Amalfitans, the only means of communication. Not only geography but the very nature of the goods—foodstuffs, timber, linen cloth, and fruits—that they brought to the ports of Tunisia and Egypt made this necessary. The numerous contemporary sources, which attest to this, confirm this point quite conclusively.[92] The voyage to Tunisia and Egypt was, in all probability, made via Sicily. The Amalfitan ship carrying silk and honey that was seen arriving in Alexandria (c. 1060)[93] must have picked up the silk in Sicily. Sicilian silk during the Geniza period was highly prized and a common import in Egypt.[94] The honey was assuredly from Tunisia, which was one of the major honey- and wax-producing areas in the western Mediterranean.[95]

The ports of Tunisia, and Mehdia in particular, were the closest and most accessible Arab markets for the Amalfitans. Their arrival there was a common occurrence. They were eagerly welcomed by the local rulers who protected them from religious zealots and granted them substantial privileges in the form of reduction of port dues, separate quarters, right of worship, and many other similar advantages. The privileges granted to western traders by the rulers of Egypt and Tunisia in the twelfth century are a reliable guideline in assessing the nature and the extent of these concessions.[96] It

duct for Alexandria and the Holy Land (G. Musca, *L'emirato di Bari, 847-71* (Bari: Dedalo Litostampa, 1964), p. 70, n. 15).

89 See n. 31.

90 Galasso, "Il commercio amalfitano," I, 99.

91 See n. 50.

92 See nn. 46, 47, 81, 82.

93 See n. 60.

94 Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, I, 102, 222-24.

95 *Ibid.*, p. 125.

96 M. Amari, *I diplomi arabi del Regio archivio fiorentino* (Florence, 1863), Introduction, *passim*.

seems a great pity that no similar treaty confirming these arrangements with Amalfi has been found, although the concord and unanimous testimony from contemporary Arab and Christian sources put the existence of some form of understanding quite beyond dispute.[97] There is actually a good reason for believing that no formal treaty between Amalfi and the Arabs will ever be found. This point can be explained by a historical parallel. As in the case of Amalfi, there are no Arab treaties or diplomas on record confirming privileges and trade arrangements of Venice with Arab potentates either in Egypt or North Africa, whereas, of course, we have ample documentation that these treaties were formally entered into by Genoa and Pisa, which were latecomers in the North Africa and Levant trade.[98] On the other hand, we have seen that Venice, like Amalfi, traded actively with the Arabs and supplied them with eagerly sought materials like wheat, timber, and iron not to mention slaves. This traffic was well known to the Venetian authorities. Officially, however, they chose to ignore it until, at times, the pressure from Byzantium and the danger of unbearable retaliations forced them to take official action to stop it.[99] Considering the traditional prudence of the Venetian government, it seems highly improbable that they would commit the unforgivable indiscretion of entering into formal treaties with the Arabs and thus endanger their privileged status in the Byzantine empire. The obvious conclusion is that Amalfi, which like Venice had similar privileges to safeguard in Constantinople, followed the same course.

This situation serves to emphasize the contrast between the position of Genoa and Pisa and that of Amalfi and Venice in their relations with the Arabs. Pisa and Genoa came to know the Arabs first as enemies behind the point of a threatening sword. Their posture of open hostility thus began at the very first contact they had with the Arabs and continued uncompromisingly through the eleventh century. In fact, the very first pact that Pisa and Genoa made with an Arab state was the one they imposed on Mamêm at the point of a sword after their capture of Mehdia in 1087.[100] In

[97] Citarella, "Relations," pp. 302-9 and *passim*.

[98] Amari, "Nuovi ricordi arabi sulla storia di Genova," in *Atti Societá ligure di Storia Patria* (1867), pp. 633 ff.; Heyd, *Histoire*, I, 124-25.

[99] At the time when the decree of John Tzimisces was made known in Venice (971), there were in the port three ships ready to sail. Two were bound for Mehdia and the other for Tripoli (Africa). The doge immediately issued an order to prevent their departure (Heyd, *Histoire*, I, 113).

[100] Amari, *Storia*, III, 169-70.

the twelfth century, in spite of the complications caused by the Crusade, normal relations were established and proved highly profitable. The formal treaties, which are still extant, were the diplomatic steps necessary to secure normal relations among people who had known each other only as enemies for over two hundred years.

On the other hand, Amalfi and, to a lesser extent, Venice came face to face with the Arabs at their first appearance in the western Mediterranean. For Amalfi, survival depended on finding a modus vivendi with the Arabs. Somehow contacts were established and soon she learned to accept them as partners. The close cooperation which began as an historical necessity soon, however, led to eagerly sought commercial contacts because of the great incentive of the profit motive. The result was a form of silent understanding based on a tradition of fruitful and mutually profitable relations among people who, through centuries of intense economic and cultural contacts, had come to understand and respect each other quite well.

IV

Before drawing our conclusions, two more points of some importance should be noted. The first is that, as far as we know, the commerce of Amalfi was largely one of distribution without any productive basis. Wheat and other foodstuffs, linen cloth, wine, fruits—all had to be imported. Even the timber of the immediate hinterland was largely in the territory controlled by the rulers of Salerno. There is, moreover, no evidence in the diplomas and chronicles of Amalfi of the existence of any manufacturing industry except shipbuilding which, together with fishing, must have played a considerable role in the economy of the town. The second is that nearly all transactions reported in the diplomas of Amalfi were effected in gold. On the question of the stimulus provided by Arab gold to the economic recovery of the West, opinions range widely. M. Lombard,[101] in a brilliant article, concludes that the flow of gold from the Arab countries, beginning in the eighth and continuing through the eleventh century, reversed a very old trend in the commercial exchanges between the West and the Orient. It was, indeed, Arab gold that allowed western merchants, Amalfitans and Venetians especially, to make up the deficit in their trade with the Byzantine

[101] Lombard, "Les bases monétaires."

empire. M. F. Himly,[102] on the other hand, maintains that the circulation of Arab coins in the West was almost negligible. The presence of "isolated pieces" was due to their intrinsic value as "souvenirs." Himly admits that the mancusus is of Arab origin but claims that it was only used as money of account. This, of course, does not explain why Italy, Germany, and England, for instance, would discard the traditional solidus as money of account for a practically unseen mancusus.[103]

Philip Grierson has argued that the mancusus was not an Arab coin but a substandard Byzantine solidus.[104] An important part of his case, however, rests on the argument that, as he states, "Arab gold at this time [late in the reign of Charlemagne] was only being struck in the eastern provinces of the Caliphate, not in Spain and North Africa; it was no doubt known in western Europe, but comparatively small quantities can as yet have come in."[105] On the other hand, A. S. Ehrenkreutz has shown that gold dinars of exceptional fineness were minted in North Africa by the Aghlabids at least as early as 812.[106] In short, it appears that, concerning the identity of the mancusus and the circulation of Arab gold in the West, there are reasoned differences of opinion.[107] Nevertheless, it is obvious that the numismatic and literary evidence is sufficient to prove the existence of the circulation of some gold in the West.[108]

[102] M. F. Himly, "Y-a-t-il emprise Masulmane sur l'économie des états européens du VIIIe au Xe siècle?," *Revue Suisse d'Histoire,* V (1955), 31-81.

[103] See p. 109 of Monnaret de Villard's article cited in fn. 107.

[104] P. Grierson, "Carolingian Europe and the Arabs: The Myth of the Mancus," in *Revue Belge de philologie et d'histoire,* XXXII, no. 4 (1954), 1059-1074.

[105] *Ibid.,* p. 1071.

[106] A. S. Ehrenkreutz, "The Standard of Fineness of Western and Eastern Dinars before the Crusades," *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient,* VI (1963), Part iii, p. 254, Table II; 257, Table IV; and 260, Table VI.

[107] Besides the articles by Lombard and Himly, the following works are most relevant to this problem: U. Monnaret de Villard, "La monetazione nell'etá barbarica. I. Le monete dell'Italia langobarda sino alla fine dell'impero carolingico," in *Rivista Italiana di Numismatica,* XXXII (1919), 22-38 and "II. Il soldo mancuso e la circolazione dell'oro arabo e bizantino nell'Europa barbarica," *ibid.,* 73-112; M. Bloch, "Le problème de l'or au moyen âge," in *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale,* V (1933), 1-34; J. Duplessis, "La circulation des monnaies arabes en Europe Occidentale du VIIIe au XIIIe siècle," *Revue Numismatique,* XVIII (1956), 101 ff.: R. S. Lopez, "Les influences orientales et l'éveil économique de l'Occident," in *Atti del X Congresso Internazionale di Scienze Storiche* (Florence: 1955), III, 1-209; C. M. Cipolla, *Moneta e civiltá mediterranea* (Venice: N. Pozza, 1957), chs. i-ii; C. Cahen, "L'évolution sociale du monde musulman jusqu'au XIIe siècle face à celle du monde chrétien," in *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale.* Published by the *Centre d'Études Supérieures de Civilisation Médiévale de l'Université de Poitiers,* I (1958), 451 ff.

[108] See Monnaret de Villard, pp. 77-78 and, besides the works mentioned in the

As far as the problem of the circulation of gold in southern Italy in general and Amalfi in particular is concerned, however, Grierson himself, while rejecting gold circulation in the West from Charlemagne to Frederick II, makes it clear that the circulation of gold in southern Italy was never interrupted from the end of the Roman Empire through the entire course of the Middle Ages.[109] In southern Italy at least, beginning with the ninth century, some of this gold was of Arab origin. According to the earliest Amalfitan diplomas this gold circulated in the form of "mancosi,"[110] and even in gold trimissi of Benevento,[111] then, early in the tenth century, in those "tari," which were either the gold quarter dinars minted by the Arabs of Sicily or imitations struck in Amalfi.[112]

We must, therefore, conclude that the agricultural products that the Amalfitans drew from southern Italy were used for the purpose of overseas exchange, particularly with the Arabs of Tunisia and Egypt. The chief products that were obtained in Tunisia were oil[113] and wax,[114] in Egypt oriental spices, with the balance of the exchange made up in gold. It was this Arab gold that permitted the Amalfitans to buy the costly wares that were imported in Italy from Constantinople. Finally, it was from the sale or exchange of these last items that the Amalfitans obtained the capital which allowed that vigorous growth and rapid expansion of trade which established Amalfi in the eyes of a widely traveled, keenly observant

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preceding note, consult the excellent study by A. M. Watson, "Back to Gold—and Silver," *Economic History Review,* 2d ser. Vol. XX (Apr. 1967), pp. 1-34.

109 In a review of R. S. Lopez, *Settecento anni fa: il ritorno dell'oro nell'occidente duecentesco.* (*Quaderni della Rivista Storica Italiana,* Nr. 4, Naples, 1955), *Economic History Review,* IX (July 1956), 372.

110 *Cod. Dipl. Amalf.* I, 1 (I), 2 (II), 10 (VI), 11 (VII), 15 (IX). Early diplomas speak of "mancosi" but beginning in 939 the formula ". . . ana tari quattuor per mancosum" appears. (*Ibid.,* II, 295 [DLXXXVI].)

111 *Ibid.,* II, 293 (DLXXXIV).

112 Amari, *Storia,* II, 458-59; Monnaret de Villard, pp. 84, 88-92. An Amalfitan diploma of Nov. 1060 records a large transaction of "auri tarenos *de presenti moneta* centum viginti." (*Cod. Dipl. Amalf.,* I, 107 (LVII).) A diploma from Naples of 1063 reads: ". . . Ego vobis dare debeam per omnem annum ipsos *solidos de Amalfi* et si ipsa moneta de Amalfi per istam civitatem non andaverit . . ." (Monnaret, p. 91, n. 4). In 1088 a document from Cava mentions the tari of Amalfi *"cum capite et cruce"* (Monnaret, p. 91).

113 Sicily imported oil from North Africa from the ninth through the twelfth centuries (Amari, *Storia,* I, 206, 415; II, 445). The introduction of the culture of olive trees in southern Italy before the eleventh century lags very much behind that of the vine, less than 1/7. Only after the eleventh century there is an increase. (Lizier, *L'economia rurale,* p. 122.)

114 See E. Gattula, *Hist. Abb. Cassinensis,* LXXXIX (1019); Yver, *Le Commerce,* pp. 137-139; Galasso, "Le cittá campane," p. 42.

and illustrious Arab visitor of the last quarter of the tenth century as ". . . the most prosperous town in Lombardy, the most noble, the most illustrious on account of its conditions, the most affluent and opulent."[115]

V

To conclude, therefore, even the fragmentary evidence that is available enables us to see that the commerce of the Amalfitan republic revolved on a triangular pattern radiating from three main points: southern Italy, North Africa, and the Byzantine empire. The staples of this commerce were agricultural products and oriental goods. Early medieval trade, however, could not afford a rigid system of specialization. There were, therefore, many collateral enterprises that were undertaken whenever the profit motive justified them. The differential in the exchange of gold and silver[116] must have proved, for instance, a profitable sideline and a particular note must be made on the imports of the works of oriental artists and craftsmen. Rome, the most important outlet for the marketing of oriental "objets d'art," was also the most important market for Amalfi. The biographies of Popes from the ninth to the eleventh centuries[117] abound in the description of items like gold, silver and ivory, jewels, pearl and stone-encrusted chalices, crucifixes, candelabra, and tapestries often given as gifts to visiting prelates for the adornment of churches all over the West. Even more important for the future development of western art was the production of smiths, painters, and decorators from Constantinople and Alexandria. Their works, when compared with the products of the rudimentary technique of local craftsmen, proved exceedingly attractive. When Amatus of Montecassino decided to decorate the famous abbey with mosaics and art work ". . . pour ce qu'il non trova en Ytalie homes de cest art, manda en Constantinoble et en Alixandre pour

[115] *The Book of Routes and Kingdoms,* by Abu al-Qasim Muhammad ibn Hawqal, trans. in English from the Italian version of M. Amari in R. S. Lopez and I. Raymond, *Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955), p. 54.

[116] For the disparity in the gold-silver ratio between the West and the Arab countries and Byzantium see Watson, "Back to Gold," p. 5. This circumstance must have been of great importance to Amalfitan traders for two reasons: It increased sensibly a margin of profit already high and it provided, moreover, a profitable sideline in the straight exchange of western silver for eastern gold, or vice versa, for the judicious and well-informed merchant.

[117] Heyd, *Histoire,* I, 94.

homes grex et sarrazins, pour aorner le pavement de la eglise de marmoire entaille et diverses paintures, la quelle nous clamons 'opere de mosy,' ovre de pierre de diverses clores."[118] The activities of the most famous Amalfitan family, the Pantaleoni, in promoting cultural and artistic exchanges with the Orient, the gifts of bronze doors to the churches of Amalfi, St. Paul outside the walls in Rome and San Michele sul Gargano, are too well known to be reported here at length.[119] Finally, the diplomas and the contemporary chronicles of Amalfi, Salerno, Cava, and Gaeta are a veritable catalogue of a bewildering variety of costly, exotic items collected by these intrepid merchants in all the markets of the Mediterranean.

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118 Amato di Montecassino, *L'Ystorie de li Normant,* Vincenzo Bartholomaeis (ed.), *Fonti per la Storia d'Italia dell'Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo* (Rome: Tipografia del Senato, 1935), p. 175.

119 Heyd, *Histoire,* I, 100-103; E. Bertaux, *L'art dans l'Italie méridionale* (Paris: A. Fontemoing, 1904), I, 404 ff. The most recent and comprehensive treatment of this topic will be found in A. Hofmeister," Der Übersetzer Johannes und das Geschlecht Comitis Mauronis in Amalfii: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der byzantinisch-abendländischen Beziehungen besonders in 11. Jahrhundert," in *Historische Vierteljahrschrift,* XXVII (July 1932), 225-84, and idem, "Maurus von Amalfi und die elfenbeinkassette von Farfa," in *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken,* XXIV (Aug. 1933), 278-83.