

SEMINARI DEL CENTRO INTERUNIVERSITARIO
PER LA STORIA E L'ARCHEOLOGIA DELL'ALTO MEDIOEVO

3

FROM ONE SEA TO ANOTHER
TRADING PLACES IN THE EUROPEAN
AND MEDITERRANEAN EARLY MIDDLE AGES

PROCEEDINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
COMACCHIO 27TH-29TH MARCH 2009

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The new *wiks* or *emporia* and the development of a maritime economy in the Northern Seas (7th-9th centuries)

Beginning in the 7th century, a coherent communications system had been built around the seas of northwestern and northern Europe, which Michael McCormick has nicely called the ‘Northern Arc’¹. Archaeological, numismatic and written sources show that this communication system was closely related to a new generation of ports, which flourished on the continent (from the Pas de Calais to the Meuse/Rhine great delta area), in the south and east of Britain, on the Jutland fringe of Scandinavia, and finally, in the Baltic and Scandinavian areas.

A brief survey of the main emporia

To begin with, I should like to present a brief survey – or, as Richard Hodges would say, a ‘gazetteer’ of the main *emporia*² – beginning with those sites located on the continent.

Quentovic, literally the *vicus* or *wik* of the river *Cuenta* (the Canche), was situated on the *pagus* of Ponthieu, to the south of Boulogne in the Frankish kingdom of Neustria. The first written references appear in English sources at the end of the 7th century, but some coins minted with the word ‘Quentovic’ on them (all of them found in Britain) suggest a history reaching back to the first half of the century. The names of several of the mint-masters who struck these coins in Quentovic may have an Anglo-Saxon origin,

¹ M. McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy. Communications and commerce A.D. 300-900*, Cambridge, 2001, p. 562.

² R. Hodges, *Dark Ages Economics. The origins of towns and trade A.D. 600-1000*, London, 1982, p. 66-86. For a survey of the *emporia*, see also S. Lebecq, «The Northern Seas (Fifth to Eighth centuries)», in *New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 1, Cambridge, 2005, p. 639-659; and S. Lebecq, «Aux origines du renouveau urbain sur les côtes de l’Europe du Nord-Ouest au début du Moyen Âge? Les emporia des mers du Nord», in *Les Villes romaines du nord de la Gaule*, Revue du Nord, Hors-série Art et Archéologie, ed. R. Hanoune, Lille, 2007, p. 485-491.

which underlines the link between the south of England and this port, surely the most important in Merovingian Neustria³.

The site known as Walcheren in written sources, but called Domburg by archaeologists, lay on an island in the Dutch province of Zeeland, where, according to empirical archaeology, a new port began to be developed at the beginning of the 7th century near an ancient sanctuary devoted to the goddess Nehalenia, which had been destroyed by a great flood at the end of the 3rd century. Numerous 7th- and 8th-century coins from all over northern Gaul and southern England have been discovered on the beach of Domburg⁴.

Dorestad was situated on the Rhine delta near a Roman fort at the place where the river's main current turned north toward Frisia and Scandinavia, and where the Lek took on a westerly direction toward Zeeland and south-east England. Like that of Quentovic, the name of Dorestad only features in texts from the end of the 7th century, but the name appears on coins (the *Madelinus* and *Rimoaldus trientes*) struck from 630-640. Although the port's origin was certainly Frisian, its greatest period of development occurred after the end of the 8th century, when the site – together with the whole of Rhenish Frisia – fell to the power of the Franks. Excavations have revealed that Dorestad benefited from a large port complex, consisting of a system of wharves or landing stages perpendicular to the bank of the Rhine, and from a row of warehouses along the port complex. As such, it was to become the main turn-table for trade between the Rhineland, eastern England and Scandinavia⁵.

Probably the first *emporium* appearing in Britain was Ipswich (called *Gipeswic* in the written sources), which, like Dorestad, has been systema-

³ S. Lebecq, «Quentovic: un état de la question», in *Studien zur Sachsenforschung*, 8 (1993), p. 73-82; for the coinage, V. Zedelius, «Zur Münzprägung von Quentovic», in *Studien zur Sachsenforschung*, 7 (1991), p. 367-378. See also S. Lebecq, L. Verslype, B. Bethouart, *Quentovic. Environnement, archéologie, histoire. Actes du colloque international de Montreuil-sur-Mer, Etaples et Le Touquet*, Lille, 2010.

⁴ P.A. Henderikx, «Walcheren van de 6^e tot de 12^e eeuw. Nederzettingsgeschiedenis in fragmenten», in *Archief. Koninklijk Zeeuwsch Genootschap der Wetenschappen*, 1993, p. 113-156; and S. Lebecq, «L'emporium proto-médiéval de Walcheren-Domburg: une mise en perspective», in *Peasants and Townsmen in Medieval Europe. Studia in honorem Adriaan Verbulst*, ed. J.M. Duvosquel, E. Thoen, Ghent, 1995, p. 73-89.

⁵ W.A. van Es, W.J.H. Verwers (eds), *Excavations at Dorestad, vol. 1, The Harbour. Hoogstraat 1*, Amersfoort, 1980; W.A. van Es, W.A.M. Hessing (eds), *Romeinen, Friezen en Franken in het hart van Nederland. Van Traiectum tot Dorestad (50 v.C.-900 n.C.)*, Amersfoort, 1994; and A. Willemsen, *Dorestad. Een wereldstad in de Middeleeuwen*, Zutphen, 2009.

tically excavated several times. These excavations have revealed a site occupied since the beginning of the 7th century, which is rich in a considerable quantity of pottery, mainly local in origin (i.e. East Anglian), but also from the Rhineland, the Meuse basin and Flanders⁶.

Several ports developed in Kent around Canterbury and along the Wantsum Stour, a sea sound at the northeastern end of the Kentish peninsula; specifically in Sarre, where a set of scales have been discovered in an Anglo-Saxon cemetery; and in Sandwich, Fordwich and a suburb of Canterbury, where a *vicus* has been recently identified on the banks of the river Stour⁷.

Hamwich, in the southern part of the future city of Southampton, is mentioned in hagiography as the key point in communications between Wessex and the Seine in around 720. Excavations have revealed the presence of a port settlement planned around 700. *Hamwich* was in close contact with the continent (the lower Seine valley, the Paris region and, to a lesser degree, the Rhineland), with its nearby hinterland, and maybe with the royal site at Winchester⁸.

The first *emporium* which appeared in the Scandinavian area is Ribe, which lay at the foot of western Jutland, on a small river flowing out to the North Sea. A well-organised settlement was founded at Ribe, perhaps by an emerging Danish monarchy, in the beginning of the 8th century, not far (7 km) from the high-status site of Dankirke. However the settlement does not seem to have had long to wait for visits from western merchants and their money, as shown by the presence of the famous so-called 8th century 'Woden/Monster sceattas' (that I should prefer to call 'Long-haired-king/Monster'), which were found in such an abundance that some scholars thought that they were minted onsite⁹.

⁶ K. Wade, «Ipswich», in *The Rebirth of Towns in the West (AD 700-1050)*. CBA Research Report 68, ed. R. Hodges, B. Hobley, London, 1988, p. 93-100.

⁷ T.T. Tatton-Brown, «The towns of Kent», in *Anglo-Saxon Towns in Southern England*, ed. J. Haslam, Chichester, 1984, p. 1-36; T.T. Tatton-Brown, «The Anglo-Saxon towns of Kent», in *Anglo-Saxon Settlements*, ed. D. Hooke, Oxford, 1988, p. 213-232; T.T. Tatton-Brown, *Canterbury. History and Guide*, Stroud, 1994.

⁸ R. Hodges, *The Hamwich Pottery: the local and imported wares from 30 years' excavations at Middle Saxon Southampton and their European context*, CBA Research Report 37, London, 1981; A.D. Morton (ed.), *Excavations at Hamwic*, vol. 1, CBA Research Report 84, London, 1992; P. Andrews (ed.), *Excavations at Hamwic*, vol. 2, CBA Research Report 109, London, 1997.

⁹ M. Bencard *et al.* (eds), *Ribe Excavations 1970-76*, vol. 5, Esbjerg, 1981-2004; S. Jensen, *The Vikings of Ribe*, Ribe.

Sliaswich, the *wik* of the Schlei, was probably the first trading post, set up in the middle of the 8th century by western merchants on the Baltic, or more exactly, at the western end of the Schlei – a fjord in Schleswig-Holstein. This *Südsiedlung*, as it was qualified by archaeologists, where basalt from the Rhenish Eifel and amber from the Baltic were transformed, scratched a modest living until the beginning of the 9th century. It was then systematically rebuilt by the order of Danish King Godfred, who forcibly transferred merchants from the Slavonic port of Reric to the new settlement known as *Siedlung A*, a few hundred metres north. This site would later be known by its Scandinavian name, *Haithabu*¹⁰.

Thanks to some well-documented written sources (especially the *Annales Regni Francorum*, the *Vita Anskarii* by Rimbert, and the Ohthere and Wulfstan Old English travel accounts¹¹), and thanks to the work of archaeologists, which has confirmed much of the written information, we know that the port of *Sliaswich/Haithabu* was connected by sea-routes with southern Norway and its *emporium* of *Skiringssal* (usually identified with Kaupang in the Fold or the Oslo fjord¹²); with the Southern Baltic (particularly with the aforementioned port of Reric, now identified with Gross Strömkendorf); with Menzlin and Wolin, around the estuary of the river Oder; with Ralswiek, on the island of Rügen; with Truso, on the mouth of the Vistula¹³; and with the Eastern Baltic, particularly the so-called Lake Mälaren in the heart of Sweden, where the *emporium* of Helgö would be established in the mid-8th century; and where the *emporium* Birka would predominate in the 9th century¹⁴.

¹⁰ H. Jankuhn, *Haithabu. Ein Handelsplatz der Wikingerzeit*, 8th ed., Neumünster, 1986; K. Brandt, M. Müller-Wille, C. Radtke, *Haithabu und die frühe Stadtentwicklung im nördlichen Europa*, Neumünster, 2002.

¹¹ S. Lebecq, *Marchands et navigateurs frisons du haut Moyen Âge*, vol. 2, Lille, 1983; S. Lebecq, «Communication and exchange in Northwest Europe», in *Ohthere's Voyages. A late 9th century account of voyages along the coasts of Norway and Denmark and its cultural context*, ed. J. Bately, A. Englert, Roskilde, 2007, p. 170-179.

¹² D. Skre (ed.), *Kaupang in Skiringssal*, Kaupang Excavation Project Series, vol. 1, Aarhus-Oslo, 2007; see also this volume.

¹³ K.H. Willroth, «Frühstädtische Siedlungen und Handelsplätze des südlichen Ostseegebietes und ihr Umland. Anmerkungen zu Distribution und Diffusion», in *Archäologische des Mittelalters und Bauforschung im Hanseraum. Eine Festschrift für Günter P. Febring*, ed. M. Glaser, Rostock, 1993, p. 277-288; J. Callmer, «Urbanization in Scandinavia and the Baltic Region ca. AD 700-1100: Trading Places, Centres and Early Urban Sites», in *Development around the Baltic Sea in the Viking Age. The Twelfth Viking Congress*, Birka Studies 3, ed. B. Ambrosiani, H. Clarke, Stockholm, 1994, p. 50-90; S. Rossignol, «Les ports de la Baltique», in *Quentovic. Environnement, archeologie, histoire*, ed. S. Lebecq, L. Verslype, B. Bethouart, Lille 2010, p. 241-252.

¹⁴ H. Clarke, B. Ambrosiani, *Towns in the Viking Age*, 2nd ed., Leicester, 1995.

Some questions of definition

In the written sources, ports are usually called *portus*, *emporia*, or, perhaps most commonly, *vici* (sing. *vicus*), which is incorporated into so many place-names of *emporia* ending with the suffix *-wik*, *-vic*, *-wig*, or, as is usual in current English place-names, *-wich*, and in current Dutch place-names, *-wijk*. Indeed, Latin authors in early medieval northern Europe reattributed the word *vicus* (which in Antiquity had meant something like a little town or an agglomeration of some importance) to refer to these new ports, which were often created *ex nihilo* in an estuary or at low river sites and generally equipped with wharf-structures made of wood or other perishable materials.

For example, although Dorestad did not have a *wik* place-name, it has been called in some 9th-century sources the *vicus famosus*, or the *vicus nominatissimus Dorestadus* (the most famous ‘wik’). After Dorestad disappeared as a port, it became, according to a royal charter from 948, the “*villa quondam Dorsteti nunc autem Wik nominata*” – a phrase recognised in the current place-name of the little town of *Wijk-bij-Duurstede*, where excavations have revealed the harbour complex mentioned above¹⁵.

Even where old Roman cities were concerned, as was the case with Nantes, Rouen, Amiens, *Traiectum ad Mosam* (Maastricht), Canterbury, London and *Eboracum* (York), they were doubled by suburban trading places, which were eventually given *wik* place-names, such as *Lundenwich* or *Eoforwich*, which were situated near the cities of London (in the area of the Strand, just upstream from the ancient city) and York (in the Fishergate area, at the confluence of the rivers Ouse and Foss) respectively, and where archaeologists have found a huge quantity of early medieval material¹⁶.

According to the written sources about Dorestad¹⁷, a population of merchant seamen lived in these *emporia*, and a wide range of commodities were transferred from one ship to another, stocked in warehouses, or transformed by craftsmen. Commodities were mainly raw materials from Britain and

¹⁵ S. Lebecq, *Marchands et navigateurs*, 1983: see vol. 2, *Corpus des sources écrites*, p. 99 (*Vita Gregorii abbatis Traiectensis auctore Liudgero*, c. 5), p. 335 (*Annales Xantenses*, a^o 834), and p. 416 (charter given by Otto the 1st to the Church of Utrecht).

¹⁶ For *Lundenwich*, see A. Vince, *Saxon London. An archaeological Investigation*, London, 1990; and for *Eoforwich*, see R. Hall (ed.), *Viking Age York and the North*, CBA Research Report 27, London, 1978; R. Hall, *The Viking Dig*, London, 1984; R. Hall, (*The English Heritage Book*) of *Viking Age York*, London, 1994; R. Hall, (*The English Heritage Book*) of *York*, London, 1996.

¹⁷ S. Lebecq, *Marchands et navigateurs*, vol. I, p. 149-160.

Scandinavia, such as metals, stones, skins and furs, amber, or slaves; and chiefly processed products from the continent such as wine, millstones, weapons, ceramics and many other artefacts, particularly from the Parisian basin and the Rhineland. Unfortunately, many of these commodities are not visible in the archaeological record: if some commodities, such as slaves, are cited as having been traded in the written sources, others, such as wool and perishable agricultural products, were probably already traded through these networks.

People also embarked and disembarked at Dorestad, among them churchmen, pilgrims and other missionaries travelling from the British Isles to the continent (Rome for instance), from the continent to the Isles or to Scandinavia¹⁸. It is thanks to them, and to the hagiographical sources, which have recorded their life and journeys, that we know so much of Dorestad's history.

The origins and first development of the wiks (with a special regard to the role of kingship)

It is striking to note that most of the *wiks* (particularly those founded in the 7th century) were created out of nothing and in the middle of nowhere. The only requirement was a safe landing site for ships – such as sandy shores at the end of estuaries or on the banks of low rivers, usually at the crossroads of sea and river routes. These sites were often virgin, previously unsettled and, in any case, empty of any trade activity. In Walcheren, there was only an ancient temple and in Dorestad, a fort of the Roman *limes* – both of them probably long since ruined. Nowhere except in the suburbs of the old cities do we find traces of a functional continuity. For example, Kentish *emporia* developed outside, or away from the *classis Britannica* ports of *Dubris* (Dover) or *Rutupiae* (Richborough); and Quentovic appeared thirty kilometres to the south of the great Roman port of Boulogne¹⁹.

As a matter of fact, the first development of the most ancient *emporia* seems to have been spontaneous and linked to local initiatives after the end of the maritime migratory movements in the North Sea and the Channel. The *emporia* seem to have been intended to satisfy the needs of

¹⁸ See W. Levison, *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century*, Oxford, 1946; or, more recently, I.N. Wood, *The Missionary Life*, Harlow, 2001.

¹⁹ S. Lebecq, «The Northern Seas (Fifth to Eighth Centuries)», and S. Lebecq, «Aux origines du renouveau urbain».

the newly settled peoples sharing the same cultural horizons along the Northern seas' coasts. For example, the birth of Quentovic may be explained by the presence of Saxon settlements in the Ponthieu area (identified by cemetery evidence), and by the need of a continental bridgehead for the insular Saxons; and the *emporium* of Walcheren and Dorestad may be explained by the connexion between Frisia and southeast England – mainly Kent, East Anglia, London and the Thames estuary, which had been very important since the maritime migrations²⁰.

Unlike the *emporium* of the first generation, the ports of the second (which, like *Hamwich* or Ribe, were founded at the very beginning of the 8th century) were originally characterised by a well-organised and eventually, a strictly planned pattern, which suggests that they were founded on the order of some regional ruler, perhaps some newly emerging kingship. In this way, the origins of *Hamwich* have sometimes been attributed to the initiative of Ine (the king of the West Saxons from 688 to 726); and the foundation of Ribe at the initiative of the South Danish king, Ongendus (or Angantyr), whom Willibrord, the famous Anglo-Saxon missionary and the first bishop of the Frisians met around 700²¹. In two other instances, we have seen a new, well-planned settlement succeeding a previous settlement only a few hundreds metres apart. This first occurred in Dorestad, at the time of the competition between the kings of the Frisians and the Pipinids in the great delta area at the end of the 7th century; then, in *Sliaswich-Haithabu*, where the new foundation of the port by the Danish King Godfred is well-documented²².

Why were these rulers, especially these kings, interested in participating in the development of port activity? For all of them, it was a question of controlling the sea routes which the *wiks* commanded; of supporting and developing a policy of overseas contacts and eventually future expansion; of facilitating the export of the surpluses of their own estates and those of the

²⁰ S. Lebecq, *Marchands et navigateurs*; and P.A. Henderikx, «Walcheren van de 6^e tot de 12^e eeuw»; S. Lebecq, «Quentovic: un état de la question»; W.A. Van es, W.J.H. Verwers, *Excavations at Dorestad*.

²¹ According to the *Vita Willibrordi auctore Alcuino*, c. 9. See S. Lebecq, *Marchands et navigateurs*, vol. 2, p. 64.

²² W.A. van Es, W.J.H. Verwers, *Excavations at Dorestad*; W.A.M. Hessing, *Romeinen, Friezen en Franken*; A. Willemsen, *Dorestad. Een wereldstad*; H. Jankuhn, *Haithabu. Ein Handelsplatz*; K. Brandt, M. Müller-Wille, C. Radtke, *Haithabu und die frühe Stadtentwicklung*. For the new foundation of Sliaswich by the Danish King Godfred, see the *Annales regni Francorum* (a^o 808): S. Lebecq, *Marchands et navigateurs*, vol. 2, p. 303-304.

elites of their respective kingdoms; and, last but not least, of retaining a part of the profits generated by the *wiks* for themselves.

This is why kings were represented in the *wiks* by officials known as *procuratores* (Quentovic), *ministeriales* (Dorestad), *praefecti* (in the Latin sources on *Sliaswich-Haithabu* or Birka), or *wicgerefan* (or *wik-reeves*, in Anglo-Saxon laws). Legislation, particularly from the Anglo-Saxon world, bears witness to the main activities of these officials: maintaining order, ensuring the legality of transactions, protecting native and foreign merchants and levying tolls and customs. For instance, the *tributa atque vectigalia* in Quentovic was directly inherited from Antiquity, and the aptly named *ripaticum* – the toll levied on the *ripa*, the bank – originated in the port of Dorestad²³. These were normally supported by important coin-making workshops, where minting was increasingly geared towards exchange and trade. The London and Canterbury mints on the one hand²⁴, and the Quentovic and Dorestad mints on the other, appear to have been particularly important. The mint at Dorestad was the most productive in the whole Carolingian Empire, just after the royal palace mint²⁵.

It is true that, at the end of the 8th century, Charlemagne reorganised the hierarchy of the northern *wiks* of his kingdom, granting full authority to his officials in Quentovic and Dorestad over all customs dues and all mints in their respective jurisdiction – namely, at all of the Neustrian ports, including Rouen and Amiens, at Quentovic, and at all of the Austrasian and Frisian ports, including Maastricht, Walcheren-Domburg among others and, finally, Dorestad²⁶.

²³ S. Lebecq, «The Northern Seas (Fifth to Eighth centuries)», and S. Lebecq, «Aux origines du développement urbain sur les côtes de l'Europe du Nord-Ouest au début du Moyen Âge»; and S. Lebecq, «L'administration portuaire de Quentovic et Dorestad», in *Quentovic. Environnement, archéologie, histoire*, Lille, 2010, p. 214-52.

²⁴ For the early English coinage, see G. Williams, *Early Anglo-Saxon Coins*, Oxford, 2008; and several contributions to B. Cook, G. Williams (ed.), *Coinage and History in the North Sea World c. 500-1250. Essays in honour of Marion Archibald*, Leiden, 2006; and contributions to T. Abramson (ed.), *Studies in Early Medieval Coinage*, vol. 1, Woodbridge, 2008.

²⁵ See Simon Coupland, S. Coupland, «Trading Places: Quentovic and Dorestad reassessed», in *Early Medieval Europe*, 13 (2005), p. 313-358, with whom I nevertheless don't quite agree about the chronology of the respective roles of Quentovic and Dorestad in the Carolingian Northern trade. For a different appreciation of the chronology of the respective roles of Quentovic and Dorestad in the Carolingian Northern trade, see S. Lebecq, «L'administration portuaire».

²⁶ S. Lebecq, «L'administration portuaire».

The emporia, their hinterland and the early medieval growth

Beginning in the 7th century, the activity of the new *wiks* and the suburbs of the old cities, extending out to all of the northern seas, had a great influence on the whole of the West because there was a progressive integration of coastal areas with their more distant hinterlands. This was due, on the one hand, to the attraction of ports and maritime activity to the elite of the hinterland, and on the other hand, to the progressive penetration of interior markets by the maritime population.

Indeed, kings and other rulers were not the only ones to profit from port activity. Anxious to ensure their salvation in the next world, kings allowed the churches to profit from ports as well. Thus, from the beginning of the 8th century, Frankish rulers offered a tenth of all the revenue they drew from the Dorestad trade to the cathedral church of Utrecht. Immediately, the cathedral created an important parish and baptismal church at Dorestad, probably corresponding to the *Upkirika*, the 'high church' mentioned in later sources²⁷. As for Quentovic, many religious settlements obtained a genuine 'window on the sea', which was open to all sorts of trade. Not only did the great neighbouring abbeys of St. Bertin, St. Riquier and St. Vaast acquire parcels of land known as *mansi* or *setici* in the *wik* itself or in immediate localities, but more distant abbeys like Fontenelle, situated near Rouen upon the river Seine, or like Ferrières-en-Gâtinais, to the southeast of Paris, were also drawn by royal concessions, which allowed for the acquisition of land and the construction of churches in the vicinity of Quentovic. The monastery St-Germain-des-Prés in Paris, which had no land in Quentovic, profited from this royal privilege, when, by 779, it gained exemption from all transport tax not only in Quentovic, but also in Dorestad, Rouen, Amiens and Maastricht. If one accepts the current interpretation of some passages in the famous polyptych of the abbot Irminon, dated around 820, the Germain-des-Prés monastery ordered men from two villages near Paris (the first one in the Beauce, the other in the Brie) to undertake regular transport services as far as Quentovic. It is plausible that estate surpluses (for example, wine, which was in demand in the North) were traded in exchange for minerals, textiles, and liturgical books produced by the famous insular *scriptoria*²⁸.

²⁷ S. Lebecq, *Marchands et navigateurs*, vol. 1, p. 157-159, and vol. 2, p. 406-417 (for the royal charters given to the cathedral church of Utrecht, in particular p. 410 for the charter from 777, quoting the 'Upkirika' in Dorestad).

²⁸ S. Lebecq, «Quentovic: un état de la question».

While the rulers and the institutions of the hinterland were investing in port sites, the merchants and navigators who had initiated the commercial rebirth of the northern seas and promoted the development of port activity began to prospect on the continental markets. This was particularly the case of the Saxons in the Seine basin and the Frisians in the Rhineland. One imagines that men from *Hamwich* and the Wessex were drawn into the Seine basin by wine rather than the ceramics from La Londe, near Rouen, which have been discovered in great quantities in the *Hamwich* excavations. It is not surprising then, that a royal charter from 709 should mention the Saxons as the only foreigners present at the St. Denis fair – an annual market founded by king Dagobert in around 635, which opened every year on the feast-day of St Denis, the 9th of October, at the launch of the new wines²⁹. The Frisians of Dorestad and elsewhere kept mainly to their own hinterland (i.e. the Rhineland) when seeking out wine and so many other goods — such as ceramics, glassware, arms, quernstones and wine barrels recycled to reinforce Dorestad wells. These items have been found in abundance in the Dorestad excavations and in all the major sites of northern Europe connected to the Dorestad harbour. This is why we find evidence of Frisian merchants at Duisburg, Cologne, Trier, Mainz, Worms and Strasbourg, where they created significant settlements. In some of these cities (mainly in Mainz and Worms), we find mention of Frisian districts in the 9th century written sources, which were sometimes connected to great suburban churches, such as St. Maximin in Trier and St. Gereon in Cologne³⁰. In all these cases, the presence and demands of the merchants from the North could have stimulated activity in these old cities, particularly their suburban religious institutions and their riverside port sites, which they frequented in great numbers.

This happened to such an extent that, from the 7th century on, the entire hinterland of the northern seas enjoyed a significant improvement in the conditions for trade, the benefits of a relative peace, the so-called *Pax Carolina*, and the dynamism of a real economic growth, which developed within the framework of the great estates, upon which dependent peasants and other small farmers produced goods under the authority of a central elite³¹. It is clear

²⁹ S. Lebecq, «La Neustrie et la mer», in *La Neustrie. Les pays au nord de la Loire de 650 à 850*, ed. H. Atsma, Sigmaringen, 1989, vol. 1, p. 405-440; S. Lebecq, «Quentovic: un état de la question».

³⁰ S. Lebecq, *Marchands et navigateurs*.

³¹ About all these questions, see R. Hodges, *Towns and trade in the Age of Charlemagne*, London, 2000; and C. Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean*, Oxford-New York, 2005.

that each of the two economic agents, the producer in the hinterland and the merchant-sailor from the sea and coastal *emporía*, exercised decisive influence on the activities and performance of the other. In particular – to use the best documented example – it is clear that the merchant-sailor stimulated the productivity of the wine-producer, and the wine-producer encouraged the merchant-sailor to improve his transport and trade venture by, for instance, developing technical innovations in the art of sailing, by adapting new monetary instruments (i.e. silver coinage) to the volume and the value of the trade and by providing peace and prosperity in their living environment – namely, the *wiks* and other *emporía*.

Conclusion

By penetrating Baltic and Scandinavian waters at the turn of the 8th and 9th centuries with these formidable ‘calling cards’ of wine, arms, silver and many other goods, the Western merchants did more than introduce the Scandinavians to the art of sailing, they also attracted the eyes of the Vikings to their ships, to their sea routes, to their ports, to their churches, and finally, to their lands. It must be stressed that, at least at first, the arrival of the Vikings did not really disturb this system, which was remarkably adapted to the kind of exchanges that existed in northern Europe at the time of the Pippinid and Carolingian emperors and at the emergence of Mercia as dominant kingdom in mid- and southern England. But as we move forward into the 9th century, the picture becomes blurred: the frequency of Scandinavian raids on these ports must have weakened them (especially at Dorestad, which was plundered several times in the mid-9th century, and, to a lesser degree, at London and the Thames estuary³²). After approximately a century of violence at the maritime and fluvial trade sites, there was a new distribution of ports. The more vulnerable ones, especially those which had been created out of nothing in unstable alluvial environments open to silting, were eventually abandoned or even forgotten, as was the case with Quentovic or *Hamwich*, giving way to new sites, which appeared during the 10th or early 11th centuries.

³² P. Sawyer (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Vikings*, Oxford, 1997 (see in particular the contributions by J. Nelson and S. Keynes). For Dorestad and the Netherlands, S. Lebecq, *Marchands et navigateurs*, in particular vol. 1, p. 272-275; L. Van der Tuuk, *Noormannen in de Lage Landen. Handelaren, huurlingen en beersers*, Kampen, 2008. For Britain, J.D. Richards, *Viking Age England*, London, 1991; H.R. Loyn, *The Vikings in Britain*, Oxford, 1994; S. Lebecq *et al.*, *Histoire des îles Britanniques*, Paris, 2007, p. 122-141.