

combination (Saint-Servatius and Maastricht are inalienable, that's for sure²³). But – according to the analysis above – it might be true that they are inseparable. In any case: Maastricht must be and is very grateful that this professor of the early historical period has focused on Maastricht and hopefully he will keep this focus for some more years to come. The archaeology of Maastricht in the first millennium – in its Euroregional context – is highly dependent on his expertise, his effort and interpretations!

- 1 Inalienable (Dutch: onvervreemdbaar) means that the intrinsic value is dependently connected to a specific time, place or event. Separated from that time, place or event, this value changes by nature. Inalienable means that the relationship is passively defined and not a matter of choice. Inseparable (Dutch: onscheidbaar) means a connection by choice, fate or wish, without changing the value, when separated. Inseparable means that the relationship is a matter of action. For the answer to the question in the title I would like to refer to the concluding paragraph of this article.
- 2 Theuws, F. & M. Kars (eds.), 2017: *The Saint-Servatiuscomplex in Maastricht. The Vrijthof excavations (1969-1970)*, Habelt Verlag, Bonn.
- 3 With the term Euroregio the surrounding area of Maastricht is meant (the area where The Netherlands, Belgium and Germany meet). The smaller Euroregio is the area between Liège, Tongeren, Maastricht, Aachen and Eupen. The larger Euroregio is the same area enlarged in the direction of Bruxelles and Köln (west-east) and in the direction of Eindhoven and Luxembourg (north-south).
- 4 It is very well possible that these listed families are in some way connected: perhaps Lambertus is a descendant of the Chrodonoids. Or marital/family-connections can become clear, when family-trees are being investigated.
- 5 Theuws, F., 2001.
- 6 In his most recent publication (Theuws/Kars 2017) Theuws writes that Servatius perhaps even died in Tongeren (in the fourth or fifth century AD, that is uncertain), where he would have been bishop before he was or became bishop of Maastricht. In all, there is little agreement on the

- archaeological/historical proof of Servatius as bishop of Tongeren or Maastricht (Theuws thinks he was!), but there is general agreement that his cult was definitively developed by the Maastricht bishop Monulphus, who we know from the writings of Gregorius of Tours, dating back to the second half of the 6th c. AD.
- 7 The excavations in the immediate surroundings of the church of Our Lady would comprise the Parochieschool site (ca. 1920), the Mabro site (1982), the Derlon site (1983), the Pandhof OLV site (1996), and several other smaller excavations (Achter de Comedie, Bat, Havenstraat, Houtmaas, Plankstraat, Wolfstraat).
- 8 Theuws 2003 (*inaugural lecture* as archaeology-professor in Amsterdam, UvA). In 2014 Theuws held another *inaugural lecture* ("De boer en de koning in vroegmiddeleeuws Europa"), when he was appointed as professor of Medieval archaeology of Europe, at the University of Leiden. In 2014 his conceptual framework and the understanding and interpretation of the archaeological sources were further developed into more complex and general reconstructions and hypotheses. In this latest *inaugural lecture* he explained why he suggests that the early medieval transformations were also based on newly developed economical concepts (a large demand on commodities existed, based on a *ritual economy*) and he explained how these processes were instigated bottom up (via civilians and farmers, instead of top down, via the nobility/aristocracy).
- 9 Appadurai, A., 1988, p. 3-63.
- 10 Gregory, C., 1982. For the definition of 'inalienable' see also note 1.
- 11 Theuws 2005.
- 12 Theuws 2007.
- 13 Theuws 2014 (*Das mittlere Maastal*).

- 14 Theuws 2014 (*Das mittlere Maastal*).
- 15 Theuws 2015.
- 16 Charles Martel was the son of Alpaïda/Alpaïs, the second wife of Pipin of Herstal, who lived in bigamy. Plectrudis/Plectrude was the first wife of Pipin of Herstal.
- 17 This way of acting is recognizable in the way the mafia operates. In a broader context (and this is meant seriously): many of the ways of acting of the competing clans in early medieval society resemble the mafia-methods and practices we know nowadays and which go back for centuries.
- 18 Theuws/Kars 2017. The book has over 600 pages, is 5 cm thick and weighs 3 kilograms!
- 19 Mirjam Kars wrote and published a PHD-thesis already in 2011 on the grave goods as part of the Saint-Servatius project: M. Kars, *A cultural perspective on Merovingian burial chronology and the grave goods from the Vrijthof and Pandhof cemeteries in Maastricht*, Amsterdam, 2011.

- 20 MERAC: the 8th gathering of the Mosanorum Et Rhenanorum Archaeologicorum Concilium (MERAC), which was centred around the problematic current interpretation of the understanding of early Christianity and town-development in the Euroregio. Frans Theuws was one of the very important contributors. His interpretation was however not accepted by all attendants, especially the theory on 'the struggle for power by early medieval noble families and its visibility in the graveyard architecture'. This colloquium was organized by Eric Wetzels, Gilbert Soeters and Clemens Bayer.
- 21 in Dutch: tweehierigheid.
- 22 Preliminary report on 'academia.edu', search for author 'E. Wetzels', title: "MERAC preliminary report on 20171115.pdf"
- 23 See his inaugural lecture on the University of Amsterdam (Theuws, 2003) "De sleutel van Servaas".

The paper takes up and further develops some reflections made by Frans on the international role of Comacchio, specifically relating to changes in the commercial axes between Mediterranean and northern Europe during the seventh and eighth centuries.

Sauro Gelichi's interest in the emporia of northern Europe and the history of the early Middle-Ages was the reason for him to meet Frans Theuws. Comacchio and Venice were the cities that cemented their friendship. Treppo Grande, in Friuli, in particular, is the place that allowed their friendship to last for such a long time.

Sauro Gelichi

"Dorestad is simply Dorestad" (and Comacchio is simply Comacchio): lessons from Frans on regional and long-distance trade in Early Medieval Italy





Caption

In Comacchio in 2009, we organised an International Congress entitled “Da un mare all’altro” (From one sea to another) with the cooperation of Richard Hodges. In the years immediately preceding it, I had started some archaeological research on Comacchio which subsequently proved itself to be an important commercial hub in early Medieval times (close to the river Po, flowing out of the Po valley to the sea). Comacchio was not a Roman city, it developed rather rapidly between the seventh and the eighth centuries and was used as a port (linking the Adriatic Sea to the Po valley at least). This was also confirmed by the few written sources on this subject: in particular, a document dating back to the beginning of the eighth century in which the tax was specified that the residents of Comacchio (the Comacclenses) had to pay to the Longobards, to allow their ships and goods to move through the Kingdom, up to the capital Pavia.

It is these characteristics that made Comacchio unusual within the context of the settlements in Italy during the early Medieval period, especially as it did not start out from either a city or an ancient *vicus*. This immediately made me consider the similarities present in northern Europe, between the seventh and ninth centuries. In that a series of very similar centres developed along river banks, near

to estuaries or by the sea. These new centres, mainly depended on trade and also like Comacchio subsequently fell into decline. In short, I had pieced together the reality behind Comacchio – a relatively similar one to the Venetian Lagoon, existing during the same period as the ‘emporium’ phenomenon in northern Europe. A phenomenon, that has been at the centre of the Northern European debate for years, above all due to the importance that it has in relation to understanding of the origins of cities. This debate however, is one that excluded the entire Mediterranean area, and the researchers of that area. It is as if the separation postulated by Pirenne in his famous theory (between a Carolingian Northern Europe and a Southern Islamic Mediterranean), was also reflected in scientific research.

Bringing these two worlds together, both north and south, meant (in Richard Hodges’ mind and my own) the need to establish contacts between the two stories. These stories were perhaps not as different as they seemed and, above all, there was a need to bring together the researchers who had attempted to narrate those stories, whom up until now, had done so separately.

Among the many colleagues and friends we invited to Comacchio was Frans Theuws, who we asked to speak about Dorestad and the emporia of northern Europe. We

also knew that he would do this from an un-conventional point of view.

Frans however did more than this, repeating the argument that we had already given, for a comparison between north and south. Such a comparison was required to reflect on two main aspects of the problem: firstly to re-consider the role of international trade in the interpretative models, regarding the emporia in northern Europe; and secondly from a social aspect, to recognise the wide range of contributions made in establishing the mechanisms behind exchanges, thus attributing a lesser role to aristocracies and state powers.

In doing so, Frans referred specifically to our situation in Italy, the actual one we were studying. Not only did our situation support his interpretation, it also substantiated my idea regarding the role played by Comacchio at this time. Then also, more generally the impact of international trade in the north-Adriatic area.

My belief was based on certain archaeological finds, mainly the presence of a large number of globular amphorae found in Comacchio, in the eighth and ninth century phases (the same appears to be true in the Venetian lagoon, but this cannot as yet be quantified). The globular amphorae most probably contained wine (and perhaps also oil) and the archaeometric analyses proved that they mainly came from the Aegean. Furthermore, it was actually the existence of a location such as at Comacchio, that made me think of it as having a mainly commercial function. It was a suburban area right from its formative stage, rather than an area used for the exploitation of agricultural resources. The presence of an early (seventh century) workshop for the production of glass objects, also led me to think that we were dealing with a ‘nodal point.’ As this artisanal workshop did not use locally-produced raw materials (as could be the case, for example, in the bone industry), it had to by necessity import raw, or semi-finished material together with some tools (e.g. soapstone crucibles) from distant sources. Thus, the evidence at Comacchio seems clearly to suggest it was originally a coastal site that developed thanks to the exploitation of local resources (i.e. salt). But subsequently evolved quite quickly in a commercial sense, by either perpetuating or re-activating trade relationships with the Aegean Sea (or rather with the Byzantine world). This development therefore linked Comacchio to an international network. In this context, Comacchio appeared to be rather similar to the settlements in northern Europe. For this reason, I believe that it could be referred to by the most common definition, that of an ‘emporium,’ the same as given to those northern settlements with similar functions. My stance did not exactly coincide with that of the influential and prominent historian, Chris Wickham, who had



Caption

previously written about the role of international trade during the eighth and ninth centuries. He argued that all in all, the role should be considered modest at best. Moreover, he believed that this international trade, when present, only functioned to fulfil the needs of a limited class of elites. Subsequently I found a valid ally in Frans, regarding this debate.

Finally, it is necessary to deal with the role that interested authorities (or controlling elite) may have had in the creation and management of the emporia. For this aspect Frans tended to rule out direct involvement by the authorities in both the foundation and management of the emporia in northern Europe. Instead, he assumed that their function

was just to provide favourable conditions for trade to develop peacefully. He found a further element of comparison in what Michael McCormick had written about early medieval Venice. McCormick expressed himself as follows: 'Venice was not founded by a king,' adding that it was developed with the aid of 'strong powers,' but without Venice being under direct control. These observations could also be applied to Comacchio, in that up to that moment, it could be described as benefiting from a kind of proclamation of Ravenna archiepiscopal power. Comacchio could almost be seen as an extension to that great city, belonging to the ancient world, that had been previously deprived of its 'historic' ports (Comacchio is approximately thirty kilometres further north). In my opinion, this explanation seemed too simple, and in any case, it clashed with some key historical and archaeological data. For example, no written sources have ever mentioned a direct link between Ravenna and Comacchio. There is no mention of it at the foundation of an Episcopal see (even though we are already in 725, if not in 781). This very episode, that took place following the famous treaty signed with the Longobards in 715, appeared to be an attempt to control, at least in part, the benefits derived from the movement of goods along its trade route. But this is a transport system that should already have been well developed by this time, outside a direct control of the authorities (more specifically, the exarch and the archbishop of Ravenna).

Therefore, as Richard and I had attempted to bridge the gap between the north and south, between the emporia in the cold northern seas and the emporia in the sunny Adriatic (and beyond), Frans had totally accepted our challenge and he had already tried to carry out an initial, very promising comparison. Not only that, Frans went even further, by linking them directly, in one of his visionary and most lucid perceptions of the Mediterranean and European world. By taking up one of his old ideas, Frans wondered whether the trade routes leading northwards through the Rhone, the Saone and the Meuse rivers in the late 6th century, had been replaced, during the eighth century, by the routes that connected the northern Adriatic Sea via the Rhine, to the emporia in northern Europe. On the one hand, there was the crisis of Marseille and on the other, the flourishing of Comacchio (as well as the settlements in the Venetian lagoon), that coincided with the flourishing of the northern European emporia. These coincidences could prove to be an indication of these changes.

It was unnecessary therefore, to trace these phenomena back to a simple problem in understanding the functioning of local or regional networks. As the majority of historians and archaeologists wanted. Naturally, the problem remained open for us, at least in part, as we had to, and still

have to better contextualise the processes that occurred in the Po valley. Especially as current archaeological research is underdeveloped there. More specifically, we would have to attempt to verify whether or not there was a link between the establishment of places such as Comacchio with a possible surplus of agricultural products in the eighth century. This essentially shifts the focus of the research from the coastal area further inland and concentrates more on the evolution of agricultural exploitation systems. Moreover, we would also have to analyse the exploitation of other more general resources, such as minerals and timber. These are resources that could have played a non-marginal role in the definition of commercial networks. Finally, we would also have to focus more clearly on the role of the peasant societies, a role that Frans is also critically reviewing in his latest ERC-funded project on the rural communities of north western Europe. It is too simplistic however to limit the issue to two main aspects, namely the role of the river trade compared to the broader role of regional trade and the part played by the aristocracies regarding their promotion and maintenance. This was and is insufficient. As Frans teaches us once again, the problem lies in the complexity (and variety) of the economic systems in these early medieval times. Not to mention the difficulty in observing these through the eyes of modernity (and therefore attempt to define and classify them). It is from this theoretical and conceptual perspective that we need to tackle this issue in the near future.

Finally, the difficulty that we have in qualifying this phenomenon on a terminological level shows us just how much it eludes our perception. We are used to defining these new settlements in northern Europe as emporia. However, this term, appearing in the written sources alongside others such as *wik* and *portus*, is not the only one used by historians. These places are referred to using other names, the subject of which we have various case studies. This current uncertainty is however a synonym for the uncertainty that is both terminological and substantial in nature. This is because it concerns the attempt to link archaeological objects that are on one hand similar to each other, while unique on the other.

The comparison that I have made here with the evidence from the south can also be considered instructive. The ancient sources have some problems in defining new locations such as Comacchio (as they refer to them in different ways), and this inconvenience is also suffered by modern scholars who have attempted to deal with this issue, for northern Europe and for the same reasons. Thus, in conclusion, and in these circumstances, I would like to follow Frans' line by wishing to add that "if Dorestad is simply Dorestad" then "Comacchio is simply Comacchio".

Dries Tys

Cult, assembly and trade: the dynamics of a 'central place,' in Ghent, in the County of Flanders, including its social reproduction and the re-organization of trade, between the 7th and 11th centuries.

Frans Theuws has shown how commodity trade was not necessarily contradictory to the social and ritual exchange of inalienable goods during the Early Medieval Period. In this contribution the link between governance, cult and trade, for the region of Flanders (Belgium) are discussed. A long-term comparative view between the 7th and the 10th century is taken, with a main focus on the successful development of the medieval town of Ghent. The translation of old ceremonies and habits, in new social and political reproduction strategies in 10th century Flanders, lead to a successful state-formation and urban take off at that time, with an important impact on the development of trade and the market.

When Dries Tys met Frans Theuws for the first time, they immediately engaged in a lively talk about early medieval peasants and traders. What he admired then and still do today is how Frans looks at the early Middle-Ages from an independent perspective, removed from any presupposed narratives. This has been an example to Dries in his own research on early-medieval coastal societies, town formation and for a few years now, early medieval cults.



Fig. 2 The Saint Bavo Abbey of Ghent, in 1534. The abbey is situated near the confluence of the rivers Schelde and Leie, in the proximity of an alleged former Roman *castellum*, as well as an Early Medieval cult and assembly site, and dates from the second half of the 7th century.