Towards an Economic History of the Horse in the Mediterranean Area during the Middle Ages: What Perspectives?

Clothilde Noé

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Keywords

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Just as Mediterranean trade during the Middle Ages has long been the focus of research questions resulting in major academic works (such as those of Lombard, Ashtor, Heyd, Braudel, Lopez, etc.), so too should horse breeding, commerce, and exchange between west and east be treated as an important research topic in this context. The geographical scale of the subject, and the dispersed nature of the sources can appear daunting. While not claiming that it is an exhaustive study, this paper intends to assess the literature on the topic to date, before returning to particular texts and archival sources in order to consider a way forward for future exploration.

Animal studies, as well as human-animal studies, are more newsworthy than ever. The social sciences incorporated these topics into their studies some time ago, resulting in a fertile and well-established area of research in that field, as well as numerous works that cannot all be included here for reasons of space.³ History, geography, sociology, humanities… All these

¹ This paper is incorporated in a work for a thesis on “The equine trade between East and West (10th-15th centuries)” at the University of Tours, supervised by Prof. François-Olivier Touati.
² CITERES, Équipe Monde Arabe et Méditerranée, University of Tours, France.
disciplines are showing ever-increasing interest in animal studies. Historians have long been interested in the horse through the history of equitation and the history of training and related artefacts, for example Daniel Roche with his major work on horses from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, and the history of the horse in art and iconography. In addition, a book dealing with the archaeology of the horse in the Middle Ages was published in 2017. Growing awareness of the role of horses clearly also stimulated research curiosity, to a greater or lesser degree, ad testified by some experts’ interrogation of the subject matter, for example Jean-Pierre Digard, and the creation of researchers’ associations, like “Cheval et Sciences Humaines.” Anglophone studies gave interest to the equine subject, in particular for the exchanges in the North of Europe. In 2011, Jordan Claridge finished a work on the horse in late medieval England. He explored the buying, selling, markets and trades of two types of horses: the warhorse and the horse for work. Recently, Anastasija Ropa studied the price and value of the warhorse in Late Medieval England.

What of the horse during the Middle Ages and, in particular, its exchange and movement? Mediterranean trade in general is relatively well known through the works of numerous researchers. The trade in sugar, cotton, cereals, alum, or slaves are all historical subjects which have been extensively studied by historians. However, studies about the horse in this context are relatively rare. This animal, emblematic of the Middle Ages, is all too often described in just a few lines and is lost in the mass of economic, political, military, or diplomatic historical information. Discussion of the medieval trade in horses, or of equids in general, which also includes mules and donkeys, is not an easy task; paradoxically this is precisely because of the ubiquity of the horse throughout Mediterranean medieval societies. It is a weapon of war, a luxury product, and a working animal as well. Equids therefore have the capacity to appear in many diverse sources, which adds to the complexity of equids as a research topic.

However, focussing on the medieval horse in the economy also allows it to be reinstated in the wider economic and non-economic context, over a longer historical period and within a more extended geographical area. “Acquérir un cheval, c’est l’obtenir par prouesse, par don, by some experts’ interrogation of the subject matter, for example Jean-Pierre Digard, and the creation of researchers’ associations, like “Cheval et Sciences Humaines.” Anglophone studies gave interest to the equine subject, in particular for the exchanges in the North of Europe. In 2011, Jordan Claridge finished a work on the horse in late medieval England. He explored the buying, selling, markets and trades of two types of horses: the warhorse and the horse for work. Recently, Anastasija Ropa studied the price and value of the warhorse in Late Medieval England.

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ou c’est l’acheter. C’est alors se placer sur un marché, dans l’échange.”

Can we really not be discussing the horse trade when the great Arab chronicler Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) is sent as an ambassador to the king of Castile, Peter (1334-1369), for the ratification of a peace treaty concluded with the princes of the Maghreb? The journey afforded an opportunity to offer purebred horses to the sovereign, which supposes the existence of a specific equine product in the Maghreb, and which also provides a real sense of value for selected animals. We meet the same man as an envoy to the Mamluk Sultan, his intended mission to supply the Sultan with North African purebred horses from Tunis.

Clearly, the exchanges extend across the whole Mediterranean area, connecting the Latin, Byzantine and Islamic worlds. This trade requires not only investigation into the production, distribution, and utilization of the horse, but also into the study of the resulting consequences on the whole of society. This paper gives an inventory of research to date relating to the economic history of the horse in the Mediterranean area during the Middle Ages. Since there is an absence of general studies about the trade of this animal in the Mediterranean area, I intend to study this question by the enumeration and examination of the diverse works in which the horse appears (the areas included cover economic, political, military and diplomatic history). The present review is a good opportunity to raise the value of the “horse” as a research topic for human-animal studies and social sciences. To this end, I intend to establish a non-exhaustive chart of the most significant research works in order to assess the impact of the Mediterranean horse trade on the economic history of the Middle Ages.

1. Regarding various foundation studies on the medieval horse

The earliest historians to be interested by the history of animals tended to prioritise domestic fauna over researching wild beasts. With this in mind, the horse provided a major focus for different historical studies of the first half of the twentieth century. An inventory of the works on the history of animals produced by Éric Baratay and Jean-Luc Mayaud showed that about 42.8% of the publications were about the horse for this period. Thereafter, the opening up of studies on other animals, particularly non-domesticated animals, decentred the focus of the historians. Nevertheless, interest in this equid was sufficiently great that an entry for “horse” was created in 1984 in the Bibliographie annuelle de l’histoire de France. In this, the topic of the horse is approached in every historical period and through many themes, such as the stud, transport, the army, breeds, veterinary medicine, and butchery. Nor did medievalists fail to engage with this question, publishing works that are still referenced today. Here I would mention the innovative research of two historians, Anne-Marie and Robert-Henri Bautier that were published in 1976 and 1978. Their two papers provided an inventory of historical research concerning the horse in the Middle Ages in France. This valuable guide for people with interest in horses in the Middle Ages gives information about all equine activities. Their studies provided knowledge that assists researchers in understanding medieval horse

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14 Idem, 208.
16 Idem, 429.
breeding, clarifies medieval equine vocabulary, and provides the foundation for an initial mapping of equine trade and its economic agents. They listed the abundant clues in various historical sources, from cartularies to *chansons de geste*, which can help the historian to approach the horse from a historical perspective focusing on the medieval period. They noted, for example, the existence of commercial movements of “grands chevaux de Lombardie” in the fairs of Champagne, which I shall discuss in greater detail later in this paper.

The difficulty of accessing and assessing the sources, which are abundant, varied, and dispersed, encouraged the publication of the work of Bruno Galland in 1993, which was an inventory of the French archives relating to the horse. The author indicated how the collections of the Bibliothèque Nationale of France could provide important sources to enlighten historians. Going through the collections, he strove to create an inventory for every historical period and to classify them by various themes: “écure du roi,” “justice” or “élevage,” for instance. He suggested at the same time the possibility of producing a detailed analysis of this collection, which could throw light on the economic agencies involved, as well as the distribution network of the horse, the rules concerning the sale of equids, and the importation of foreign horses into France.

The 1990s saw the first attempts at overviews through a synthesis of the material. In 1994, Brigitte Prévot and Bernard Ribémont published a work which formed an initial overview of the history of the horse in France in the Middle Ages. The animal was studied in its socioeconomic, literary, and medical roles. The exploration of the abundantly available sources, such as cartularies, medieval account books, legacies, and literary texts, permitted the authors to reveal the emergence of the private trade in luxury horses, as well as trade through the great fairs which were marked by a predominance of Italian merchants, highlighting the reputation of the Lombard and Spanish horses; while the abbeys had an important role in supplying horses for commerce and farming. The latter part of the book focussed particularly on equine medicine, and that completed their inventory on the horse in the Middle Ages. The same year, Ann Hyland published a review of the history of the horse in the Mediterranean world. Her study embraced the Byzantine world, the Islamic world and the Western Christian world. Leaning on rich literary sources once more, including chronicles and literary, legal and commercial texts, Hyland produced an extensive report on the warhorse in the Mediterranean area, which was a key area of important exchange for this period. Hyland outlined the way in which warhorses were bred, and also the way they were trained, treated, and used on the battlefield. A few years later, she produced a more general book on the horse in the Middle Ages. The medieval horse, particularly the English horse, was described quite briefly through chapters concerning the horse at “Domesday and Before,” its “Supply and Demand,” role in “Farming and Commerce” and also in “Trades and Crafts.” Hyland’s work has the merit of cultivating a holistic view of medieval life relating to the horse, from the horse at work on the farm to the role of the warhorse.

18 Idem, 52.
2. Concerning studies on the medieval horse in the Mediterranean area

Studying the horse within the broad Mediterranean environment gives rise to a great number of challenges. The researcher has to confront a vast geographical scale, a more or less long temporality, and then face the multiplicity of the sources. Wilhelm von Heyd’s works remain still today a valuable reference point concerning Mediterranean trade in the Middle Ages.\(^{23}\)

Through studying a wide range of items, including food products, he drew attention in particular to the trade in horses that was driven by Persian and Arab merchants to India.\(^{24}\) This trade is mentioned in the respective works of Marco Polo (1254-1324), Ibn Battuta (1307-1377) and the Russian merchant Afasaniy Nikitin (d. 1472). This trade between the Arab world and India has been studied by several historians: in this context we can name, for example, Ranabir Chakravarti\(^ {25}\) and also Ali Bahrani Pour\(^ {26}\) who both devoted part of their works to the trade of horses in Asia. The Indian trade is developed by Yashaswini Chandra in her work on the trade of horses into and within India.\(^ {27}\) She explored the aspects of this trade with the description of the terrestrial and maritime routes, the functions of the horse in social life, religion, sport and war. She described the professionals of the horse like grooms or breeders.

For all that, the exchange of equids in the Mediterranean area is not well-developed in Wilhelm von Heyd’s work. A later study of Eliyahu Ashtor suggested presenting the prices and the salaries in the medieval Orient.\(^ {28}\) In his quest to discover real costs and values, this historian listed the prices of the horse all around the Mediterranean Sea, not only in the Umayyad, Abbasid and Fatimid Caliphates but also in the Mamlouk Sultanate, in Dalmatia, and in the cities of Florence and Marseille. This broad overview was intended only as a first draft on the trade of the horse in the Mediterranean area because this animal commodity tends to be lost in more general documents including the production and exchange of other commodities. Unfortunately, gathering data on horse prices by geographic area does not necessarily enable the researcher to tie together the individual locations, and much less to outline the distribution network. To date, there are no works about the commercialization of horse trade on a Mediterranean-wide scale. The difficulty mainly comes from the social position of the horse in the Middle Ages. It is such a “common” animal, that it becomes nearly invisible in the contemporary documentary sources, which do not necessarily sign its presence to the researcher. Moreover, it is a product whose commercialization was forbidden very early in the medieval period, as much on the Christian side as the Islamic side. But in spite of prohibitions on selling horses abroad, some states did not hesitate to encourage this exchange, and to supply a more or less unofficial parallel market to more official ones. This


\(^{24}\) Idem, 135-136.


frequently hidden question of the exportation and importation of the horse has resulted in a particular focus in some historians’ works.

3. Some regional works on the trade-in horses

Some works were executed on a regional scale enabling the existence of more or less legal commercial networks to be highlighted. In 1941, Jean Régné had already begun to describe the characteristics of the importation of Spanish horses to Narbonne.29 His study and analysis of the registers of the chancellery under King James II of Aragon (1267-1327) allowed him to affirm that the Aragonese or Catalan horses were regularly exported to Narbonne, Perpignan, Montpellier, Foix, Rodez, and on a wider geographic scale, to Genoa, to Portugal and to the pontifical court. The study of the export licenses established by James II of Aragon, on the model of Philip IV of France (1268-1314), revealed the sovereign’s desire to control the circulation of the equine “product.” Indeed, the horse being integrated within the list of products forbidden for exportation, it was necessary to get a special license, which either the buyer or the intermediary assigned to bring the animal to its new owner, had to show to all the sovereign’s officers, and in particular to those who watched the ports and the Pyrenean passages. Régné’s pioneering study encouraged research to be extended to other locations, for example, the Italian peninsula, and to other chronological periods (indeed, Jean Régné studied this traffic only within a brief timeframe of 30 years).

In fact, it was not until 1968 that Yves Renouard developed this research theme, by producing a paper about the exportation of horses from the Iberian Peninsula to France and England.30 He also regretted the lack of interest shown by historians in this topic, while beginning the analysis of the impact of the Iberian trade.31 The reputation of the Iberian horses was known across Europe, and their qualities were sung in the chansons de geste. This renown reflected the interest of knights, especially between the eleventh and the fifteenth centuries in France, who wanted to buy the most superior mounts. Yves Renouard studied the commercial information relating to this demand for warhorses. His work gave indications about these Iberian exportations to France and England through analysis of the customs fee, of the legal texts which controlled the circulation of the animals, and the Rôles Gascons, which provided many clues that confirmed these horses were exported regularly.

The Spanish horse trade was the subject of another seminal paper, that of Anthony Pinto.32 Not having access to regular certification documentation such as account books for the terrestrial tolls, Pinto turned his attention to analysing the notaries’ minute books, which are kept in Perpignan and in Girona. His aim was to outline the network of supply connecting the French and the Aragonese regions. Pinto succeeded in identifying several export regions for French livestock in the fifteenth century, all of which were capable of transporting equids to Catalonia. Among these regions, the historian referenced the Massif Central, which sent both pack and saddle animals to the Mediterranean area. Auvergne from the 1460s onward sent equids to Roussillon and Catalonia. The two regions of Rouergue and Languedoc sent

31 Idem, 1113.
animals too. Yet, still further ahead of even these productive regions, Béarn was the most important export centre for the horse trade by volume.

Thereafter, Anthony Pinto traced the road network along which the French livestock moved. He affirmed that it was only from the 1390s that an established distribution network made possible the connection between the Massif Central and bordering regions. Horse-dealers and intermediary agents were actively involved in these itineraries. Narbonne and Carcassonne played a role as major hubs of the commercial network. Rouergue was a hub for the network during the years 1410-1420 too. Finally, a route connected the Atlantic area with the Mediterranean area. This road passed through Bayonne, Toulouse, and Perpignan. Part of Pinto’s work concerns sales specialists, transport, and distribution of the horse. The merchants of Béarn decided to set up their base into the episcopal city of Elne, because of trade fairs and the proximity of the region to the supply network. In comparison, Auvergne and Bearman conveyors carried livestock between the dioceses of Elne and Girona. Mule and caravan drivers from Girona in the fifteenth century had an active role in the distribution of horses and mules from local farms and studs. In Roussillon and in Perpignan, this distribution was at first in the hands of economic agents from the kingdom of France. The analysis of notarial sources allowed Anthony Pinto to describe the sold animals more precisely, especially concerning price and quality. It is not surprising to note the predominance of the mule in Catalonia and in Roussillon: an examination of the Castelló of Empúries’ register of the 1420s showed, for example, that the mules represented around 43% of equids sold for this period. The mule was a robust and enduring animal, well-adapted to working on hard roads. The author incorporated a recap chart in his paper indicating the price of mules according to locality and date. The assessment is clear; some mules seem to be of better quality than others, such as the mules from Rouergue. As for the horses, they represented an important part of the equine trade too. Anthony Pinto was able to show the evolution of prices and then of the quality of horses. The value of horses from the plains of the Empordà decreased during the fifteenth century, for example. Indeed, the farmers decided to abandon breeding good and medium value horses for breeding horses of lower quality to respond to ever more intensive popular demand. In sum, the study of these collections made the analysis of developing commercial exchange possible, including, indeed, an unexpected outcome.

Anne-Marie and Robert-Henri Bautier also analysed equine commercial movements in their works on the medieval horse. Their analysis was based on the tolls of the Alpine region in order to outline equine imports. This work allowed them to affirm the transport of mounts from the Netherlands, Germany, Spain and Italy within the kingdom of France. The horses were transported to the fairs of Champagne, then to those of Chalon, or to Lyon by merchants from Milan and from all Western and Central Lombardy; a second group of merchants came from Emilia, Bologna, Parma and Piacenza. The two authors were able to establish the temporality of this trade using the account books. The pace of traffic outlined in the tolls varied seasonally and from year to year. Winter brought the movement to a halt on both sides of the Alps, and there was no or very limited movement in horses from the second half of the month of November to the end of April. To this information, the authors added an attempt to describe the itineraries that the merchants took in order to reach the different marketplaces. These importations were highly dependent on the geopolitical context of the period: in Italy in the 1340s, the Visconti and the Scaligeri were at war, there were imperial expeditions and conflicts around the pontifical states, and there was political discrimination against Lombard merchants. All these facts caused the trade in horses to the

33 Bautier, “Contribution à l’histoire du cheval au Moyen Âge.”
34 Idem, 65.
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The kingdom of France had to rely on other marketplaces, particularly the great fairs of Holland and Friesland. They supplied the kingdom when it was unable to ensure its supply of mounts from many different lands. The work of Félix Bourquelot, while admittedly dated now, is still today a starting point for studies on the great medieval fairs. He often referenced equids identified through taxes on the sale of products of Troyes, of Provins, of Bar-sur-Aube and of Lagny, and in the different locations for sales in the same cities. Bourquelot also indicated the prices of the horses, from the account book of 1269. These horses were sent to the fair of Lagny: “cheval noir d’Espaigne,” “cheval de Lorraine” and also “cheval sor de Puille” are some of the means of identifying the equines which were part of the medieval international trade. This book had the merit of examining the origins of the equine trade, and understanding its organisation, which was greatly influenced by the predominant role of the Italian merchants.

Henri Dubois devoted part of his research to the Fairs of Chalon. He examined various toll accounts, which enabled him to establish the volume of the equine imports to the Fairs of Chalon. He also described the itineraries of the equid traders. Dubois analyzed both the prices and the quantities of the horses which crossed the tolls, and so he could clarify the commercial conditions of the horse trade. Every movement of a horse revealed the origin of the animal and sometimes its destination as well. For example, the Augerans toll showed that the price and quantity of horses between 1305 and 1313 grew significantly until 1309 (in which year the author confirmed the movement of 410 mounts), and then declined until there were just 25 horses in the year 1313. The historian tried subsequently to analyze the places where the mounts were sent. The sale of horses is mentioned from 1339. Saddle horses, draft horses or pack horses were all bought in the Fairs of Chalon, especially for the Duke of Burgundy’s court. Henri Dubois identified the presence of merchants coming from Milan, from Parma, from Piacenza, from Florence and also from Siena. These merchants specialised in the selling of destriers, palfreys or rounceys. In addition, the Italian merchants seemed to be involved in equine sales from the 1340s. Moreover, these merchants were additional to merchants from the Rhine and a Catalan dealer, identified as the victim of a troublesome buyer. All these merchants played an important part in the importation of mounts into the French kingdom, but they were also allowed the exportation of some beasts too, when it was permitted by the government in power. The equine trade was more or less developed depending on the geopolitical context. The Duke bought no more in Chalon after 1382 but he went to Anvers, to Compiègne, to the Fair of Lendit, to Paris, to Geneva and also to Spain.

35 Idem, 68.
37 Idem, 303.
39 Idem, 484.
40 Idem, 149.
41 Idem, 488.
42 Idem, 150.
43 Idem, 488.
44 Idem, 150.
This topic was taken up by Ludovic Notte, who wrote a key study on the international equine trade during the 1300s. He proposed drawing on the royal accounts, which really appeared from the thirteenth century onward, in the absence of primary sources such as producer’s papers or specialist merchants’ documents. The crusades and the wars during the second part of the century mobilized armies which were raised by seigniorial hotels. These seigniorial hotels were in charge of the expenses for the everyday life of the lords. The expenses were registered in account books. However, this documentation remains quite limited and does not allow a complete evaluation of the impact of the army’s purchase on the organization of the markets and its commercial agents. It is also difficult to study the perspectives of the farmers and producers and the breeders’ techniques. Ludovic Notte’s work was a reminder of the complexity of the trade in horses: it was possible to find pack horses or service horses, and also luxury animals, destriers, palfreys, and coursers from Spain and from Italy. He used sources which allowed him to obtain information about this trade: sometimes the geographical origin of the merchants and of the consumers were indicated, as were the sums of money which were spent. Looking into the princely archives of Count Robert II of Artois (1250-1302) and of his daughter, the Countess Mahaut of Artois (1269-1329), Ludovic Notte observed how irregular the Count’s purchases were. He bought, for example, some horses during his various trips. The Count also bought from places that specialized in equid sales. He bought horses in Flanders, in Fairs at Moissac, and also in Paris. These different exchanges were affected by the political context of this time. It is not surprising, for instance, to see the king prohibiting the trade with Flanders in 1302-1305, which may have destabilized the equine trade in this region and certainly encouraged the consumers to buy in other places. In addition, the remount trade was essentially Parisian from 1302, and it was certainly able to take advantage of the embargo on the Flemish trade. The Fairs of Champagne and of Brie were added to these commercial regions and they constituted privileged places for the horse trade in the thirteenth century. The count had the same preferences in purchasing horses as the kings: Philippe IV of France (1268-1314) bought his horses in Apulia, in Flanders, in Bar-sur-Aube, in Angers or also in Paris. At the beginning of the fourteenth century the places of Flanders, Champagne and Paris shared the major part of the luxury trade. However, Paris acquired an important place in the horse trade during this same century such as the trade of the Lendit. This trade developed through the presence of the royal court, of its officers and of its princely hotels, an administration in charge of the expenses of the princes, but also through the decline of the Fairs of Champagne and Brie around 1315-1320. However, the great Fairs of Champagne did not come to an end, because the Italian merchants continued to visit these locations. The accounts of the tolls showed the movement of these Italian dealers and also an increase in traffic during the Franco-Flemish conflicts. That is why it is not surprising to see Princess Mahaut buying a grey horse “merchié en la cuisse destre d’un merc de Puille” in the Fair of Bar-sur-Aube. By the end of the fifteenth century, the internal remount supply in the kingdom was not large enough. Then, a royal order in 1484 tried to organize the importation of horses “d’Espaigne, de Poille, d’Alemaigne et d’autres lieux pour en fournir les gens de guerre” [from Spain, Apulia, Germany and others places to supply the men of war]. Thus, Ludovic Notte outlined the horse trade in the West from the thirteenth century to the fifteenth century, presenting information regarding commercial agents and important locations for this trade.

This study could be viewed as complemented by Nicolas Thouroude’s research into the horses of John the Fearless (1371-1419) from 1399 and 1419. The study of the supply of horses of the ducal stables showed the terms and conditions of the purchase of horses, their assignments, and the politics of donations which the duke of Burgundy arranged. On the basis of the Duke of Burgundy’s “comptes généraux,” it is possible to reveal clues about the identity of the horse-dealer, the value and the description of the sold animal, its place of purchase and the assignment of the horse. Nicolas Thouroude had highlighted a remount trade essentially coming from Paris. John the Fearless found his supplies in Bruges, in Lille, in Douai, in Arras, in Troyes and to a lesser extent in Dijon too. Apart from the well-known commercial locations, Nicolas Thouroude also studied the prices of purchased horses. The ones from Paris cost around 110 francs per head: this is more expensive, in comparison with an average price of 85 francs, thus horses bought in the capital city were certainly more expensive than those from elsewhere. Indeed, the princes could obtain horses which cost between 50 and 60 francs from the end of the fourteenth century and the beginning of the fifteenth century. Furthermore, Nicolas Thouroude studied information about the horse-dealers who visited the French capital. The Parisian suppliers were mostly professional horse-dealers. The important presence of the merchants and brokers of horses encouraged the government to establish a control policy in 1375, 1415 and 1424. His study on the Parisian merchants also highlighted the best horse-dealers. Thus, he could study their commercial strategy. These experienced sellers had a particular policy of selecting groups of mounts for the sales. The horse-dealer Perrin Pinçon, for example, demonstrated three grouped sales of seven, thirteen and fifteen horses in six sold batches. Further, information in the national archives in Paris complete this horse-dealer’s profile. Perrin Pinçon seemed indeed to be a regular horse-dealer at the Parisian Fairs: according to personal researches, a certain “Perrin Pinçon” regularly visited the Fair of the Lendit and the Fair of Compiègne from 1386 to 1420. Finally, a single Italian trader had the opportunity to sell 20 horses to John the Fearless. Nicolas Thouroude’s work offers a good overview of the Parisian equine trade and suggests avenues for future research.

The important accounts kept in Dijon and Paris make possible the study of the functioning of the Mediterranean commercial network. The registers of these two archives give information about the dealers of horses, the number of bought horses, and they sometimes signal the country of origin and the place of the purchases of the beasts. It is possible to analyse these registers with the help of the creation of a database. I introduce here first results of my ongoing study. 889 horses were counted for the archives of Paris for period between 1391 and 1423 and 2257 animals for the archives of Dijon from 1357 to 1408. This amount of data could give information on the Mediterranean trade for a long period of time. When the origin of the horse is written in the registers, only three places of origin are mentioned: Apulia (24 mentions), Spain (6 mentions) and Germany (1 mention). The mention of the geographical origins raises these animals to a “extraordinary” status in front of the other beasts whose the origin, certainly more modest and common, is never given. The Duke of Burgundy bought for example 20 “coursiers” from Apulia in the fairs of Chalon and Troyes. He bought too a “haquenée” from Apulia in 1387 for 15 francs.

The identity of the dealers is also interesting: they are mentioned as “marchants de chevaux” which means they were specialized in the resale of horses. The origins of these dealers are

47 Idem, 142.
48 Archives Nationales in Paris: registers KK34, KK35 and KK53.
varied: Germans, Spaniards and Italians are the most mentioned foreign dealers in the accounts. The Germans are the most represented dealers because their geographic proximity with the places of selling (Fairs of Champagne and Fairs of Paris). By focusing on the sold beasts by each dealer, it is possible to detect a real specialization of the dealers. For example, a certain « Hennequin de Cologne » sold three “roncins” in 1384 to the king of France in the fair of Compiègne, and the same year a same “Hennequin de Cologne” sold four “roncins” and a “haquenée” to the king of France but in the Fair of the Lendit. The next year, he sold two “roncins” in Paris. A certain “Hennequin d’Allemagne” sold in 1387 in the fair of Compiègne a horse to the Duke of Burgundy. The profile of Hennequin is very interesting as long as his varied appearances in the accounts give indications about the specialization of the horse-dealer. He visited different fairs in one year, the ones of Compiègne, Paris, the Lendit, and he certainly moved with a lot of horses.

The king of France bought from him eight batches of two to five horses when he is mentioned between 1384 and 1401, which is certainly the demonstration of the confidence of the sovereign in the quality of the bought beasts. Another dealer, whose origin poses a problem because he is mentioned as an inhabitant of Troyes and as “Lombard,” seems to be skilled in the resale of coursiers from Apulia. He sold two coursiers to the Duke of Burgundy in 1371, ten in 1372 and four in 1373. These three transactions question the supply and the transport of horses from Apulia to the kingdom of France. Another dealer, Diego Martinus “du pais d’Espagne,” sold sixteenth horses to the French crown between 1420 and 1422, including ten coursiers, certainly Spanish, two roncins and four horses (certainly coursiers they too because they were bought for the high prices of 2000, 2000, 1200 and 1000 livres tournois). He bought these animals only four times. The whole of these data can give some information about the identity of the dealers and the horses in the Mediterranean trade network.

The horse has provoked greater interest from historians in the field of Byzantine studies. Art history and veterinary history have provided interesting sources for studies into the question of the horse trade and horses in general. Horses were essential tools for the optimal operation of the empire: they were used for transport, war, races, parades, and agriculture. The extensive use of this animal required quite intensive breeding. Studies were conducted concerning the supply of horses for the army. The Byzantine state controlled equine production, maintaining state breeding farms, mainly in Cappadocia. John F. Haldon also determined the important role of some provinces and churches in the supply of horses to the Byzantine state. The direct debit of 1000 horses in the region of the Peloponnese in the reign of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (905-959) provides a good example of how this supply

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worked in practice. Further, the topic of the equine economy in Byzantium has been analyzed more intensively than the horse in the West. Historians have shown for example that the price of the Byzantine horse was high because of its important role for the army. Regarding the economic agents, specialist staff was present at the market and the fairs whose function it was to estimate the physical conditions of the horses and other animals.

All these studies confirm the existence of both staff and sites more or less specialized in particular equine sales. The animals, horses and mules, can be studied through various sources. Unfortunately, no review has established a connection between these different regions which can therefore seem very disconnected from each other.

Generally, the export of horses encouraged a real impetus in the states concerning the selling of this weapon of war. National strategies were established: historians have worked on this subject and provided their results about these policies in many papers.

4. State policies: fluctuations between prohibition and support of the horse trade

From very early times, the horse was considered as merchandise which was forbidden for export within both the Christian and the Islamic states. However, once again, clues allow researchers to detect the existence of an equine market which was more or less legal. These prohibitions were, at first, imposed by the Catholic Church which wanted to prevent the sales of all weapons to the Muslims in the context of the Crusades and the Reconquista. Abundant and regular documentation from the end of the twelfth century to the beginning of the fifteenth century indicates the regulation of the prohibition: the trade of the res prohibitae, including horses, was more or less supervised, and sanctions were put in place, from simple fines to excommunication. Exportation licenses were only given as an exception, and this completed the control measures. However, investigating the whole of these dispositions, which forbade all sales relations between Christians and Muslims, in fact allows the researcher to highlight economic exchanges between the two. Historians have examined these documents intently to reveal the commercial relations which were previously invisible. Joseph Trench Odena was one of the first to focus on the pontifical prohibition, producing an initial work on the merchants from the Aragonese Crown with Islamic countries, and a second on the traders from the Midi. Information about the horse was presented in an incomplete form in these works, especially as it was included in the list of the res prohibitae. Even if these works clearly have limitations, as they only concern the first half of the fourteenth century and some specific geographical regions, they are essential in reconstituting the chronology of these essential commercial relations.

Damien Coulon highlighted the importance of examining fines and navigation licenses in a paper which complemented the work of Joseph Trench Odena. Once again, the horse,

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54 Koliás, “The Horse in the Byzantine World,” 92.
with other banned products, had apparently become invisible in the official records but was visible in the destinations of illicit merchants and the administrations of ports through which the Church accepted the transfer of merchandise.

The policy of the French kingdom was not the exception regarding the equids. Anne-Marie and Robert-Henri Bautier, in their first paper,\(^57\) mentioned the initial exportation prohibition for the year 1296: the export of warhorses was forbidden along with weapons, any other military-related items, and the export of gold and silver. Trading in warhorses was not possible without a written authorization from the royal government.

This restrictive policy for exportations must be more largely studied. Analyzing the *Ordonnances des roys de France*,\(^58\) which collect the French royal certificates as the legislative texts, edicts or rulings, it is possible to observe that the prohibition to export was largely remade and repeated in the following years. In 1304, 1312 or 1314, the exportation of horse to the outside of the kingdom of France is strictly forbidden. In 1358, having a licence to export from the ports of Aigues-Mortes and Saint-Jean-de-Losnes is mandatory. These texts mention “plusieurs marchands lombards, qui ont trait ou fait traire du dit royaume (…) de grands chevaux” [several Lombard merchants exported or made export from the kingdom (…) great horses] as well. It is evident that an unofficial market developed in the frontiers of the kingdom and Lombard merchants bought great French horses in the varied fairs to bring them with them in Italy. These irregular transactions are visible by the royal letters of remission which are kept in the National Archives in Paris. The king with these letters could forgive persons for a crime or an infraction. For example, the knight Robert de Buse in 1381 received forgiveness from the king for having sold ten horses to the English enemy.\(^59\) Thus, a study of the profiles of these dealers is conceivable.

We find similar restrictions operating in Spain. The Castilian monarchy included horses among the items forbidden for exportation, called “cosas vedadas.” Fernando Arias Guillén investigated the available sources and proposed an analysis for the fourteenth century.\(^60\) His study is particularly interesting in understanding the restrictions of the horse trade in the Castilian kingdom. He noted:

> au début du XIVe siècle, ne pouvaient circuler hors de Castille les cavallos, rocines, mulos, mulas e otras bestias, vacas, carneros, pueros, oveias, cabras, cabrones, e toda la otra carne biva e muerta, pan, legunbre, e todas las otras viandas, cera, seda, coneio, moros, moras, otrossi oro e plata, etodo billon de canbio, auer amonedado, sacado ende doblas dela sinal del Rey don Alffonso e dineros torneses de plata e torneses prietos e los dineros coronados.\(^61\)

From the 1330s, the Castilian monarchy took great care to ensure this restriction was implemented. Beyond this prohibition, it also adopted a specific policy that encouraged its subjects to buy horses bred in the kingdom. The aim of the monarchy was to produce great horses for military use. Fernando Arias Guillén detailed the different strategies established on local, regional and national scales to stimulate and protect Castilian equine production. This

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\(^{57}\) Bautier, Bautier, “Contribution à l’histoire du cheval au Moyen Âge,” 63.

\(^{58}\) *Ordonnances des roys de France de la troisième race recueillies par ordre chronologique* (Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1723-1741).


\(^{61}\) Idem.
policy made it obligatory for any Castilian in possession of a mule to also own a horse. The Castilian monarchy also created a knighthood of _cuantia_ or _premia_: its members were chosen among the bourgeoisie from the Andalusian coast, and had to have horses and weapons to assure the defence of the coast. In return, they had tax concessions to help them to equip themselves. The equine policy led by the Castilian monarchy was thus closely linked to their defensive military policy, which explained the Castilian sovereigns’ strategic choices.

The commercial policy of the Angevin dynasty has also been studied. One of Georges Yver’s now somewhat dated books proposed in particular an analysis of the trade and merchants in meridional Italy in the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries. Yver outlined the commercial policy of the House of Anjou of Naples. The sovereigns’ goal was to increase the productivity of their kingdom through the establishment of various identifiable strategies, his own work focussing on the livestock trade. It appeared that the horses were particularly renowned in the Angevin kingdom because the sovereigns made a great effort to improve the equine breed in the South of Italy. The strategy was to preserve the animals in perfect shape and to get rid of those that were too old to work. The Angevin sovereigns were committed to their policy, and applied themselves to encouraging equid trade. An important market took place in Naples every Monday, at which horse dealers from all over Italy gathered. It was in that place that the professional purchasers acquired their supplies, and also where the government bought not only luxury horses for the king and his family, but also the indispensable warhorses for the army. Yet Georges Yver nuanced the apparent dynamism of this trade in relation to the Angevin restriction policy of the horse trade. As his neighbour, Charles I of Anjou (1226-1285) restrained the exportation of beasts of burden in order not to impoverish the state. Nevertheless, it was possible to sell the beasts abroad. The Angevin kingdom had indeed “magistri passuum” who were in charge of frontiers and had the task of authorising exportation licenses for livestock. This applied to horses: anyone who wanted to export his animals had to request a special authorization. This restriction on sales was aimed at controlling the exportation of warhorses abroad. If the order was not observed, those who contravened it were subject to corporal punishment and the confiscation of the value of the animals. In 1282, the surveillance of export licences was strictly applied. However, these prohibitions did not apply to everyone who frequented the Angevin kingdom. Georges Yver noted some exceptions for important foreigners, such as related sovereigns, allies of the Angevins, and also the leaders of various military orders.

Another state with a diverse approach concerning the exportation of horses during the Crusades was Venice. Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, in her book on the relations between Venetian Crete and the emirates of Menteshe and Aydin, dedicated the second part of her work to the foreign trade of the maritime republic in Crete. All trade conditions were described, and the author listed the merchandises which were exported by the emirates. Among these were slaves, wheat, wax, and horses. The animals represented an essential product for the military administration of Crete, and Venice developed a policy of giving horses to the two Islamic emirates, in spite of the pontifical prohibitions concerning this sensitive product.

Thus, the commercial policies of medieval states were fully outlined by some historians. However, many works focus on the choices of the individual states in controlling the

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63 Idem, 30.
64 Idem, 102.
circulation of this particular product, whether encouraging or restraining its exportation. Studies concerning the period of the Crusades provide a rich source of information about the commercialization processes of horses in the Mediterranean area, which I will now discuss.

5. The horse in the history of the Crusades

The particular context of the Crusades, with the various pontifical and state prohibitions relating to this activity, poses questions today to the historian about the vital supply of products to the Holy Land. For a long time, investigations concentrated on armaments, or on both Christian and Muslim military troops. A new question emerges now, which relates to the provisioning of both armies. The supply of horses for the military was undoubtedly of concern during the crusades: many animals never reached Jerusalem, others succumbed to the enemy’s assaults or were taken as the spoils of war. Contemporary chroniclers of the events often mentioned the real lack of horses, which were vital for the armies. Thus, the topic of the supply of horses is essential for historians exploring the history of the crusades. Indeed, the history of the crusades was in a sense reinvigorated by the study of troop logistics relating to those who were engaged in the conflict. The supply of mounts became a major issue for the crusaders because the purchase of beasts on site was almost systematically forbidden by hostile sovereigns, except under specific agreements. Only in this way, was it possible to transport horses via terrestrial or maritime routes. In fact, it was chiefly in maritime ways that the animals were transported from 1190.

John F. Pryor devoted much of his work to studying the delivery of mounts to the Orient. Researching the question of how horses were transferred not only revealed the logistics of the crusades, but also engaged more widely with the subject of Byzantine, Islamic and Latin maritime expeditions. Every state within these three cultural areas adapted their own equine transport system, all of which were more or less derived from the Byzantine system, the chalandia. The transport of horses, which can suffer badly from seasickness, was a valuable source of income for the Genovese, Pisan and Venetian maritime republics, which benefited from renting out their services to the military princes who wanted to travel to the east. John H. Pryor looked for clues in the shape and the arrangement of the vessels, which were more or less specialized for this specific transport during the reign of Charles I of Anjou. But the supply issues of the Holy Land provided a source of investigation for him, too: his research in the “Angevin archives of Naples,” designation which I will use according to the important work of reconstruction started by Riccardo Filangieri, which were sadly destroyed during World War II, gave some clues about the strategies of the kingdom of Sicily in supplying the Christian states of Jerusalem. It was in fact from this Mediterranean hub that the mounts for the knights were sent. Pryor noted the problem of exportation licences, transporting agents, who were in this case the military orders, and the possible origins of these provisions of horses. In his view, the Teutonic Knights and the Hospitalers were the orders particularly involved in equine transport. He noted the delivery of two shipments of 3000 horseshoes in 1280 and 1281, which highlights the

68 Pryor, “Transportation of horses by sea during the era of the Crusades,” 15.
70 Pryor, “In subsidium Terrae Sanctae,” 134.
significant deficit of metallurgic activity and products for the horses used in the Holy Land. It is a pity that his study was only based on the Angevin archives of this period, and that he did not have access to Charles II of Anjou’s (1254-1309) documents.

Cavalry remounts were a major problem for crusader cavalry. The great warhorses were of course imported through maritime routes, but the merchants of the other camp also supplied the markets of the crusaders’ cities. Then another problem arose: the lighter Arabian horses were not capable of supporting the weight of the knights with their armour. As well as Arabian horses, there were the Turkoman horses, horses from Syrian and Turkish regions which were mentioned in the Rule of the Templars. Some of the horses would have come directly from the oriental merchants. This real difficulty of getting horses resulted in conscientious management of the mounts by the military orders. For example, Alain Demurger noted that the statutes of the Hospitalers forbade the selling of good mounts after the death of a brother. The mount had to be returned to the living brothers. Only the beasts which were of no use to them could be sold. The Hospitalers were heavily dependent on the supply from the West. All brothers from overseas took advantage of their passage out to bring with them food, mounts, and money. According to the statutes, the master writer and the scribe of the monastery had to register the number of animals brought from the West. Then, this register was sealed with the order’s bull. Transport to the front required special authorization. For example, a deed of July 6th, 1281 showed that Jacques of Taxi, a Grand Master, asked Charles I of Anjou for authorization to bring food to Acre and also 100 mounts, including 40 mules and 60 horses ad arma et non arma. The difficulty of obtaining supplies is clear, especially as the supplies from the West had been stopped. Alain Demurger noted a letter from Jacques Revel to Féraud of Barras during Pentecost 1268 in which the former explained his difficulties in accomplishing his supply mission, particularly because Spain had ceased to send horses to the East. A similar organizational structure can be found in Templar administration. Through comparing the registers of the Angevin archives and the Rule of the Templars, Alain Demurger was able to discover the similarities in administration for the Templar horses. Thus, every Templar who went to the Holy Land took food, mules and horses with him. This organization was also the focus of studies by Malcolm Barber, who examined the Templars’ Rule. The requirements of weapons and horses being considerable, it was necessary to get them from the West, even though it was accepted that crusaders would give their mounts to the order on leaving the Holy Land. The Templars also relied on the Angevin kingdom to ensure their supply of horses. Once again, the sovereigns authorized a number of exportation licenses to help the war effort of the crusader states. This question of the Christians’ supply in the West, by and for the military orders, was studied by Kristjian Toomaspoeg. He re-examined the Angevin Archives of Naples and proposed to trace the roads of supply to the Holy Land. His research determined the breeding areas for the remounts of the knights in the West. There were horses from Campania which were

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71 Idem, 140.
72 Richard, Histoire des croisades, 396.
74 Idem, 333.
transported overseas in 1282-1283, and also horses from Spain to Acre via Messina in 1271. The deliveries of food and horses to the East were not constant and were attested on a vast scale only during the Angevin period, when Greece and meridional Italy were drawn together. Then the Sicilian Vespers in 1282 seemed to bring the transport of mounts for the crusaders into disarray.

A re-reading of the varied sources brings more information about the ways of supply in the direction of the Holy Land. There was indeed an attempt of supply by the different States and entities. The Templars had to produce their own horses with a stud, or buy foals on site to train them themselves. In the Templar’s Rule, some chapters were added to modify the functioning of the order. The “Retraits” of the Commander of the land of Jerusalem indicate the management of these young animals by himself. He could give one or two foals to the brothers and place the animals in the different units as agreed with the Marshal. The study of the Hospitallers’ and Templars’ statutes could be pertinent to understand the internal management of the horses which are not easy to obtain. This purchase was not limited to overseas trips. The re-reading of the medieval authors of the crusades, Christian and Muslim, gives information about the ways to obtain new mounts. Each camp involved in the conflict took advantage of the victories on the other to get horses, as Pierre Tudeboeuf, a Poitevin priest who took part in the First Crusade, described it, or William of Tyre (1130-1185), archbishop of Tyre who wrote a story of the Crusades.

The raids were also a more or less effective method to get mounts as the anonym author of the Chronique de la première croisade wrote when the Turks from Antioch stole the crusaders’ oxen and horses which grazed near the Orontes River. The submission of the cities was also an opportunity to complete the equine effectives: Tripoli submitted to the crusader armies promising to supply horses and mules, and Alexandretta offered horses and mules as gifts. But the purchases on site, however forbidden by the Christian and Muslim sovereigns, were possible: Bertrandon de la Brocquière (1400-1459), Burgundian traveller and pilgrim, indicated that he bought a horse during his travel and shoed it in Damas, or Usâma ibn Munqidh (1095-1187), a Syrian prince from Shaizar on the Orontes river, wrote that his brother sold a horse to a crusader. This one claimed the repayment of the horse the next year, because the animal just died...

The transactions between the Christian and Muslim worlds are taller than the question of the logistics of the Crusades. The production and the commercialization of equids inside and outside the Muslim area and the contacts between the crusaders and the local populations are elements to study within the scope of the Mediterranean trade of horses.

78 Idem, 97.
79 Recueil des historiens des Croisades. Historiens occidentaux (Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1859), 27, 43, etc.
80 Guillaume de Tyr, Histoire des régions d’Outre-mer depuis l’avènement de Mahomet (Paris: Paléo, 2005), tome 1, 200, etc.
81 Recueil des historiens des Croisades, 242.
82 Recueil des historiens des Croisades, 285.
83 Guillaume de Tyr, Histoire des régions d’Outre-mer, 160.
84 Bertrand de la Brocquière, Le voyage d’outremer de Bertrandon de La Broquière, premier écyer tranchant et conseiller de Philippe le Bon, duc de Bourgogne (Paris : Imprimerie royale, 1892), 61.
6. Political history: the horse as a diplomatic gift

Mounts often appear as diplomatic gifts which were exchanged during the visit of a sovereign or member of the diplomatic services. The horse thus gained more credibility in medieval historiography. It is today ranked at the heart of cultural, social, economic, and symbolic aspects in diplomatic exchanges. As part of these historiographical trends, the horse begins to be found in competition with more exotic or unusual animals, and then disappears from view again. Nicolas Drocourt examined the subject of animals in the Byzantine Empire.\(^{86}\) One characteristic of the area under Byzantine authority, and its sources, is the tendency to somewhat eclipse the animals. Studying only the Greek texts was not sufficient: they needed to be combined and compared with other texts from neighboring states. Thus, the horse is revealed as the most frequent gift given by the Byzantine emperor, and to and from foreign sovereigns. For instance, the day after the defeat of the battle of Myriokephalon, in 1176, Manuel I Komnenos (1118-1180) received a fully equipped horse with an ornament of silver bridles from the Sultan Kilij II Arslan (1113-1192).\(^{87}\) Mules were also part of gift-giving: for example, mules were exchanged between Salah ad-Din (1138-1193) and Isaac II Angelos (1156-1204) in 1192.\(^{88}\) These animals were often associated with costly luxury products. Drocourt considered the recurrence of the horse as a gift: whatever their geographical, religious or cultural origin, the heads of state seemed to always choose the horse. Indeed, it is an animal which, for both West and East, is associated with royal power and it can be given by the sovereign to a homologue through the diplomatic process. The abundant exchanges of horses in the east between Byzantium and the Islamic world were made easier by geographical proximity, and the relative facility of the transport of horses (in contrast to elephants which required another logistical process). Nevertheless, equids disappeared as the focus turned to exotic and wild animals which were exchanged between the sovereigns, and the author noted that exchanges between the West and the East remained quite rare. It is more a question of practical gifts than gifts that indicate the possession of rare or specific animals, which were noteworthy and therefore referenced.

7. Conclusion

This paper shows how the different documentary sources relating to horses can constitute a significant foundation for further studies which will elevate equids as important historical subjects and actors, and more generally as a valid object of research for human and social sciences. Historians have already identified how this animal was integrated in the great international economic movements of the Middle Ages, from the Fairs of Champagne to the crusades. Of course, the readily available, more obvious historical sources do not always immediately reveal the integration of this animal within commercial and economic movements, as was the case with the crusades. In this case, we need to start by questioning the necessary elements for provisioning the knights who went to the Holy Land. A substantial part of the pre-modern economy actively revolved around “horse matters”: furnishing horseshoes for the horses involves the metallurgic sector, the maritime republics were relied upon for renting horse transport ships, horse-dealers from both north and south, from Germany to Italy, met at the Fairs of Champagne, which were centres for lucrative business. Economic and military concerns were entangled, to the extent that the states were concerned


\(^{87}\) Idem, 68.

\(^{88}\) Idem, 68.
about the possible illegal exportation of equine products. The exchange of horses between states indicates the selection of the best examples for gifting, and thus the existence of a particular market based on the luxury horse (and the luxury mule!). Studying the trade and movement of equids in the Mediterranean area in medieval times constitutes a valid historical object for researchers, which also helps to enlighten many other commercial aspects specific to the period. An extensive study with the help of a sounding of the medieval sources can be useful to understand the development of occupations related to the trade of the horses, the terms of the exchanges and the systems of the assessment of the value of the equids in the different Mediterranean spaces. The horse can be an approach angle to understand the connections between the Mediterranean spaces.

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