

ORIGINS OF THE EUROPEAN ECONOMY

*Communications and Commerce,
A.D. 300–900*

Michael McCormick
Harvard University



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CONTENTS

List of maps	xiv
List of figures	xvi
List of tables	xviii
List of charts	xxii
Preface	xxiii
List of abbreviations	xxvi

Commerce, communications, and the origins of the

European economy	1
-------------------------------	----------

From the end of Rome to the origins of the European

economy	2
The changing context of Carolingian commerce	6
Early medieval writers' attitudes toward merchants	12
Early medieval communications	15
The road ahead	19

PART I THE END OF THE WORLD	25
--	-----------

1 The end of the ancient world	27
---	-----------

1. Long-term trends in the late Roman economy	28
2. People and food	30
3. Population health	38

2 Late Roman industry: case studies in decline	42
---	-----------

1. Metal extraction and production	42
2. The ceramic industry	53

3 Land and river communications in late antiquity	64
--	-----------

1. Routes, ships, and men	64
---------------------------------	----

CONTENTS

2. Land communications and the closing of the overland corridors	67
3. River communications and the case of the Rhône route	77
4 Sea change in late antiquity	83
1. Transport and commerce	83
2. Public money and private ships	87
3. Ports, ships, and cargoes	92
4. Secular change 1: the flow of goods	98
5. Secular change 2: the transformation of late Roman shipping	103
The end of the ancient economy: a provisional balance sheet	115
 PART II PEOPLE ON THE MOVE	 123
5 A few western faces	129
1. Jerusalem pilgrims	129
2. Ambassadors to Constantinople	138
3. Comparisons	147
6 Two hundred more western envoys and pilgrims: group portrait	151
1. Basic facts	151
2. Geographic characteristics	153
3. Social profile	158
4. Under way	168
7 Byzantine faces	174
1. The ambassador	175
2. The missionaries	181
3. The pilgrims	197
8 Easterners heading west: group portrait	211
1. Basic facts	212
2. Geographic characteristics	213
3. Social profile	224
4. Under way	227

CONTENTS

9	Traders, slaves, and exiles	237
1.	Traders, slaves, and politicos	237
	Traders	237
	Slaves	244
	Politicos: exiles, refugees, and hostages	254
2.	Invisible travelers: immigrants, seamen, fishermen, and wanderers	261
3.	Fictional travelers	267
	People on the move	270
PART III	THINGS THAT TRAVELED	281
10	Hagiographical horizons: collecting exotic relics in early medieval France	283
1.	The problem of early medieval relics	283
2.	Collecting relics at Sens	290
	Changing geographic patterns	292
3.	Collecting relics at Chelles	308
	Early efforts	310
	The age of Charlemagne	312
11	“Virtual” coins and communications	319
1.	On the tracks of the mancosus	323
	Farfa	326
	Dinars on the Adriatic rim	330
	Dinars elsewhere in Italy	335
2.	Silver mancusi	337
12	Real money: Arab and Byzantine coins around Carolingian Europe	343
1.	Arab coins	344
2.	The Spanish and Viking groups	345
3.	Byzantine coins in and around Carolingian Europe	351
4.	Sardinia	354
5.	The Rhône and Rhine corridors	357
6.	The Adriatic rim	361
7.	The Amber Trail	369
	Things that traveled	385

CONTENTS

PART IV	THE PATTERNS OF CHANGE	391
13	The experience of travel	393
1.	Land	394
2.	The sea	402
	Terror of storms: environment and technology	403
	Ships and their equipment	404
	Convoys and fleets	411
	How big were the ships?	415
3.	Operational issues	418
	Landings	418
	Styles of navigation	422
	In port	425
	Aboard ship	426
	Danger	428
14	Secular rhythms: communications over time	431
1.	New data, new questions	432
2.	The ebb and flow of Mediterranean movement	433
15	Seasonal rhythms	444
1.	Seasonality of land travel	445
2.	The seasons of the sea	450
	The monthly patterns of movements	452
	Two marginal months: April and October	454
	Winter	458
	Winter sailing close up	462
	Another factor	464
16	Time under way	469
1.	Duration of embassies and speed of travel	470
2.	Speed of land travel	474
3.	Traveling to Italy	476
4.	Speed of sea travel	481
5.	Reconstructing some early medieval voyages	483
	The transport of Pope Martin I to Constantinople, A.D. 653 ...	483
	Some other early medieval voyages	488
6.	A ninth-century shift?	491

CONTENTS

17	“Spaces of sea”: Europe’s western Mediterranean communications	501
1.	The ancient trunk route from Italy to the Aegean	502
2.	Southern rim: communications between the Maghreb and the Muslim center	508
3.	Southern links: from Africa to the southern Tyrrhenian Sea	511
4.	Northern links: Tuscany, the northern Tyrrhenian Sea, and Liguria	515
18	Venetian breakthrough: European communications in the central Mediterranean	523
1.	Venetian breakthrough	523
2.	The reopening of the Gulf of Corinth	531
3.	Home ports and the regional structure of shipping routes	537
19	New overland routes	548
1.	The revival of the Balkan and Danube routes	549
	The Danubian corridor	553
	The Balkan corridor	557
2.	The northern arc	562
	The patterns of change	565
PART V	COMMERCE	571
20	Early medieval trading worlds	573
1.	Imagining trading worlds	573
2.	Trading worlds beyond the Carolingian empire	580
	The south: Mediterranean trading worlds	582
	West and east: new trading worlds	604
	The northern arc	606
21	Where are the Merchants? Italy	614
1.	The problem of Carolingian merchants	614
2.	Merchants and markets in southern Italy	618
3.	Merchants in northern Italy	630

CONTENTS

22	Merchants and markets of Frankland	639
1.	Royal toll stations	640
2.	Merchants, tolls, and rivers	644
3.	Expanding horizons: the Seine basin and the fair of St. Denis	647
4.	Ships and traders on the Rhine	653
	The economic lessons of Rhenish pottery	656
	A movable market?	663
23	Connections	670
1.	Northern and eastern European connections	670
2.	Southern European connections	674
	Spain	674
	Trade across the Alps	678
	Money movements across the Alps	681
3.	The view from Iraq	688
24	Where are the wares? Eastern imports to Europe	696
1.	Bulk wares inside Carolingian Europe	698
2.	The problem of papyrus and the Alps	704
3.	Drugs: the spice of life	708
4.	A liturgical imperative	716
5.	Silk	719
25	European exports to Africa and Asia	729
1.	Lumber, fur, and arms	729
2.	Europeans	733
	The language of slavery	734
	Two changes	738
	Getting slaves	741
	The economics of slave trading	752
3.	Geography of the European slave trade	759
	At the origins of the European economy	778
	Appendices	
1	Checklist of Mediterranean travelers, 700–900	799
2	Mentions of mancusi to 850	811
3	Catalogue of Arab and Byzantine coins in the west	815

CONTENTS

4 A register of Mediterranean communications, 700–900	852
Bibliography	973
Primary sources	973
Secondary sources	991
Index	1048