

TRADE IN ARTISTS' MATERIALS  
MARKETS AND COMMERCE IN EUROPE TO 1700

EDITED BY JO KIRBY, SUSIE NASH AND JOANNA CANNON

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*Cover illustration:* A street scene, showing in the foreground an apothecary on the right and a cloth merchant on the left, from Gilles de Rome, *Le livre du gouvernement des princes*, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, MS Arsenal 5062, f. 149v (early 16th century).

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# The Trade in Painters' Materials in Norway in the Middle Ages. Part 1: The 'Silent' Trade in Painters' Materials in Norway in the High Middle Ages

*Per G. Norseng*

## INTRODUCTION

This paper can be read as an introduction or an appendix to Unn Plahter's exposition, which forms the other part of this contribution. The investigations referred to by her, here and elsewhere, on the imported painters' materials that were being used in twelfth to fourteenth-century decorative art in Norwegian churches, definitely show that some sort of trade in such commodities must have taken place in Norway in this period. I have been asked to comment on Unn Plahter's interesting results from the point of view of the historian of trade.

## CHEMISTRY AND HISTORY

If I were to confine myself to relating the direct evidence for trade in painters' materials in Norway in historical sources from this period, this could be done very briefly. Indeed, I have found no explicit references to such trade, either in primary sources from this period or in secondary literature on the history of Norwegian medieval trade.<sup>1</sup>

The chemical analyses discussed in Plahter's contribution concern painted walls and ceilings as well as sculptures and altar frontals from almost all over the country. They clearly demonstrate that it was not only art works, artists and styles that were imported from an early period. Local painters, or foreign painters working in Norway, were also loyal to European tradition in their choice of techniques, colours and painters' materials, using pigments and chalk that could not be produced in Norway, but had to be imported from England or the Continent. Although some of the pigments originated in very remote places such as Central or South Asia, and consequently were extremely expensive even in the great European commercial centres, this research allows us to assume that not only cathedrals and other great ecclesiastical institutions, but also at least a substantial number of the more than 1,000 parish churches that are known in Norway in the Middle Ages possessed such painted art. This seems to apply even to churches in the remote mountain valleys

of southern Norway and the rough and barren coasts of northern Norway.

Without chemistry we would know hardly anything about the import of painters' materials to Norway, but with the insights provided by Plahter and her colleagues even the historian may make a contribution (albeit less precise) to the understanding of trade in painters' materials in Norway. By putting such trade into a more general historical context, taking as my point of departure the written sources for Norwegian foreign and domestic trade in this period, the commercial infrastructure, the trade routes, the known range of commodities, the personnel involved in the trade, as well as crafts whose practitioners may have been the customers of the traders of painters' materials, I shall discuss the character and extent of this trade and attempt to shed some light on the conspicuous silence of the written sources. In particular, Plahter's contribution raises three problems that will be addressed below:

- Through which channels might these foreign, partly very exotic and expensive commodities have been imported to this outpost of European medieval civilisation and subsequently distributed throughout the country?
- What factors determined the shifts in the import of painters' materials that chemistry has revealed?
- To what extent can we also assume the existence of a non-ecclesiastical market for the import of painters' materials?

## WRITTEN SOURCES

Trade in commodities such as painters' materials is obviously hard to trace archaeologically, except through the evidence revealed by the remaining painted art itself. Documentary and other written sources are potentially more informative, but very few such sources related to trade survive from the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in Norway compared with more densely populated areas such as England, northern Germany or the Netherlands where the

use of writing for commercial and administrative purposes was more widespread at an early date.<sup>2</sup> Unn Plahter has, however, contributed one additional source of information that may reflect conditions in the period covered by her investigations of painted art: an Icelandic manuscript of mixed 'encyclopaedic' contents includes a list of what seem to be the prices of gold leaf, silver, pigments, and other painters' materials in Bergen.<sup>3</sup> The list contains prices per unit as well as prices for unspecified amounts. This may suggest that the items were taken from different sources, produced for somewhat different ends. In any case, it is hard not to interpret the prices as references to trade. The manuscript is dated to the fifteenth century, but since both the price list and the manuscript itself appear to be compilations it seems probable that the information reflects trade and prices in Bergen at a somewhat earlier date. The currencies that are involved are fully compatible with conditions there in the middle or latter half of the fourteenth century.<sup>4</sup> This early dating of the price list, although not fully established, also makes sense from a different perspective. Norwegian production of movable art seems to have suffered a complete collapse in the late Middle Ages as it was replaced by imported art, especially from Germany.<sup>5</sup> This no doubt reduced the demand for foreign painters' materials. The peak years of trade in such materials in medieval Norway would thus precede the Black Death in the middle of the fourteenth century.

The almost complete lack of written evidence should be seen against the general background of the development and use of literacy in medieval Norway.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the entire known corpus of surviving charters and other documents related to Norwegian history before 1500 amounts to little more than 12,000 individual items, of which 11,500 have been published. Only about 1,000 of these can be dated to the eleventh, twelfth or thirteenth century; the great majority belong to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.<sup>7</sup> New documents of any historic consequence are very rarely discovered on Norwegian soil. Only foreign archives offer real possibilities for making important discoveries in the future, mostly for the later years of the Middle Ages onwards. This applies in particular to German archives (the study of which has only been resumed by Norwegian historians in recent decades after the long break caused by the Second World War and the subsequent transportation of archives to Moscow and Potsdam) and to Dutch archives, which have so far been less thoroughly investigated by students of Norwegian foreign trade.<sup>8</sup>

Among Norwegian documentary sources surviving from this period, private and commercial correspondence is very rare, merchants' account books practically non-existent, and customs rolls and other 'public' account material completely unknown. The vast majority of extant documents from the Middle Ages are individual charters dealing with land transactions. It would appear that the use of written deeds gradually became more widespread in the latter decades of the thirteenth century, probably partly as a result of legislation of 1274 stipulating this practice in transfers of landed property above a certain value.<sup>9</sup> The small number of more comprehensive documentary sources are cadastres, mostly registers of ecclesiastical landed property, from the middle of

the fourteenth century onwards. For obvious economic and legal reasons such material had a better chance of surviving through the centuries than documents relating to trade in movable goods. A limited number of documents concern other ecclesiastical matters or royal administration and diplomatic affairs, including trade treaties. Even more importantly, substantial commercial legislation has survived from the late thirteenth century onwards, especially for the city of Bergen, the most important economic centre of the country at that time.

As far as the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries are concerned, a few Scandinavian narrative sources, export licences issued by English authorities, and other sources from English archives carry the heaviest burden of evidence for Norwegian foreign trade, together with archaeological finds from excavations in the most important medieval towns. From the latter half of the thirteenth century onwards documents from German archives are also relevant. For some years in the early fourteenth century the customs rolls for a number of towns in East Anglia give valuable glimpses of the trade between Norway and England. These foreign documentary sources are very useful supplements to the commercial legislation, which for the late thirteenth century and most of the fourteenth century is by far the most important native source of information on Norwegian imports and exports.

#### THE URBAN LANDSCAPE

From time immemorial objects of great value and prestige had entered Norway from England and the Continent, directly or indirectly, through trade, barter or other forms of exchange, or as booty. From the eighth century onwards the influx of such foreign goods apparently grew dramatically, due not only to Viking raids and piracy, but also to peaceful trade. This period saw the development of the earliest urban settlement on present Norwegian soil that is known to us: Kaupang in Skiringssal, Vestfold – probably identical with *Sciringes heal*, mentioned 100 years later by an Anglo-Saxon scribe at the court of Alfred the Great, relating the account of the Norwegian voyager Othere. To judge by archaeological evidence, Kaupang emerged at the very end of the eighth century as an important centre of trade and production on the western side of the Oslo fjord, probably under the protection of an expanding Danish kingdom, and closely connected with the Baltic as well as with the North Sea trading systems of this time.<sup>10</sup>

The settlement in Kaupang disintegrated in the first half of the tenth century, but well before the end of that century a more lasting urbanisation was taking shape elsewhere, in Trondheim or Nidaros in mid-Norway, and possibly also in Oslo. New urban settlements developed during the eleventh and early twelfth century. Around 1130 the Anglo-Norman historian Orderic Vitalis was familiar with six such settlements in Norway which he termed *civitates*: Trondheim, Bergen, Tunsberg (= Tønsberg), Oslo, Borg (= Sarpsborg), and finally Konghelle, near Gothenburg in present-day Sweden (see Fig. 1).<sup>11</sup>

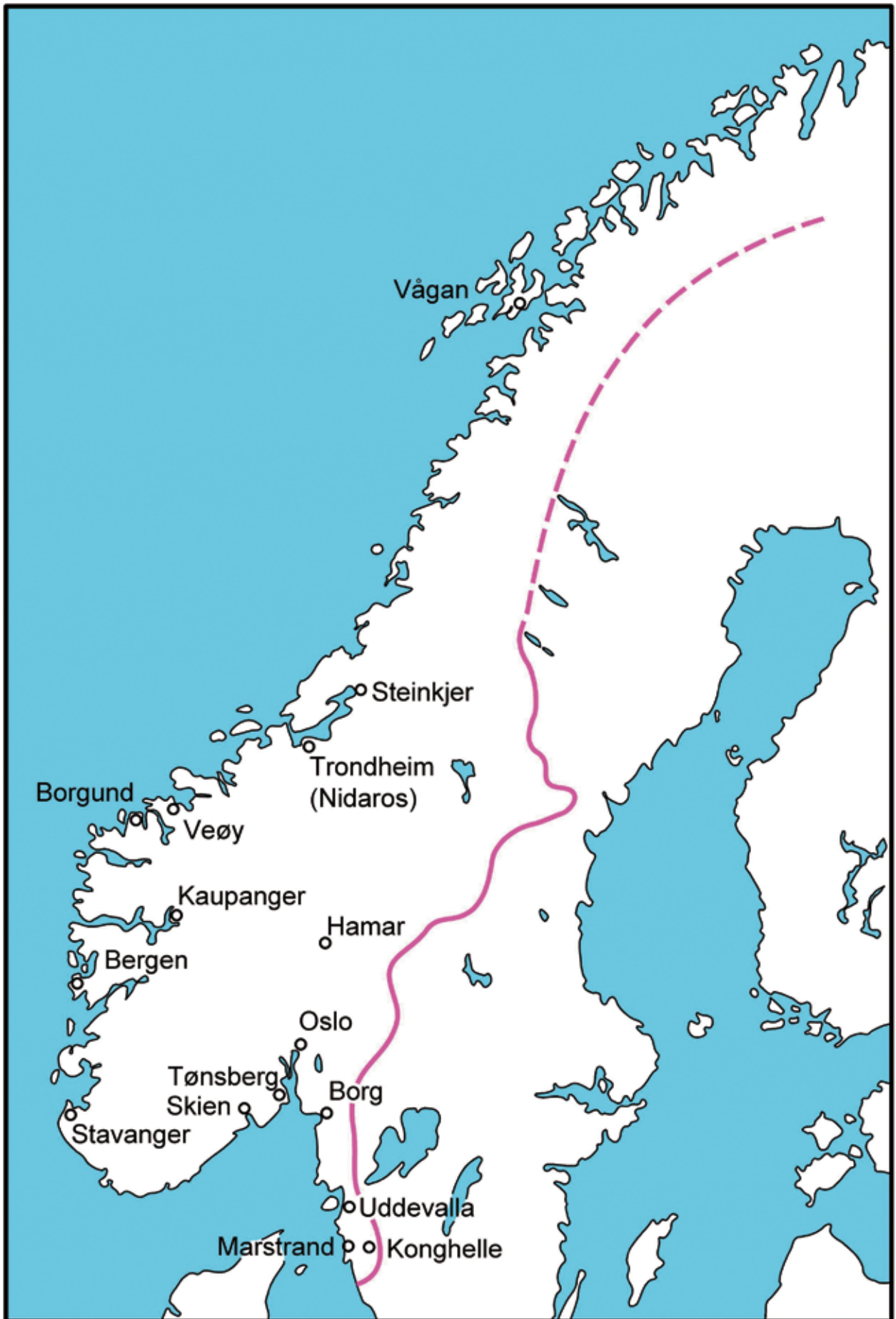


FIGURE 1. The urban landscape of Norway in the Middle Ages.



To begin with, several of these localities were probably royal military strongholds rather than commercial centres, especially in the Oslo fjord area. But in Trondheim, which was growing rapidly from the very beginning of the eleventh century, trade most likely played a significant role at an early stage. It was strategically situated to control and exploit the trade along the coast, between northern and southern Norway, as well as the overseas trade with the British Isles and the Norse settlements in the Atlantic. From the Trondheim fjord, furthermore, the Baltic coast could quite easily be reached overland. This should also be borne in mind with regard to Plahter's observations concerning the possible import of painters' materials from Asia to Europe through Russia and the Baltic region.

Trondheim was quite a crossroads in those days, and the trading activities there must have been important throughout the early Middle Ages. And when the urban settlement in Bergen in western Norway developed during the last half of the eleventh century, this was quite clearly closely connected with the emerging export trade in dried cod from northern Norway and parts of western Norway.

In eastern Norway, Skien, although not on the learned Orderic's list of towns in the early twelfth century, also shows signs of urban development during the eleventh century at the latest, obviously due to its highly favourable position at the first waterfall along the waterway upstream from the coast to the interior of Telemark, and also due to the rich natural resources in the mountain areas there, especially iron ore, whetstones and antler, which were much in demand in north European long-distance trade. As for the other early medieval towns of eastern Norway, Tunsberg was an important centre for foreign trade no later than the latter half of the twelfth century whereas Oslo's commercial importance may have developed somewhat less rapidly.

Bergen, Oslo, Trondheim and Tunsberg were to become by far the biggest towns in medieval Norway, with rough population estimates ranging from approximately 7,000–9,000 inhabitants (Bergen) through 3,000 (Oslo and Trondheim) to 2,000 inhabitants (Tunsberg) on the eve of the Black Death. They were all important royal administrative centres, and Bergen, Oslo and Trondheim were also episcopal sees from the late eleventh century, the latter an archiepiscopal see for the entire Norwegian kingdom and the Norse settlements in the Atlantic and the British Isles from 1152 or 1153. With the exception of Bergen, roles as administrative, military and ecclesiastical centres probably contributed more to urban development than did foreign trade throughout the high Middle Ages.

In addition to the towns already mentioned, a few other, less important, urban settlements emerged along the western coast of Norway in the eleventh or twelfth century, evidently due principally to the rise of commercial fisheries and the need for harbours along export routes. One of these small towns, Stavanger, became the fourth mainland episcopal see c.1125. In present-day western Sweden, Marstrand probably emerged as a centre for herring fisheries in the early twelfth century, to be visited around 1300 not only by Norwegian, but also by English merchants. And in northern Norway an urban settlement developed at Vågan in Lofoten, the centre

of the most important cod fisheries and of the production of dried cod.

All these towns were situated along the coast or the fjords. Only one urban settlement developed in the interior: Hamar on the shores of the great Lake Mjøsa. It became the fifth and last medieval episcopal see on the Norwegian mainland in 1152–3.

In view of the size of the country's total population, estimated at 300,000 to 500,000 in the first half of the fourteenth century, the number of towns is not very impressive even in the high Middle Ages. It is still less so when the size of the territory and the enormous geographic distances are taken into consideration. Compared to other countries, the lack of great cities is not the most striking characteristic of the Norwegian urban scene, but rather the almost complete lack of the small market towns that are typical phenomena elsewhere. In other countries a great number of such towns sprang up in the high and late Middle Ages. In Denmark, with a population only twice that of Norway, and a far smaller territory, no less than about 70 towns existed by 1500.<sup>12</sup> Marstrand, now a Swedish seaside resort, may have been the only new urban settlement in Norway in the thirteenth century, and Uddevalla, now also a Swedish town, was the only newcomer in the late Middle Ages. This absence of typical small market towns in Norway, mostly catering for local and intra-regional exchange, represents a striking difference in the infrastructure of domestic trade that should also be noted in our context.<sup>13</sup>

#### IMPORTS AND EXPORTS, NATIVE AND FOREIGN MERCHANTS

Some narrative sources can help to give an impression of the commodities and personnel involved in foreign trade of the high Middle Ages. For example, the saga of King Sverrir relates a speech that the king allegedly gave to his army in Bergen in 1186. Heavy drinking had caused much argument and fighting among the men. Sverrir blamed it on the German merchants, stating:<sup>14</sup>

We wish to thank the English who bring hither wheat and honey, flour and cloth, and we thank those who have brought here canvas and flax, wax and metal vessels. In the same way we will mention those who have come from the Orkneys, Shetland, the Faroe Isles and Iceland, and everybody who has brought goods that we cannot do without, and which are useful to this country. But the Germans have come here in great numbers on many ships to take away butter and cod, to the detriment of the country, in exchange for wine that people have become accustomed to buying – my own men, the townspeople as well as the merchants. From that trade much evil and little good has come ... If they want to save their lives and keep their merchandise, I command them to leave as soon as possible.

This is the earliest example of the repeated efforts of Norwegian kings in the high Middle Ages to conduct a policy of 'tied imports' towards the Germans who were exporting cod and

butter from Norway. Rather than strong beverages, they were obviously expected to bring in exchange useful commodities such as Baltic rye, which by the end of the thirteenth century had become the most important German export to Norway. The most common commodities in Bergen's foreign trade in the late twelfth century are suggested by the saga episode. Furthermore, it gives the impression that merchants from England, Germany and other foreign countries, as well as from the Norse settlements in the Atlantic islands, were visiting Bergen on a fairly regular basis in those days. At least the Germans were very numerous.

From approximately the same time, another narrative source, *Profecto danorum in terram sanctam*, tells the tale of a party of Danish crusaders who visited Oslo, Tunsberg and Bergen in 1191 on their way to the Holy Land. All three towns are described as populous. The Danes found Bergen very rich in supplies, abundant in dry cod, and much visited by foreign merchants from Iceland, Greenland, England, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Gotland and other places that were too numerous to be mentioned. All sorts of things were to be found here, including great quantities of wine, honey, wheat, fine cloths, silver and other items for sale, and there was a lively trade in many types of commodities. On a more modest scale, Tunsberg is also described as a centre of long-distance trade: 'The town is rather crowded in the summer because of all the ships which come here from all corners of the world.'<sup>15</sup> Where these ships were coming from can be inferred from a passage in the saga of the Norwegian missionary king Olaf Haraldsson (St Olaf) by the Icelandic author Snorri Sturlusson. According to Snorri, Olaf found it easy to promote the new religion in the Oslo fjord area because many merchants arrived in the summer, from Denmark and Northern Germany, and also because the local people themselves frequently undertook commercial expeditions to England, northern Germany, Flanders and Denmark (as well as raiding expeditions to Christian countries). Snorri wrote the saga around 1230. If not very accurately informed about conditions 200 years earlier, as far as commercial activities are concerned, his account is probably a fairly good description of what he could observe in Tunsberg when he visited the town in 1218.<sup>16</sup>

In spite of the allegedly great number of foreign ships, however, even in Bergen supplies of foreign goods were not very reliable in those times. Bad weather, international politics or war could interfere with trade. When Håkon IV Håkonsson, one of the most illustrious Norwegian kings, was informed that the pope would send a cardinal, William of Sabine, to crown him in Bergen in 1247, the king – according to his saga – busied himself sending ships off to England and other foreign countries for things that he thought were lacking in Norway for such a splendid occasion. Apparently he did not trust the merchants to bring what he needed in sufficient quantities, but his own trading agents seem to have done a good job. In the absence of a permanent banqueting hall of sufficient size, the banquet took place in a huge storehouse that had been decorated with fine, brightly coloured textiles, obviously of foreign provenance. And the saga author proudly relates that the cardinal, who had been warned in England of the primitive

habits and dreadful food and beverages he should expect to experience in Norway, on the contrary, expressed great contentment with the delicate ways of the Norwegians, the great number of foreign merchant ships and the abundance of delicious food and drink.<sup>17</sup>

These narratives from the latter years of the twelfth and the first half of the thirteenth century introduce us to some of the most important trade connections, visiting merchants, and commodities in Norwegian foreign trade of the time. Such narrative sources (until they dry up in the latter half of the thirteenth century), together with the documentary evidence, especially from English archives, and trade legislation from the 1270s onwards, also leave no doubt as to the existence of a considerable number of Norwegian natives actively taking part in long-distance trade to the North Sea area, to the Baltic, and also to the Atlantic islands throughout the thirteenth century and into the early fourteenth century: professional merchants as well as 'semi-professionals', engaging in trade more on an *ad hoc* basis or as part of the education of young men from good families – as portrayed in the mid-thirteenth century didactic *King's Mirror* – and also agents for the king, the great ecclesiastical institutions, or wealthy lay landowners.<sup>18</sup>

In the years around 1300 the sources reveal more information not only about the diversity of commodities involved, but also their relative importance. Among Norwegian commodities reported to have been imported by non-English merchants in the years 1303–11, dried fish accounted for 82 per cent of the total value, fish oil for 8 per cent, timber and planks for 3 per cent, herring and hides also for 3 per cent each, and other items for only 1 per cent. The bulk of the export trade concerned a limited number of commodities. But we know that a great variety of goods was exported in lesser quantities: raw materials such as tar, potash and other forest products; whetstones; dried salmon; trout and other fish products; fat and hides from seals; butter etc. Among more luxurious commodities whale bones, walrus teeth, fine feathers, furs, falcons and hawks may be mentioned. From eastern Norway timber and planks were the most important of all these export articles.<sup>19</sup>

In our context, the imports that these exports could pay for are of far greater interest. From the English customs rolls for the years 1303–07, the following information seems to concern commodities exported from King's Lynn by Norwegian ships:<sup>20</sup>

Commodities	No. of merchants
Woollen cloth	64
Malt	58
Honey	45
Grain	22
Spices	6
Salt	5
Lead	4
Beans; linen	3
Silk; flour	2
Canvas; coal ( <i>carbon</i> ); helmets (?); carpets; gloves; beer, lard (?); rope; caps; mead	1

The following list of commodities, exported from Boston by German merchants who had brought dried fish and other Norwegian commodities, mostly from Bergen, may also to a large extent reflect imports into Norway:<sup>21</sup>

Commodities	No. of merchants
Cloth	56
Salt	25
Beans	7
Malt	5
Honey; cereals	3
Lead; wheat	1

A great number of these commodities, such as salt, honey, cereals, beer, mead and metals, were of course likewise available from the Baltic region. And the textiles that were, according to the customs rolls, so important in the export trade from England to Norway did not include only English cloth: in other sources different fine qualities from the Netherlands are also mentioned in the high Middle Ages, as is coarse cloth from Germany in the late Middle Ages. Likewise, the wine imported from England included both French and German products; the latter could also be obtained from the Baltic cities to some extent. Import of Baltic rye to Bergen is documented only shortly before 1240, but had apparently become by far the most dominant commodity imported into Norway from the Baltic by the end of the thirteenth century, without replacing the more luxurious import of English wheat. German beer and malt were also popular.<sup>22</sup>

In town legislation and other sources from the late thirteenth and the fourteenth century we are, moreover, informed of imports from the North Sea or Baltic ports of commodities such as peas, rice, grapes, almonds, walnuts, wax, incense, iron, bast, hemp, flax, pottery and various other kinds of craft products in metal, glass, leather, bone, textiles, etc.<sup>23</sup> The import of metals must also have included gold, silver and copper – raw materials that were obviously needed by local craftsmen, but not extracted in Norway this early. As for imported spices: saffron and ginger are specified among commodities exported to Norway from King's Lynn in 1303. Saffron, together with pepper, is also mentioned in the town privileges for Oslo from the mid-fourteenth century.<sup>24</sup>

Some painters' materials may have been included in the Norse term *glis*, a collective term for various petty commodities of fashion that we come across in the Bergen sources on several occasions in this period. And we have to bear in mind that English merchants seem to have been frequent visitors to Norwegian ports, both Bergen and the towns of eastern Norway, at least until the 1330s, to judge *inter alia* from a number of export licences for grain that were issued by the English Crown.<sup>25</sup> Customs duties were not levied in England for other imports or exports therefore the range of commodities that English merchants contributed to the Norwegian import trade is difficult to assess.

Although the import of painters' materials is never directly referred to in any Norwegian written sources antedating the Black Death, some of the commodities listed

above may have been imported for such use, for example some of the precious metals and especially the *carbon* (coal) exported from King's Lynn by a merchant from Tunsberg in 1304, as well as by a man from Bergen in 1308, on board a ship belonging to the Apostle church there, a wealthy and prominent royal chapel. For that matter we cannot completely rule out the possibility that some of the lead, and perhaps also the saffron, that was imported into Norway in the first half of the fourteenth century was intended for producing pigments, in spite of plausible observations to the opposite effect made by Plahter. Perhaps it is not a mere coincidence that the Tunsberg merchant, in addition to coal, also brought some lead from King's Lynn in the same cargo.<sup>26</sup>

#### CHANGING GEOGRAPHICAL AND ORGANISATIONAL PATTERNS OF FOREIGN TRADE

In this perspective the import of painters' materials that can be indirectly detected in twelfth to fourteenth-century Norway through the painted art of the epoch makes perfect sense. Is it thus possible, in spite of the lack of direct references to this trade, to have an educated opinion as to how these often very costly materials were distributed to the workshops in which they were being used? And do we necessarily have to think of the domestic distribution or, for that matter, import of such commodities exclusively in terms of professional trade?

As a background for such deliberations, we should also take into consideration certain important changes that took place in the patterns of foreign trade during the high Middle Ages.<sup>27</sup> Trondheim, the most important Norwegian town in the eleventh century, was still, in the late twelfth century, a centre for the export of stockfish from Norway. Because of the archbishops' great incomes in kind from tithes as well as from their extensive properties in northern Norway, they retained an interest in the export of dried fish throughout the Middle Ages, but by the end of the twelfth century merchants were also carrying this highly popular commodity directly from Vågan to Bergen. In the competition over export from northern Norway during the thirteenth and early fourteenth century, Trondheim completely lost out to Bergen, which was clearly better situated for native merchants to meet with foreign merchants, and for reloading cargo from small vessels suited for trafficking the long Norwegian coast onto bigger ships crossing the North Sea (see Figs 1 and 2). Symptomatically, by the beginning of the fourteenth century the archbishop of Trondheim had acquired a huge property with a warehouse in Bergen.<sup>28</sup>

By the end of the thirteenth century it had become the policy of the Norwegian kings to prohibit foreign merchants from sailing further north than Bergen. From the beginning of the fourteenth century the ban also included their overseas possessions. These prohibitions seem to have been respected by the now-dominant German merchants, probably because it was not contrary to their own interests. They were happy to exploit the trade in Bergen, leaving it to the natives to bring the dried cod and other export commodities there.<sup>29</sup> And as the Germans were becoming increasingly

dominant among the foreign merchants in Norway during the thirteenth century, engaging not only in trade with their home towns but also with the Netherlands, England and other places, they eventually got a firm grip on Norwegian foreign trade in general, although natives and other foreign merchants were probably never completely put out of business. In the early fourteenth century Norwegian professional merchants as well as representatives of the Norwegian king, the great ecclesiastical institutions and the lay aristocracy, were apparently still actively trading abroad, from Trondheim and the towns of eastern Norway as well as from Bergen. But the English customs rolls give the impression that this trade was retreating, leaving more and more of the export and import to the Germans, probably because they had more capital and superior commercial organisation and technology.<sup>30</sup>

This development represents a total shift in gravity in Norwegian foreign trade, completely doing away with Trondheim's role as a centre of exports and imports, and establishing Bergen's supremacy. In the long run it also

made Norway more dependent on the German merchants for necessary supplies of foreign commodities.

In Bergen the merchants from the leading Hanseatic town, Lübeck, came to dominate the scene completely in the fourteenth century. In Tunsberg and Oslo, and eventually also in the lesser towns in eastern Norway, merchants from other German cities, such as Rostock and Wismar, seem to have been by far the most important.

The Hanseatic merchants in Bergen, when allowed by the king to take up permanent residence there towards the end of the high Middle Ages, and the craftsmen who followed them, formed a community of considerable size that segregated itself from the rest of the town. In the 1360s the so-called *Kunthor* or *Contoir* was organised in Bergen. It was the strict policy of the German merchants in Bergen not to accept citizenship and intermarriage with local women, either for themselves or for the craftsmen who were expected to return to their home towns in Germany after some years in Bergen. In the towns of eastern Norway, however, the Germans became far more integrated into the local populations.<sup>31</sup>



FIGURE 2. The routes of Norwegian foreign trade around 1300.

As a consequence of some of these developments, for most of the fourteenth century Bergen was apparently the only Norwegian town with fairly regular direct access to markets in both England and the German hometowns of the Hanseatic merchants, whereas foreign trade in the towns of eastern Norway seems to have been more one-sidedly directed towards the Continent in this period. One indicator of the shifts in trade connections is the pottery that has been excavated in Norwegian medieval towns. Before 1200 ceramics from the German area and the Netherlands predominate. From the early thirteenth to the late fourteenth century the bulk of the ceramics found at the so-called German Warf in Bergen consists of English ware, reflecting the fact that the Lübeck merchants there kept up strong trade connections with eastern England throughout that period. In the fifteenth century, pottery from Germany and the Netherlands once again predominated. The finds in Oslo and Tunsberg resemble those in Bergen until about 1300, when Dutch and Danish ware apparently took over for almost a century, to be replaced by Rhenish pottery from the late fourteenth century.<sup>32</sup>

In view of this brief outline of Norwegian foreign trade, Plahter's interpretations of the shifts in the provenance of certain painters' materials used in Norwegian painted art that she has documented in the high Middle Ages (see pp. 64–73), seem well founded. The replacement of lapis lazuli from Badakhshan with the less exotic azurite, observed from the middle of the thirteenth century, is clearly to be explained not by changing commercial connections between Norway and Europe but by a more general change in connections between Asia and Europe due to the Mongols, who blocked old trade routes in the east, through the region of the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea to the Baltic Sea. As for chalk, which before the middle of the thirteenth century was predominantly imported to Norway from the northern Continent, and from the latter half of that century can instead be seen to have originated principally in the regions on either side of the English Channel, a geographic shift in artistic influences from the Continent to England should probably be accepted as the main explanation, largely independent of shifts in trade routes.

As Plahter also suggests, however, the occurrence in some late-thirteenth-century Norwegian painted objects of a type of chalk that is not to be found in the Channel region, but *inter alia* in Norfolk, is probably due to the growing trade between Norway and the towns of East Anglia in this period, rather than to artistic preferences. Moreover, the continuing 'English connection', both in terms of stylistic influences and import of chalk in the fourteenth century, fits very well with a long-lasting interest in trade with eastern England on the part of the German merchants in Bergen. By the same token, as Plahter likewise points out, the return to chalk of continental provenance towards the end of the late Middle Ages can be related to an increased stylistic influence from northern Germany that is to be explained by the strong German commercial presence. In this case it also coincides with a change in the ceramic finds from Bergen, reflecting a shift in the overall pattern of Norwegian foreign trade, probably due to a large extent to the fact that

the English from c.1400 were gradually satisfying more and more of their demand for imported fish by sailing directly to Iceland, defying the prohibition and making themselves less dependent on exports from Bergen. As trade connections between Norway and England were thus declining in importance, in contrast the German dominance in Norwegian foreign trade, as well as German cultural influence, was growing.<sup>33</sup>

#### THE CHALLENGES OF DOMESTIC TRADE

If the source material for Norwegian international trade in the high Middle Ages seems, in a European perspective, depressingly restricted, this is even more the case for domestic trade, which is generally still harder to grasp in written as well as in archaeological sources. The sagas, however, give the impression of numerous ships trafficking the long Norwegian coast throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, partly heading to or coming from Denmark or the Baltic, but to a large extent serving domestic trade. In a manner of speaking, they disappear with the sagas. The runic inscriptions on wood and bone from the Middle Ages (eleventh to early fourteenth century) that have gradually been discovered in urban excavations, include some short messages, accounts and other references to domestic trade, but do not contribute much to the overall picture. The extant charters have very little to say about trade between towns within Norway, or between town and countryside. Legislators were apparently mostly preoccupied with internal economic activities in the towns or with foreign trade.<sup>34</sup>

The ascendancy of the German merchants to dominance in Norwegian trade, with their superior organisation, clearly enhanced the export trade. It has been a matter of much dispute as to whether or not, at the same time, this ascendancy suppressed a native merchant class. I shall not engage in that debate, but would like to point out that, in our context, the German hegemony may have had some negative repercussions for the *domestic* distribution of foreign commodities outside the regions of the main export fisheries.

On the one hand, the expansion in the export of dried codfish that the Germans organised from Bergen made considerable imports possible. And some of these imports apparently even made their way to northern Norway, to ordinary fishermen's homes. When, in 1431, the Venetian nobleman Piero Querini, on his way to Flanders, lost control of his ship off Lisbon in a heavy storm, he was brought by winds and currents all the way to the Lofoten Islands. Here he and 11 surviving members of his crew had to spend the winter with local fishermen, in a settlement of only 120 people living in 12 simple huts. According to the accounts given by Querini and two of his men, they were struck not only by the generous hospitality, but also by the proliferation of foreign commodities in these humble homes. Not only did the inhabitants buy grain, which could not be grown locally in those parts, but was easily available abroad, especially from the Baltic, they also bought imported fine English textiles of a kind that you would not expect to find in peasant families elsewhere, as well as spices.<sup>35</sup>

The explanation is simple. The highly commercialised fisheries in northern Norway, and also in some regions in western Norway, created, especially in the late Middle Ages, a specialised population of fishermen along the coast who, apart from the fish that they were catching for their own consumption and some cattle and sheep that they were able to keep, depended entirely on imports for their supplies of food. Because they were more exposed to the market economy of their day than the average peasant, supplying merchants with a commodity that was in great demand in Europe, they could meet not only their most basic needs through imports, but could also afford a touch of the luxury that foreign trade brought back to Norway in return for fish. In fact, at this stage, the fishermen in northern Norway did not depend either on foreign or native merchants to transport their fish all the way to Bergen and bring back the commodities that could be obtained there: according to Querini and his men, in the spring the people with whom they lived sailed to Bergen themselves with their valuable produce.

In Lofoten and other places in northern Norway these conditions may have been in existence since the late thirteenth century. On the other hand, we should also bear in mind that this was clearly not typical for the Norwegian peasant economy as a whole. These conditions reflect a considerable commercialisation in the fisheries along the northern and western coasts, probably not paralleled in the rest of the Norwegian economy. In fact, elsewhere the German dominance in foreign trade may have caused the infrastructure of domestic trade to suffer, since native merchants engaged in foreign trade probably also participated to some extent in coastal transport within Norway in the thirteenth and early fourteenth century. Symptomatically, Querini's fishermen did not leave to middlemen the troubles and pleasures of transporting the fish to Bergen. Imports to Bergen were neither far from regular nor sufficiently extensive and dependable to meet demand from elsewhere. Once a commodity became available in Bergen, it was not necessarily easy to get hold of in other parts of the country. In fact, it could be more readily available to the population of northern Norway than to people living in Trondheim, Tunsberg, Oslo or other towns, not to speak of people in the countryside in eastern Norway. A few examples may serve to illustrate this point.

One of the few Norwegians in the fourteenth century who has left us considerable private correspondence is Håkon, bishop of Bergen. His letters to colleagues and friends give the impression that supplies of foreign goods in Bergen in the 1330s and 1340s were far from reliable – and that people in other towns were still worse off. For example, in June 1338, in a letter to Jón, bishop of Skálholt in Iceland, he expresses his regrets that hardly any merchant ships were coming to Bergen from Flanders or England. As for the supplies of wine, only some Rhenish white wine of poor quality was available. For lack of other things to send, the letter is accompanied by a small piece of 'heathen' woven cloth and a box of gingerbread.<sup>36</sup> This was hardly of much consolation to a less centrally situated colleague in need of wine both for communion and for personal consumption. And the problem does not seem to have been temporary.

Two years later Håkon was making very similar excuses in a letter to Solomon, bishop of Oslo, who had apparently also been asking for wine. Håkon complained that the shortage of wine was the same in Bergen as in Oslo. His canons now had no wine at all, except for some Rhenish wine he had been able to get them, at an extremely high price. Otherwise, what the Germans were presently selling as wine was very poor, more like gruel, if we are to believe Håkon.<sup>37</sup>

Håkon's correspondence with these and other prelates reveals not only shortages of important supplies, but also demonstrates an interesting inclination among men of such high social standing to exploit personal networks to obtain not only personal objects like riding horses and pet dogs, but also quite standard commodities such as, for example, mast timber and iron, rather than relying on merchants to do the job.<sup>38</sup> A letter to Arne, a canon at the archiepiscopal cathedral in Trondheim, also reveals a transport problem that may seem to uncover a serious flaw in the commercial infrastructure of inter-town trade in Norway towards the middle of the fourteenth century. In this letter of January 1338, Håkon expresses his gratitude to Arne for getting him some mast timber, adding that he would also like him to buy some iron on his behalf, if the price drops to a more reasonable level. As for the mast timber, however, Håkon complains that it seems to be difficult for him to have it shipped from Trondheim to Bergen. His own ships do not sail that far north, and the ships that normally sail there, and could take the timber, are too small.<sup>39</sup> It is perhaps a little far fetched, but I am tempted to blame this on the lack of sufficient Norwegian merchants engaging professionally in foreign trade at this stage, and Trondheim's complete loss of its former role in Norway's international trade.

#### PAINTERS, PETTY TRADERS AND THE NORWEGIAN MARKET FOR PAINTERS' MATERIALS BEFORE 1350

Although not entirely reliable, international trade in the high Middle Ages obviously supplied Norway with foreign luxuries as well as with some commodities for mass consumption. Although we do not know of any dealers in foreign painters' materials, we are familiar with the profession of painters in Bergen, and also with some other professions whose practitioners may have been using such materials or even engaged in trading them locally.

All the painted art from the twelfth–fourteenth centuries preserved in Norway has been found in churches. For the Church, such art was more or less a liturgical necessity. Ecclesiastical institutions and their sponsors probably constituted a major part of the market for painters and painters' materials.

Great ecclesiastical institutions and prelates could choose to employ their own painters for shorter or longer periods. One such painter is known to us through the quite singular correspondence of Bishop Håkon of Bergen. When he wrote to his Icelandic colleague Jón in 1338, in addition to the topics mentioned above he made a request for absolution on behalf of a certain *Boraren pentur*, or 'Thoraren

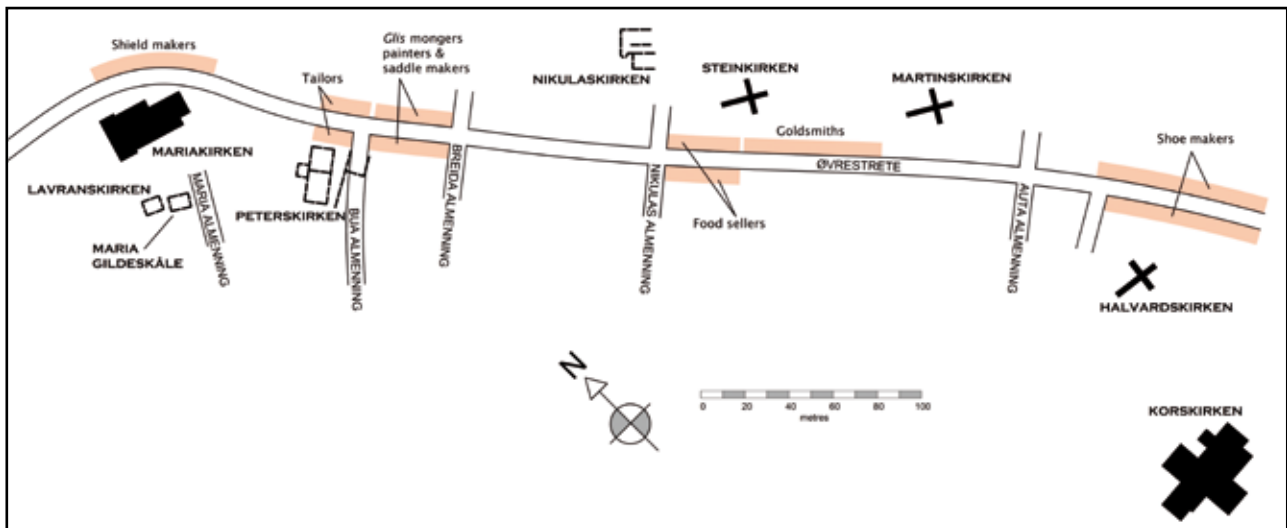


FIGURE 3. Craftsmen and salesmen on the Upper Street (Øvrestrete) of Bergen according to the town law of 1276.

the painter', who was obviously an Icelander. According to Håkon he could 'paint and write'. Two years later Thoraren was still with Håkon, who wrote a letter of recommendation for him to the bishop of Skálholt. The painter was leaving for Iceland to sort out some private business there, and needed support to redeem his property. Håkon stated that in his work he had done what was asked of him and that he had promised to return to Bergen after the visit to Iceland.<sup>40</sup> Since he was evidently also a scribe, in his work as a painter he may have been engaged in the production of manuscripts, a genre of painted art that is not represented in the material analysed by Plahter, but which clearly belongs in the same context.

In an important centre of commerce and craftsmanship like Bergen, however, painters were also able to establish their own workshops. In the Bergen town law of 1276, the members of a great number of different crafts and other professions are assigned specific quarters within the town, in a fashion quite common elsewhere in Europe. This arrangement may go back to a former town law for Bergen and a great fire in 1248. Among the crafts mentioned is the profession of *pentari* (= *pentur*). By ordering that they should have their shops on either side of the Øvrestrete (Upper Street), the law book clearly implies that there were several such painters in the town (Fig. 3).<sup>41</sup>

The word *pentur* or *pentari* is an obvious loan word showing the French origin of the term, perhaps imported via England. No matter what kind of painting Thoraren and his more independent colleagues were executing, the foreign terminology at any rate hints that they were working with imported technology and painters' materials. Significantly, the only Norse collective term for colour is *kolorr*, another loan word that is apparently used only once in the entire corpus of Norse texts known to the editors of the most comprehensive Norse dictionary available.

The independent painters in all probability catered for the needs not only of the Church, but also of lay customers. From their workshops they may have been called away to decorate ceilings, walls, doorways etc. in customers' houses, in Bergen or in the countryside. In their workshops they

may have been painting works of art to order or for sale, or producing decorated manuscripts. They may also, for example, have been painting shields. According to a Bergen ordinance on crafts and prices from the 1280s, and a similar ordinance from 1384, the local shield-makers were offering their customers, among other things, red and other coloured shields.<sup>42</sup> It would seem, perhaps, a waste to have such weaponry painted with costly imported pigments. Alternatively, perhaps they were painted with locally produced colours. But, as we have already seen, this is not very likely given the limited access to local materials for producing pigments, and the prevailing use of imported pigments in extant medieval art in Norway. Among the shields in the first ordinance is a small so-called *steint* shield. This term for 'painted' must be connected with the word *steinn* (stone), which in a fourteenth-century Icelandic manuscript with instructions for painting was used to describe materials that were being ground to produce various pigments.<sup>43</sup> Consequently, at least some of the shields sold in Bergen in the 1280s were probably painted with imported pigments. Some of these shields may, of course, also have been made specifically for festive use, tournaments and so on, to enhance the prestige and social standing of their owners.

When painters were employed as household servants, like Thoraren who stayed with Bishop Håkon, the employers evidently had to supply the pigments and other painters' materials. This may also have applied to the customers of painters working in independent workshops, as was clearly often the case with goldsmiths and those in other metalworking crafts subject to the surviving price ordinances from Bergen. But since the painters are not mentioned in these documents, we cannot be sure. They may also have provided the materials themselves, as the price ordinances indicate what was normally expected in the cases of, for example, the shield-makers, or the goldsmiths when gilding objects of silver.<sup>44</sup>

In any case the existence of the profession of painters in Bergen, and the legislation on shield-makers both indicate a local demand for imported painters' materials for profane use as well as for use in churches. It is hard to assess how



great this demand was, and likewise how the necessary materials were obtained from abroad – or how the domestic and local trade in them was carried out. I shall restrict myself to making a few tentative suggestions.

Observation of the use of imported painters' materials in religious art throughout Norway does not, of course, reveal the whole picture. Although traces of foreign pigments were found on the stem of the Gokstad ship in Vestfold, dating from about 900, surviving examples of painted art in non-ecclesiastical medieval contexts are extremely rare in Norway. In fact, none are known from the period covered by Plahter's analyses. From the late Middle Ages, one example is described in the literature: the decorations on the doorway of the so-called *Lydvaloftet*, a wooden farmhouse at Voss in western Norway, not far from Bergen. Not only the decorated doorway, but also the size of the building demonstrates that the owners must have been people of substantial means. Only fragments remain, but sufficient to analyse the technique, showing that the work was executed using a glue-based binder, charcoal, chalk, and pigments that were usual in contemporary northern Europe: azurite, orpiment (yellow arsenic), vermilion, red or white lead, and red ochre.<sup>45</sup> A greenish colour may have been of local provenance, but others must have been imported. The chalk is a Late Maastricht type which is assumed to have come from continental northern Europe. The decorations include the figure of a man and a woman. The man's costume would have been the height of European fashion in the mid-fourteenth century. It has been suggested that the subject matter of the painting was copied from contemporary illustrated manuscripts, and that the decorations were executed during the second half of the fourteenth century by an artist who was connected to a workshop.<sup>46</sup> It is a fairly educated guess that he had been summoned from Øvrestrete in Bergen, or wherever the professional painters were living there after the Black Death.

This secular doorway is, in fact, the only known object of Norwegian painted art from around 1400. It demonstrates, among other things, that imported styles, techniques and painters' materials were also being used by painters working for wealthy laymen, even in the countryside. The taste for decorative art in the European style, including the bright colours that could only be produced by the use of imported pigments and chalk, must be assumed to have been as great in the higher echelons of lay society as were other features of European upper class culture.

Although not mentioning painted art or painters' materials, the evidence of sumptuary legislation of the latter part of the high Middle Ages, together with price ordinances and other legislation for foreign merchants, the English customs rolls, surviving wills of Norwegian nobility and other sources all testify to the fact that foreign commodities such as wine, precious metals, brightly coloured cloth, silk, fine gloves and other articles of fashion were part of the consumption pattern of the Norwegian nobility and urban elites. The cultural imports of the upper classes of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century also included features such as chivalresque literature and ideals, noble titles like 'baron', 'lord' and 'knight', and sports such as fox hunting and tournaments.

Leading churchmen, who to a large extent were recruited from the nobility, also participated in these noble activities and possessed armour, jewellery and other imported objects of great value. The higher echelons of the clergy and lay society obviously combined to constitute an aristocracy with similar tastes and values, which they shared with the upper classes throughout Europe.<sup>47</sup>

This contributed to creating a considerable market for luxury imports, including – at least to some extent – the import of painters' materials. In comparison with European conditions, however, substantial differences of scale should be taken into consideration, especially as far as lay circles are concerned. Apparently the Norwegian nobility controlled a smaller proportion of the country's economic resources, and the clergy and the ecclesiastical institutions a greater proportion, than was commonly the case elsewhere in Europe. Furthermore, even if a group of really important lay landowners emerged in Norway from the thirteenth century onwards, and even if part of the nobility had access to very substantial additional incomes through high office in royal service, there were no magnates who could compete with the most powerful and wealthy lay lords in England or the Continent, or with the splendid castles they built, the great courts they entertained, and the lavish luxury consumption they displayed. In fact, private castles were very few and small in Norway and most noble residences were probably wooden buildings, modest both in size and style by contemporary European standards.

All these factors must have influenced the demand for foreign luxury commodities in Norway in the Middle Ages. This observation may serve as a warning that the 'private' market for imported painters' materials was probably rather restricted. Commodities that were quite commonplace for the European elites may in some cases have been considered objects of extreme luxury by their peers in Norway. Close commercial connections made them available, but not necessarily affordable, to the average aristocrat. Furthermore, at least from the thirteenth century onwards, availability was certainly far greater in Bergen than in other places, whether town or country. And in general the foreign consumer goods that were common in the late Middle Ages were probably rarer, even in the higher echelons of society, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries than subsequently.

How, then, did a range of imported pigments and other foreign painters' materials end up in churches throughout the country, even in places very remote from Bergen and other towns? As pointed out by Unn Plahter in the next paper, the movable objects of painted art were probably normally produced in workshops in the towns, especially ecclesiastical centres, where the necessary materials may have been bought by the craftsmen or their customers.<sup>48</sup> In the case of decorated churches or other buildings, both the painters and their materials would frequently have to be brought from the towns. In spite of repeated prohibitions from the latter part of the high Middle Ages, itinerant pedlars were obviously frequenting the countryside and whatever local fairs existed, but we have no reason to believe that they were trading in such valuables, no matter how easy these commodities were to carry.



In the sailing seasons, the painters or their customers could no doubt buy painters' materials directly from merchants bringing this kind of merchandise from abroad, although foreigners were generally supposed to restrict themselves to wholesale trading. But local middlemen of native or foreign extraction probably engaged in the trade in painters' materials in Bergen and possibly in other towns as well.

As suggested above, pigments may have been included in the so-called *glis*, petty commodities of fashion, which are mentioned quite frequently in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century legislation for Bergen. The trade *en detail* in such articles of luxury was considered a profession of its own by the legislators. Those who engaged in this business were called *glismangarar* (*glis*-mongers). According to the town law, they were next-door neighbours to the painters on Øvrestrete.

The extant price ordinances from this period give an impression of the range of commodities in which these *glismangarar* dealt. They include not only 'English caps', 'waxed caps', fine gloves, flax etc., but also candles, silks of different qualities, silk thread and – quite interestingly – lead. Such price ordinances could not, of course, cover every single item that you would expect to find in the booths of these people. For obvious practical reasons the efforts to control prices in European medieval towns typically concentrated on the more standard items within each different trade or profession. This is also the case in Bergen, although for some reason more trades and crafts are included in the price legislation from that town than was normally the case elsewhere in Europe.<sup>49</sup>

We should definitely not exclude the possibility that the *glismangarar* in Bergen were supplying pigments or other painters' materials to their close neighbours in the painters' profession, or to those who commissioned their work. But conditions in Bergen were rather special by Norwegian standards. Even if we take into consideration a possible bias in the extant sources, not only were the size of the overall population and the demand for and influx of luxury commodities from the North Sea region, as well as the Baltic, much greater here than in other towns, but so too were the number and variety of skilled craftsmen, often Germans, in the thirteenth and later centuries.<sup>50</sup>

The *glismangarar*, or other possible suppliers of painters' materials operating in Bergen, foreigners or locals, would not be of much help to the bishops of Skálholt or Oslo, or other friends and peers of Bishop Håkon, if their merchandise was not distributed beyond Bergen, or similar commodities were not imported directly to other towns. We have no reason to believe that direct import did not occur elsewhere to some extent. But we do have reasons to believe that painters' materials were generally harder to obtain through trade in the smaller towns, including Trondheim, Oslo and Tunsberg, during much of the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In fact, to the extent that the materials in question were imported via the North Sea region rather than via the Baltic towns, this handicap for the towns in eastern Norway was more likely growing than diminishing in the fourteenth century, in spite of close commercial contacts with the Baltic.

## CONCLUSION

The lack of direct evidence for the trade in painters' materials in Norway, except for some possible glimpses, is quite understandable considering the lack of sources. The existence of the painters' profession in Bergen suggests that painting was a fairly normal activity, presupposing, in view of the lack of local supplies, some kind of trade from abroad in the relevant materials. However, the great ecclesiastical and lay lords of this epoch did not depend totally on the services of professional merchants. The archbishop in Trondheim probably found the property and personnel he was keeping in Bergen very useful, not only because of his interest in the export of dried cod, but also as a means of securing supplies from foreign merchants and craftsmen. And in the same way as Bishop Håkon's colleagues in Skálholt and Oslo expected him to supply them with wine in times of need, it would not have been beyond them to address him with similar requests if they needed painters' materials as well. It is a pity that only fragments of their correspondence are available to us and that very few other private letters from this period survive.

Yet the letters from Bishop Håkon of Bergen are definitely indications of the existence of private networks for economic exchange at this social level, partly in the form of exchange of commercial services, but also partly perhaps as exchange of gifts in a manner that we normally associate with more 'primitive' economic systems, in the Viking Age, or in quite different cultures. Gifts exchanged between kings and bishops or other prelates, or between Norwegian and English kings, for example, may to some extent be interpreted in the same way. In addition to the obvious diplomatic aspects of such exchanges, to the English kings of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries this was probably an important source of supply for falcons and hawks to be used for hunting; to the Norwegian kings it was *inter alia* a way of securing supplies of wheat.<sup>51</sup>

This is also a reminder that precious commodities such as painters' materials were perhaps not imported to Norway via England, the Netherlands or Germany exclusively by way of professional trade. Apart from chalk, these materials were neither bulky nor heavy. They could easily be carried by, for example, a journeyman or a fully skilled painter moving about in search of work, or a messenger carrying a letter, or a cleric returning from the Papal Curia, a monastery of great learning or from a university in England or on the Continent. From the latter half of the twelfth century onwards, such contacts between Norway and Europe were steadily growing, as were pilgrimages to places such as Rome, Jerusalem, Santiago di Compostela or Aachen. If they could afford it, should we not expect people, who for any of these reasons travelled between Europe and Norway, to seize the opportunity to bring back, for themselves, their friends and peers or their superiors, little expensive things that were in great demand in Norway – much as, in our own times, we take pains to bring home our tax-free quotas of alcohol or tobacco when we go abroad for business or pleasure?

## NOTES

- See for example Blom, G.A. (1997) *Trondheims historie 997–1997*, vol. 1, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget; Helle, K. (1982) *Bergen bys historie*, vol. 1, Bergen, Oslo and Tromsø: Universitetsforlaget; Helle, K. and Nedkvitne, A. (1977) 'Sentrumsdannelser og byutvikling i norsk middelalder', in G.A. Blom (ed.) *Urbaniseringsprosessen i Norden*, vol. 1, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, pp. 189–286; Helle, K., Eliassen, F.-E., Myhre, J.E. and Stugu, O.S. (2006) *Norsk byhistorie, Urbanisering gjennom 1300 år*, Oslo: Pax forlag; Nedkvitne, A. (1977) *Handelssjøfarten mellom Norge og England i høymiddelalderen*, Bergen: Sjøfartshistorisk årbok. Bergens Sjøfartsmuseum; Nedkvitne, A. (1983) 'Utenrikshandelen fra det vestafjelske Norge 1100–1600', unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Bergen; Nedkvitne, A. and Norseng, P.G. (2000) *Middelalderbyen ved Bjørvika: Oslo 1000–1536*, Oslo: J.W. Cappelen Forlag AS; Norseng, P.G. (2000) 'Fra farmannen Ottar til Bertram Bene. Synspunkter på kilde- og metodeproblemer i studiet av handel', *Collegium Medievale*, 13, pp. 11–77 (with extensive further references to literature, in Norwegian and other languages, on Norwegian Viking Age and medieval trade). For an updated general survey of Norwegian medieval history in the Middle Ages, see Helle, K. (ed.) (2003) *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- For a survey and discussion of sources for the history of trade in Norway in the Viking Age and Middle Ages, see for example Norseng 2000 (cited in note 1); Molaug, P. (2000) 'Nærhandel og fjernhandel i Norge i middelalderen', *Collegium Medievale*, 13, pp. 117–40; cf. Geir-Atle Erslund, G.-A. (1998) 'Die Hanse-Archiv aus Bergen', *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Lübeckische Geschichte und Altertumskunde*, 77, pp. 381–90.
- See Plahter, U. (2004) *Painted Altar Frontals of Norway 1250–1350: Materials and Technique*, vol. 2, in U. Plahter, E.B. Hohler, N. Morgan and A. Wichstrøm, *Painted Altar Frontals of Norway 1250–1350*, 3 vols, London: Archetype Publications, pp. 57–60 with further references.
- Ibid.*
- See for example Nordhagen, P.J. (1994) 'Die Hanse-Problem in der Norwegischen Kunstgeschichte. Der Zusammenbruch der Kunstproduktion in Norwegen im Spätmittelalter', in V. Henn and A. Nedkvitne (eds) *Norwegen und die Hanse*, Frankfurt am Main and New York: Peter Lang, pp. 41–72.
- For a general discussion of the development and significance of literacy in Norway and other Scandinavian countries in the Middle Ages, see Nedkvitne, A. (2004) *The Social Consequences of Literacy in Medieval Scandinavia*, Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy 11, Turnhout: Brepols.
- Diplomatarium Norvegicum* (= DN) vols 1–22 (Christiania 1847–Oslo 1995). The chronological distribution in the DN is as follows: 1018–1200: 112 items; 1201–1300: 882 items; 1301–1400: 4,633 items; 1401–1500: 5,873 items; 1018–1500: 11,500 items. To these charters should be added documents from foreign archives that have not been published in Norway. Including such items, the entire corpus of extant charters from the remaining period covered by the DN (1501–1587) still numbers less than 10,000 individual documents.
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50. See Norseng 2000 (cited in note 1), pp. 45–6.
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