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TRADE BETWEEN GDAŃSK AND TURKU (ÅBO) IN THE 16TH AND THE FIRST HALF OF THE 17TH CENTURY

Compared with the well developed research into Gdańsk's trade with Western Europe, practically no studies have been written on Gdańsk's trade within the Baltic basin. This is probably due both to the type of sources at our disposal (especially the accessibility of the published registers of the Sound customs duties) and to the fact that trade with the West had, for centuries, been of basic importance for Gdańsk. Nevertheless, trade within the Baltic Sea should not be ignored both for statistical reasons (it accounted for one-third of Gdańsk's turnover in the first half of the 17th century)¹ and in view of the fact that it played an important role in the development of the Baltic region and its hinterland.

The towns on the Finnish coast, Viborg (Viipuri) and Turku (Åbo) were Gdańsk's traditional trade partners even in the Middle Ages. Polish historiography has not paid much attention to these contacts, and Finnish studies, both old (by C. v. Bonsdorf, T. S. Dillner, K. Grotenfeld, J. W. Ruuth) and more recent ones (by R. Ranta), have only touched upon this subject; moreover, for linguistic reasons (they are not even equipped with summaries in foreign languages) they are practically unknown in Poland. This article, based on Finnish literature and on Turku's 16th and 17th century customs records, which the author studied during her short stay in Finland, can fill in this gap to only a slight extent, first, because the reflections will be confined to Gdańsk's trade with Turku, leaving out Viborg which at that time accounted for

¹ Cf. M. Bogucka, *Handel zagraniczny Gdańska w pierwszej połowie XVII w. (Gdańsk's Foreign Trade in the First Half of the 17th Century)*, Wrocław 1970, p. 61.

about 50% of Finland's foreign trade,² and secondly, because the article is based on preliminary soundings and not on a full archival research.³ The period covered by the article, the 16th century and the first half of the 17th, was a period when Gdańsk's trade was at the peak of its development. The changes which occurred in the Gdańsk-Turku contacts at that time, examined in a broader context, can supplement the general picture of Gdansk's trade and its trends.

Table 1. Ship Traffic on the Gdańsk–Turku–Gdańsk Route⁴

| Year | A | B | C | Year | A | B | C | Year | A | B | C |
|------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------|----|----|----|------|---|---|----|
| 1549 | 13 | | 50 ⁵ | 1590 | 11 | 12 | 31 | 1602 | 9 | 6 | 24 |
| 1574 | | 18 | 82 ⁵ | 1591 | 14 | 14 | 40 | 1603 | 7 | 8 | 19 |
| 1575 | | 9 | 56 ⁵ | 1592 | 12 | 11 | 31 | 1605 | — | 2 | 4 |
| 1576 | | 8 | 61 ⁵ | 1593 | 10 | 10 | 30 | 1606 | 4 | 4 | 15 |
| 1584 | 18 ⁶ | 19 ⁷ | 56 | 1594 | 12 | 6 | 33 | 1611 | 6 | 6 | 30 |
| 1585 | 12 | 12 | 45 | 1595 | 4 | 6 | 28 | 1613 | 4 | 2 | 12 |
| 1586 | 6 | 8 | 30 | 1596 | 11 | 11 | 35 | 1615 | 2 | 1 | 5 |
| 1587 | 11 | 9 | 34 | 1597 | 3 | 5 | 24 | 1616 | 5 | — | 17 |
| 1588 | 17 | 19 | 39 | 1600 | 2 | 3 | 10 | 1652 | 1 | 1 | 7 |
| 1589 | 12 | 13 | 32 | 1601 | 4 | 4 | 11 | | | | |

A — ships from Gdańsk entering Turku; B — ships sailing from Turku to Gdańsk; C — percentage of Turku's overall traffic

As Table 1 shows, contacts with Gdańsk accounted for from 30 to 80% of the total traffic in Turku in the 16th century (till 1590)⁵. Gdańsk can therefore be undoubtedly regarded as Finland's main intermediary in the trade with the West. This began to change at the end of the 16th century and in the first half of the 17th⁶. Of decisive importance was the competition of Lübeck⁷, which while sending only a few ships annually

² R. Ranta, *Turun kaupungin historia 1600–1721*, Turku 1975, p. 239.

³ Professor E. Kuujo from Helsinki considered writing an extensive work on trade between Gdańsk and Turku in the 15th and 16th centuries, but even after its publication, the work will not be fully accessible to researchers for linguistic reasons.

⁴ The table is based on customs records from Riksarkivet, Helsinki, call number 233, 233g, 233c: Turun Maistraatin Arkisto (Archives of the Town of Turku), G.I. 1, and on the studies by T.S. Dillner, *Tabeller rörande Finlands handel åren 1570–1622*, „Historialinen Arkisto”, vol. 13, Helsingfors 1894, pp. 425 pp., and J.W. Ruuth, *Abo stads historia*, Helsingfors 1909, vol. 1, pp. 156 ff.

⁵ The figures represent only the traffic from Turku to Gdańsk.

⁶ According to T.S. Dillner, *op. cit.*, Table 17.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Table 16.

to Turku in the 16th century, accounted for two-thirds of its trade already in the first half of the 17th; another important reason for the decline of the Gdańsk — Turku trade was the intrusion of the Dutch (in the first half of the 17th century they sent a few ships annually to Turku, but these were vessels of a large tonnage).⁸ In the second half of the 17th century direct contacts between Gdańsk and Turku practically came to an end.⁹

To Gdańsk the trade with Turku was of small importance. In the 16th century 900-1,000 ships sailed from Gdańsk annually to the West; in 1583 Gdańsk's harbour handled a total of 2,000 ships.¹⁰ Hence the ships plying Turku accounted only for a small share of Gdańsk's overall traffic. The situation was similar as regards the value of trade between

Table 2. Gdańsk's Place in Turku's Trade in the Light of Estimates of the Value of Turku's Overall Trade Turnover¹¹

| Name of port | 1595 ¹² | | 1606 | | 1652 | |
|--------------|------------------------------------|-------|------------------------------------|-------|------------------------------------|-------|
| | Value of turnover in Swed. thalers | % | Value of turnover in Swed. thalers | % | Value of turnover in Swed. thalers | % |
| Lübeck | 19,114 | 81 | 19,074 | 63 | 88,449 | 78.7 |
| Gdańsk | 3,904 | 17 | 5,904 | 19.5 | 2,406 | 2.1 |
| Dutch ports | 375 | 2 | 1,911 | 6.3 | 18,312 | 16.3 |
| Danish ports | — | — | 1,834 | 6.1 | — | — |
| Wismar | — | — | 1,344 | 4.5 | 162 | 0.2 |
| Stralsund | — | — | 202 | 0.6 | — | — |
| Riga | — | — | — | — | 1,881 | 1.7 |
| Revel | — | — | — | — | 995 | 0.9 |
| Kołobrzeg | — | — | — | — | 207 | 0.2 |
| Total | 23,393 | 100.0 | 30,269 | 100.0 | 112,412 | 100.0 |

⁸ R. Ranta, *op. cit.*, pp. 235, 238.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ S. Kutrzeba, *Handel i przemysł do r. 1793 (Trade and Industry up to 1793)*, (in: *Gdańsk, Collective work ed. by S. Kutrzeba*, Lwów 1928, p. 155.

¹¹ The table is based on customs records from Riksarkivet in Helsinki, call number 234b, 235c, the Archives of the Town of Turku, G. I, 1, and on the work by C. v. Bonsdorf, *Åbo stads historia under sjuttonde seklet*, Helsingfors 1894, vol. 1, p. 431. The figures are estimates, for the value of cargos is not always stated in the customs records.

Turku and Gdańsk¹². A. Mączak estimates the value of Gdańsk's global exports in 1595 at 1,457,200 Reich thalers.¹³ With one Reich thaler worth 1.5 Swedish thalers,¹⁴ the value of Gdańsk's exports to Turku in that year would have amounted to 2,602 Reich thalers, i.e. 0.2% of Gdańsk's total exports, also very little. Nevertheless, trade with Turku should be examined as an important element of Gdańsk's Baltic trade; its significance, however, was due rather to the commodity structure of the trade on the Gdańsk–Turku–Gdańsk route.

Since the Middle Ages salt had been the main commodity sent to Turku from Gdańsk; the important volume and value of the salt exports to Turku are shown in Table 3.

Tabela 3. Export of Salt from Gdańsk to Turku¹⁵

| Year | Lasts | Value in Swed. thalers | Percentage of total exports from Gdańsk to Turku |
|------|-------|------------------------|--|
| 1549 | 753 | — | — |
| 1584 | 443 | 8,860 | 72.5 |
| 1591 | 165 | — | — |
| 1592 | 321 | — | — |
| 1595 | 112.5 | 2,468 | 63.2 |
| 1606 | 79.5 | 2,848 | 48.2 |
| 1652 | — | — | — |

At the end of the 16th century however the export of salt from Gdańsk to Turku dropped considerably¹⁶. This may have been the reason for the general weakening of contacts between the two ports; in any case Gdańsk ceased to be the main port for the transshipment of salt going to Finland from the West (Spain, France, Scotland). Further research will show whether this was a result of the decline of Gdańsk's

¹² The figures for that year represent only imports to Turku and not the total turnover of the port.

¹³ A. Mączak, *Między Gdańskiem a Sundem (Between Gdańsk and the Sound)*, Warszawa 1972, p. 86.

¹⁴ E.F. Heckscher, *Sveriges Ekonomiska Historia*, Stockholm 1936, pp. 556, 613.

¹⁵ Riksarkivet Helsinki, the customs records of Turku, 233, 233 g, 234 a, 234 b, 235 c, and the Archives of the Town of Turku, customs records, G.I. 1.

¹⁶ According to prices in Turku.

salt trade¹⁷ or whether, on the contrary, it was the loss of the Finnish market that affected Gdańsk's salt exporters. In any case the two phenomena depended on each other.

It is interesting that at the end of the 16th century, instead of salt, Gdańsk merchants tried to send to Finland not only agricultural products, livestock and some amounts of colonial goods (wine, spices, sugar), but also industrial goods, especially textiles and hosiery produced in Gdańsk (also in Pomerania and Silesia) as well as glass, bottles, paper, furniture, etc. An important role among foodstuffs was played by products of the Gdańsk food industry: beer, vodka and honey cake. As in the trade with Stockholm, the aim was to win one of the Baltic markets, this time Finnish, for Gdańsk's intensively growing production.

Tabela 4. Structure of Gdańsk's Exports to Turku¹⁸

| Products | 1584 | | 1606 | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| | Value in Swedish thalers | % of total exports | Value in Swedish thalers | % of total exports |
| Salt | 8,860 | 72.5 | 2,848 | 48.2 |
| Industrial goods | 2,023 | 16.6 | 2,259 | 38.3 |
| Agricultural produce, livestock, foodstuffs | 1,330 | 10.9 | 797 | 13.5 |

In the middle of the 17th century the picture of the Gdańsk–Turku turnover changed totally. Gdańsk imports to Turku in 1652 were not only very small, but what is characteristic, they consisted only of industrial goods¹⁹. On a barge belonging to Hans Stephenson, skipper Godfryd Roskamp brought 50 Swedish thalers' worth of various odds and ends belonging to Stephenson, 104 stools worth 119 thalers, some

¹⁷ Cf. M. Bogucka, *Sól w handlu bałtyckim w pierwszej połowie XVII w. (Salt in the Baltic Trade in the First Half of the 17th Century)*, "Zapiski Historyczne" vol. 36, 1971, No. 1, pp. 101–110.

¹⁸ Riksarkivet Helsinki, customs records, 233 g, 235 c. It is worth pointing out that this structure already characterised Gdańsk's exports in 1549, *ibid.*, call number 233.

¹⁹ Cf. M. Bogucka, *Handelsbeziehungen im Ostseeraum. Der Handel zwischen Danzig und Stockholm in der ersten Hälfte des 17. Jh.*, in: *Seehandel und Wirtschaftswege Nordeuropas im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert*, hrsg. K. Friedland und F. Irsigler, Ostfildern 1981, pp. 38–47.

glass goods, spices and cucumbers worth 16 thalers (total value of goods — 139 Swedish thalers).²⁰

What disappeared completely from the imports was salt, its deliveries to Finland having been taken over by Lübeck, as well as textiles and haberdashery, the export of which had been monopolised by Lübeck and Dutch merchants.²¹

In the 16th and at the beginning of the 17th century, Turku sent to Gdansk mainly cod liver oil, tar, butter, timber, hides and furs, as well as some quantities of metals.²² In 1606, the balance of trade was in Gdańsk's favour (an active balance of 4,932 Swedish thalers) and in 1652 in Turku's favour (Gdańsk's passive balance amounting to 2,078 thalers).²³ Further studies would be necessary to gain a more general idea of the trade balance between two ports over a longer period.

It is difficult to analyse the organisation of goods exchange on the Gdańsk–Turku–Gdańsk route because of the scarcity of sources. It seems that mainly small ships (sometimes defined as barges in customs records) plied this route. It is hard to say whether they belonged to Gdańsk, Finnish, or Swedish shipowners. The cargos were divided into consignments of differing values — from about a dozen to several hundred thalers — and were loaded on various ships. The cargo carried by one ship frequently belonged to several or even more than a dozen persons. 90% of small consignments were carried by skippers themselves and the crew. As far as can be judged by customs exemptions and reductions granted in Turku, about 50% of the merchants enjoyed the municipal rights of Turku, though this was often their second citizenship, acquired for the sake of these privileges.²⁴ Finnish peasants and gentry (including women) also took part in this trade and, judging by names, also Swedish and Gdańsk merchants. Among the latter particularly active at the beginning of the 17th century were Jören Maas (in 1606 he carried goods worth 922 Swedish thalers) and Jacob Wulff (the goods he transported in 1606 were worth 3,486 thalers); they both held

²⁰ Archives of the Town of Turku, call number G. I., 1. p. 16.

²¹ R. Ranta, *op. cit.*, pp. 235 ff.

²² On the basis of Riksarkivet Helsinki, 235 c and the Archives of the Town of Turku, G.I., 1.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ For instance, Jören Maas, a Gdańsk burgher actively engaged in trade with Finland on the Gdańsk — Turku and Lübeck — Turku routes, was, at the same time, a citizen of Turku, cf. Riksarkivet Helsinki, 235 c., p. 48 a, 52, 54 a, etc.

75% of the trade on this route and apart from them only 16 persons took part in the exchange in 1606.²⁵ The trade was more fragmented in other years, nevertheless one gets the impression that big wholesale dealers with considerable capital at their disposal were still active; fragmentation of trade on one side did not exclude its concentration on the other. Such trade organization was also characteristic in the exchange between Gdańsk and Stockholm in the first half of the 17th century,²⁶ and can probably be regarded as typical of Baltic commerce in general during that time.

Several conclusions can be drawn from these data. First, it is worth noting that contacts between Gdańsk and Turku had been declining before the big crisis caused by the Swedish invasion of Poland in 1655. The decline resulted probably to the same extent from the oncoming Polish-Swedish wars as by the competition of Lübeck and Dutch merchants, as well as by the growing passivity of the Gdansk merchants, who were satisfied with local activities in their own port, since it brought them no smaller profits than the risky and troublesome overseas trade. This could not but affect Gdańsk's trade in salt (as late as the 16th century Gdańsk was an important port for the transshipment of overseas salt which its merchants sent on to Turku) and the development of industry in Gdańsk. The efforts made by Gdańsk artisans at the turn of the 16th century to expand to the Finnish market, failed. This must have been due, to a large extent, to the lack of interest in the marketing of local products on the part of Gdańsk merchants.

(Translated by Janina Dorosz)

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ See note 19.