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The cloth exports of Flanders and northern France during the thirteenth century: a luxury trade?

By PATRICK CHORLEY

Pirenne was emphatic that the wool textiles of Flanders and northern France that were exported throughout Europe and to the Levant during the thirteenth century and formed the basis of the prosperity of the region were “in the full force of the term luxury products”. Although this view has been questioned, it remains the accepted orthodoxy. The most recent historian of Flanders, for example, repeats Pirenne almost word for word and goes on to describe the Flemish cloth as a product held in “matchless esteem” by an “exclusive public throughout Europe”. The present study aims to provide a more comprehensive picture than has so far been undertaken of the structure of the trade and to address more particularly the question of whether the cheaper varieties of cloth were an important component of the trade and what their characteristics were. On this basis the validity of the standard view can be tested.¹

The pertinent evidence is of two types. There is commercial evidence, which itself falls into two categories; the record of actual transactions in notarial contracts and in the accounts of merchants and consumers on the one hand; and on the other, official schedules of prices, duties, and cloth lengths laid down by the authorities. Such documentation is largely limited to the Italian, southern French, and Iberian markets, but it is sufficient to permit a detailed breakdown of the relative prices of textiles entering into long-distance trade—both of woollen cloth proper and the various special types of cloth such as says, stanforts, and *biffes* and of their place of manufacture. On relative volumes, although it provides some pointers, it is not so informative; still less so on the classes of consumer. Secondly, there is the evidence of guild regulations, which, although not as abundant as for the subsequent period, survive from the later thirteenth century for a number of the major centres of production. These throw more light on the structure of the trade. More importantly, the specifications laid down by the guilds make it possible to relate the range of prices demonstrated by the commercial evidence to differences in the techniques of manufacture, and so of quality, an obscure

¹ Pirenne, *Histoire économique*, p. 32; Blockmans, *Culturelle geschiedenis*, p. 94. Similarly, Fourquin, *Histoire économique*, p. 215, and Thrupp, ‘Medieval industry’, p. 249. The view is questioned in Munro, *Transformation*, and Derville, ‘Draperies flamandes’; and also, in the light of the English market, in Miller, ‘Fortunes of the English textile industry’, p. 76. See also Coornaert, ‘Draperies rurales’. The major survey of the trade (now somewhat outdated), Laurent, *Grand commerce d’exportation*, does not deal with this aspect of it.

subject full of problems of interpretation, but one about which rather more can be said than is to be found in the standard accounts of medieval cloth technology.²

A convenient frame of analysis is provided by that mysterious organization, the hanse of seventeen towns. Almost nothing is known about its origin or function except that it already existed in the early thirteenth century, and that it in some way represented the interests of the cloth towns at the Champagne fairs and perhaps in other markets. What is known is its membership later in the century, which had by then grown to 22 or 23; all but a few are shown in table 1. The hanse clustered in Flanders and the adjacent districts of France to the south, with an important extension in Champagne comprising Châlons, Provins, and Reims. It included almost all the towns that played a part in the long-distance cloth trade until the end of the century, when—with the rapid rise of the Brabant industry led by Malines, Brussels, and Louvain, the decline of many of the old-established towns, and somewhat later the proliferation both in Flanders and Brabant of the small “country” centres epitomized by Werwick and the Lys industries—a shift began which by the mid-fourteenth century had produced a radical relocation of cloth manufacture in the region as a whole. The change coincided with major alterations in the structure of output. From around 1200, when the records effectively begin, for almost a century the trade was dominated by the seventeen towns, although their individual fortunes certainly varied during the period. All but a few of the less important members (which may well have joined later) are already represented in the Genoese trade in the first decade of the century and at about the same time in Venice (table 1). Outside the hanse in the north, and disregarding England, there were only two manufacturing areas of any importance: Paris and its suburb St Denis, and the Norman area of Rouen, Louviers, and Caen, with which Chartres may be included. It is with the period of the dominance of the seventeen towns that this inquiry is concerned. For reasons of space it has been necessary to treat the period as a whole, and pay little heed to changes taking place within it.³

I

In the following tables an effort has been made to bring together in easily appreciable form the more important published evidence relating to cloth prices during the period. Only the raw statistics are presented; and at first sight the reader may find them somewhat baffling. The range of prices both between and within categories should receive most attention. The two basic categories were the high quality “coloureds” (the precise definition of which will be discussed later), and the cheaper varieties comprising rays, stanforts, says and other special types. The prices of some of the most widely sold and

² De Poerck, *Draperie médiévale* and Espinas, *Draperie*, 1.

³ Carolus-Barre, *XVII villes*. Unrepresented in the Genoese evidence are Aubenton, Huy, Orchies, and Péronne (the last of which appears to be entirely absent from the commercial record). Bailleul is mentioned twice during the period, and Poperinghe later in the century. The one remaining member of the hanse, Reims, clearly owed its place to its well-documented position as the leading linen producer. There appears to be only one possible mention of it as a wool town (Narbonne, table 8) and that is ambiguous, more probably referring to Rouen.

representative cloths have been set in bold type. These include Douai and Châlons cloths marking the upper and lower limit of the category of coloureds, the ubiquitous Arras stanforts, the rays of Ypres and Provins, themselves embracing a wide price range, and finally Valenciennes cloth, which was among the cheapest kinds of northern cloth entering into long-distance trade. The price of cloth made close to the markets from which the data come has also been set bold in some instances.⁴ The second point to note about the tables is the evidence that they provide about the extent of specialization. With few and unimportant exceptions they are comprehensive in their coverage of the data in the sources from which they are drawn.

The Genoese series is the most comprehensive available for the period. It also reaches back earliest, many of the instances being from the year 1200. The Genoese evidence can be compared with two other contemporary sources of the same nature from Siena and Marseilles.⁵ These show a similar price relationship between some of the major types. Differences in the lengths of different types of cloth limit the value of the piece prices for purposes of comparison between them. They have been converted where possible into ell (*braccia*) prices on the basis of the statutory cloth lengths obtaining at this time in Venice, which show that whereas there was relatively little variation in length between the fine coloured cloths made by the leading centres, there were big differences in the cheaper and the special types, which tended to be either much longer or shorter.

In most of the Genoese cases the instances are too few for inferences about relative prices to be very reliable. But in some—almost by definition the most important—they are sufficient to permit reasonably firm comparisons. In this category are the coloureds of Ypres, Châlons, and Douai, Provins rays, Arras stanforts, and Tournai says. In a few cases it is possible to check the inferred ell price against isolated surviving retail prices. This has been done in table 2, which also presents the main data from Siena. It is instructive to compare the ell prices in these Italian markets with the official retail prices set by the Portuguese and Castilian crowns on the advice of leading merchants (table 1).

Italian mercantile sources offer nothing comparable to the Genoese series for the later part of the period. The best coverage is provided by purchases by the Ranieri company of Siena at the Provins fair (1294) and by the much more extensive sales of the Del Bene company of Florence (1318-1322). They are mainly of similar cloth and have been matched up in table 3. Different and in each case almost exactly contemporary measures have been used to deflate the piece prices. These do not always correspond exactly with each other, or with the earlier Venetian list, although the differences are for the most part small. The inferred ell prices can also be compared with fragmentary retail prices gleaned from the records of the Del Bene and of other contemporary Florentine companies, as well as from the rather earlier accounts of an unidentified Sienese company (table 4).

⁴ All the prices in the tables include transport costs and duties. How important these were as a component of the total price is briefly discussed on p.368-9.

⁵ Examples from Marseilles, 1248: scarlet 745s., Douai 433s., Châlons green and blue 308-321s., Arras stanforts 256-273s., all in *moneta mixta*. Blancard, *Documents*, I, pp. 261-417 and II, pp. 1-311 *passim*. Cloths were also exported from Cambrai, Dixmude, Provins, St Quentin, Ypres, Rouen, Louviers, Chartres, and Paris (*biffes*).

Table I. Thirteenth-century cloth prices (in local solidi).

	Genoa 1200-1260			Venice 1265			Portugal 1253			Castile 1268		
	price range s./piece	average price piece	length braccia	duty s./piece	retail price s./cobitis	retail price s./aera						
Coloured												
Scarlet	6†	400-530	38	50	60	30-45						
Abbeville	3	236-256	33	—	bono 20	— 10						
Amiens	12	116-146	20	—	—	—						
Cambrai	6	260-373	45	30	—	tinto 26-25						
Châlons	11	238-357	41	20	—	—						
Châlons	17	196-258	41	20	—	—						
Dixmude	9	120-200	33	18	—	—						
Douai	7	317-400	38	30	—	white 11-25						
Ghent	5	320-360	339	8-5	—	tinto 19-22-5						
Lille	7	140-212	169	4-7	—	tinto 22-5						
Montreuil	2	251-287	269	—	camelina†	camelina 11-25						
Provins	4	210-289	233	6-1	—	—						
*Rouen	4	205-213	216	4-2	—	—						
St. Quentin	5	130-150	140	52**	—	tinto 12-45						
Ypres	13	213-280	259	27/35	—	tinto 19-22-5						
Ypres	21	210-300	244	6-3	—	blue† 11-25						
Ypres			41	30	—	—						
Special Types												
Arras	23	196-246	214	3-3	—	rraz 6½						
Beauvais	3	58-60	58	—	arraiz 11	—						
Bruges	2	126-202	164	5-1	—	barrac.† 8						
Bruges				17	—	stanfort 15						
*Paris	3	279-296	288	—	—	other 14						
Provins	10	118-150	137	3-6	—	biffet 20						
*Rouen	2	50-85	—	—	—	pruys 13						
St. Omer	1	—	—	4	—	pruma 13						
Tournai	11	130-155	144	—	—	cloth 13						
Valenciennes	1	—	—	3-6	—	tornay 10						
Valenciennes	3	92-102	98	—	—	valanc. 9						
Ypres	7	198-221	206	4-9	—	renforch. 20						
Ypres				—	—	corde 55						
Regional						stanfort 11						
Regional						misc. 2-5						
Regional						misc. 1½-7						

* Not members of the hanse † Instances ‡ Unidentified ** From Verona lengths (table 7)

Sources: Doehard, *Relations commerciales, passim*; Roberti, 'Racio lombardi', pp. 5-22; Cessi, *Deliberazioni*, II, pp. 276-7; *Portugaliae monumenta*, I, pp. 192-6; *Cortes*, I, pp. 65-6.

Notes: The Genoese prices, stable over the period, are from notarial contracts (which cease after 1260 to record quantity and place of manufacture). Those from Portugal and Spain are retail *maxima* set by the Crown. Prices and measures are local. The Venetian *braccia* (Ciano, *Pratica*, p. 136) was somewhat longer than the Genoese and Siennese (table 2). The table of lengths is dated by its editor to before 1250. The Castilian *maravedi*, used for coloureds, has been converted into *solidi* at the rate of 1:7.5 (Spufford and Wilkinson, *Interim listing*, p. 196, confirmed by internal evidence). Occasional sales of cheaper cloth under 200s. are recorded in Genoa from the high-price centres, as are dealer stanforts (280-380s.) and some very cheap products (*aracti*, 80s.) from Arras. Otherwise the only significant omissions are unidentified stanforts, probably mainly from Arras (24 instances av. 215s.), and *capae* from Montreuil, popular c. 1200 (a long cloth, 66 *br. gen.* selling at around 340s.). The Castilian prices include Poperinghe (6s.) and Etampes frieze (3.75s.); the Portuguese Chartres (10s.) and Caen (9s.). Regional prices are from Genoa (Lopez, *Origini*, pp. 177-9) and for Portugal and Castile from various Castilian centres.

Table 2. *Inferred and actual ell (braccia) prices in Genoa and Siena*

	Genoa			Siena		
	1200-60 s./br. av.	1191-1206 s./br. retail		s./p	1221/8	1227/8 s./br. retail
Châlons	5.4	6.5	Châlons	—	—	8.75
Ypres	7.2	7.3*	Ypres	440-475	—	12.6-17.5
Ypres	6.0	5.3	Douai	—	10.7-11.6	19.2
Lille	4.2	4.8	Arras	442-545	—	7.5
Arras	3.3	3.4	St Omer	275	6.8-8.4	—
Unidentified	3.3	3.0-3.2	Valenciennes	210	6.9	—
Tournai	3.6	3.5*	Rouen	114	6.0	7.1
Como	—	1.2	Siena	164-195	6.3	—
						4.6-5.3

* unidentified

Sources: Doehard, *Relations and Rosso, Documenti*, p. 17. For Siena, Bizzari, *Imbreviature, passim*.

Notes: Other centres mentioned in the Siena contracts are: Amiens, Abbeville, Chartres, Louviers, Paris, Provins, and Montreuil (with Hesdin), the latter being referred to more often than any other. Montreuil cloth was copied in Siena.

From this period, in fact, more records of retail sales by cloth merchants survive—and not just from Italy. Examples from the Rhône valley, Provence, and Nuremberg are gathered together in table 5. The last is exceptionally valuable, not only because it involves much larger quantities than the others, but because it is unique for Germany before the series of hanseatic records begins in the 1340s. Table 6 utilizes a second type of source that becomes more common from this time, the accounts of royal and aristocratic households, the most informative early examples being those from Aragon. Together the later tables document the last phase of the seventeen towns' dominance of the European cloth trade, the fourteenth-century shift in the pattern of supply appearing clearly in all records after *c.* 1320. Besides the valuable extra data that they provide on the prices of the various special types of cloth such as says, *biffes*, and rays, and of the products of the north Italian and Languedoc industries, they are useful in indicating the kinds of cloth made by members of the hanse which do not figure in the earlier sources—Poperinghe, Huy, Orchies, and Aubenton.

It might be argued that the commercial prices tabulated in the text add up to only a small sample, for the most part involving very small quantities or very few instances; and that they are not necessarily representative. But the striking degree of consistency that they display, which deserves to be emphasized, deprives this objection of most of its force. There is moreover the additional control provided by the official Portuguese and Castilian retail prices (table 1). These, which cover a very wide range particularly of the cheaper cloths, are of course precisely "representative". The same is probably true of the declared values of Castilian imports in 1293 (table 9). Finally, considerable light is thrown on the relative values of different kinds of cloth by official lists of duties. These are mainly from Mediterranean France and Spain and have been brought together in table 8, which has been placed later in the text as, like the official cloth lengths in table 7, its main value is to illustrate specialization. The most comprehensive list of duties is the Venetian one of 1265 in table 1. In general administrative sources of this kind complement the commercial records in that they concern the typical case, which may not be true of the latter, although these are far more precise. Comparison between the two shows price patterns that are closely similar.

A second difficulty is more intractable. It is that cloths varied in width as well as length, something that is clear from guild regulations although never mentioned in commercial records. Although all the cloths concerned were broad cloths, the higher the quality the broader they tended to be.⁶ It is impossible to compensate for this, except to bear in mind that the difference in price per unit area between finer and coarser cloths is often somewhat exaggerated.

II

Whatever reservations there may be about this conspectus of prices, two points stand out indisputably from it. The first is that the seventeen towns

⁶ In Ypres, for example, coloured cloths were tented to 9 and even 11 quarters, says and rayed stanforts to 8½. There were similar differences in Douai and in Bruges, where the tented width of thin says was 7½, which appears to have been that of most Valenciennes cloth, sold finished to the merchant, as was the *grand drap* of Arras, at 7 quarters. See Espinas, *Draperie*, 1, table 2, and Espinas, *Documents*, nos. 115, 253, 296-7.

Table 3. Piece prices and inferred ell prices in Provins, 1294, and Florence, 1318-23

Provins		Florence						
	s./tournois	length	s./ell	lb a fior	av.	length	s./br.	
Douai	tinti	267-359	9.9-13.3	21**	52-84	62	40	31
Ypres	blue	182	6-3	7	43-60	51	42	24
Châlons	green	188-312	6.3-10.4	10	40-65	52	43	24
Châlons	blue	170-230	5.7-7.7	5	33-52	44	43	20
Lille	blue	229	7.9	7	31-47	37	42	18
Orchies	bl./medley	152	5.1	3	25-32	29	44	13
Paris	medley	168	4.3	3	31-33	32	56	11
Ypres	ray	331	10.0	18†	13-15	14	24	12
Ghent	ray	244	7.6	5	35-41	38	47	16
Poperinghe	ray	204	6.4	20	22-27	24	47	10
Arras	stanfort	132	2.9	2	31	31	61	10
Provins	bif. ray	155-185	5.5-6.6	40	12-24	19	71	5
Provins	ray	78-88	2.8-3.1	7	38-50	44	62	14
Beauvais	bl./medley	116	3.9	5	12-14	13	36	7
Lagny	ray	123	3.2	1	17	17	56	6
Montreuil	blue	91	3.6	28	35-56	40	44	18

* From Pegolotti † Confirmed by Pegolotti ‡ Coverture (half-stanforts) ** instances

Sources: Bauthier, 'Marchands siennois', pp. 87-107 (purchases of the Ranieri company); Sapori, *Compagnia de calimala*, pp. 282-303 (sales of the Del Bene company). The latter prices exclude costs of dyeing when done in Florence. Piece lengths are from Bourquelot, *Etudes*, I, pp. 254-5 (contemporary official lists in Champagne ells for the Champagne fairs) and from Pegolotti, *Pratica*, pp. 278-86.

Notes: Pegolotti's figures have been converted where appropriate according to the ratios: 34 Flemish ells:27 Champagne ells:19 Paris (Espinass, *Vie urbaine*, II, p. 474; a Douai clothier's document c. 1275), and 1 Flemish ell:1½ Florentine *braccia* (Pegolotti, p. 246). He states that variation in ell lengths in Flanders is "piccola cosa" (p. 236). Although his lengths are closely in line with guild specifications where comparison is possible, the figure for Douai has been corrected from 32 to 34 ells as above (confirmed by Bourquelot). The figures for Ghisteltes says is from Espinass and Pirenne, *Receuil*, I, p. 367.

Table 4. Retail prices in Florence, early fourteenth century, and Siena, 1277-8 (*s. braccia*)

	Del Bene, 1318-23		Alberti, 1329		Covoni, 1336-8		Peruzzi, 1337-8		Siena, 1277-8		
Douai	tinto	29-32	medley	14	tinto	42-4	tinto	29-31	Cambrai	red	36
Douai	blue	27-29	blue	21	blue	33	blue	26	Châlons	green	19-26
Châlons	blue	19	tinto	20	blue	33	Provins bl	16	Paris	tinto	19-21
Orchies	blue	12-14	St Denis	11					Provins	blue	20
Ghent	ray	8	ray	8-11					St Quentin	red	14
Ypres	ray	8	ray	7					Ypres	ray	13-15
Arras	tinto	9							Provins	ray	10-12
Caen	say	10	say	7½					Paris	ray	8
Ghistelles	say	9-10							Unident.	stanfort	8
Unident.	say	8-11	say	8	say	10			Caen	say	20
Toulouse	say		ray	6	tinto	10 (12-16)†			Arras	say	16-20
Florence	2.4*		tinto	7-10**	tinto	8-21		2.4*			

*Romagnuolo (coarse, used for alms) †Perpignan ‡1317 ** 1325

Sources: Saporì, *Compagnia, Libri degli Alberti, Libro giallo, Libri di commercio*, all *passim*; Astuti, *Libro dell'entrata, passim*.

Notes: All prices relate to small quantities and mainly single instances. Those of the Alberti are from stock inventories (including also Ghent ray at 25s.) which may account for their being lower than the others.

Table 5. Retail prices, circa 1300, in France and Germany

	Marseilles, 1278 s./canna	Grasse, 1308-9 s./canna	Lyon, 1320-3 s./ell	Nuremberg, 1304-5 hallerell (av. prices)
Ypres	36	40-41	Brussels	Ghent
Châlons	16-24	29-38	Malines	Ypres
Châlons	20-23	—	Louvain	Tournai
Paris	—	32	Provins	Huy
			Provins	
Paris	—	24-28	Sens	Ypres
Provins	23	—	Amiens	Poperinghe
Unident.	16	10-20	Huy	Bruges
Provins	9	25-28	Tournai	Ghent
Arras	8	—	Aubenton	
			St Denis	Poperinghe
Genoa	9-13	say	Ghent	Tournai
Florence	—	13-15	Ghent	Huy
Narbonne	12	24	Ypres	Aachen
Elne	10	—	Provins	Hinberg
Local	2	4-5	Provins	Loc. Fudertuch
			cam. viol.	plain
			misc.	plain
			green	fine pl.
			blue	fine pl.
			camelid	
			misc.	ray
			camelid	ray
			misc.	ray
			blue	ray
			white	ray
			white	ray
			ray	ray
			ray	ray/bl.
			ray (couv.)	green
			biffe	
			ray	
			ray	

Sources: Blancard, *Documents*, II, pp. 404-15; Aubenas, 'Commerce de draps', pp. 200-12; Meyer, 'Fragments', pp. 428-39; Chroust, *Handlungsbuch*, table 6. Apart from Nuremberg, the quantities are minimal.

marketed cloth in a wide range of qualities, types, and prices. It was far from being the case that, as one authority has claimed of the region, "everywhere similar sorts of high-priced cloths were produced", a statement that compounds two errors.⁷ For the second point to emerge is the remarkable degree of specialization. The scale of prices runs up in a continuum from *barracans* to scarlets. The latter might be ten times more expensive than the former. But the trade broke down broadly into two categories, although the borderline is imprecise. On the one hand were the fine coloured cloths, in the production of which a near monopoly was enjoyed by an élite comprising Douai, Ghent, Cambrai, Ypres, and Châlons (to which Lille and Provins have the best claim to be added). On the other was a miscellaneous range of generally much cheaper wool textiles, that included not only the special types such as stanforts, *biffes*, and rays but also less expensive plains and whites. The majority of members of the hanse manufactured only these sorts; and some, of which the great centre of Arras is the most notable example, concentrated almost exclusively upon one or another of the special types, which moreover were also produced by élite towns such as Ypres and Provins.

This division into two basic categories is apparent in the contemporary vocabulary of the trade. The term "coloured", often found in official documents such as schedules of duties and retail prices (tables 1, 8, and 9), always denotes a distinct and superior class of cloth. It is never employed for cheaper goods, which are referred to either simply by their place of manufacture or by their place of manufacture in conjunction with the name of one or other of the special types.⁸ In the Marseilles *leude* of 1228 *draps de color* without further qualification are distinguished from Arras and St Omer stanforts, Beauvais *barracans*, and mere *brous* (Bruges) for example, and pay a higher duty (table 8). Similarly, in the tariffs of Narbonne, Barcelona, and of Valencia, the rubric runs "drap de Gant, de Doaix, d'Ipre e de color".⁹ The classification was also applied in the centres of production. Four kinds of cloth were sold in the Ypres cloth hall according to a late thirteenth-century document: *panni tincti, enforciati, dimidii panii* (stanforts) and *saii*. They corresponded to the four quite distinct branches into which the local industry was divided.¹⁰

It is impossible to delimit the two categories exactly as there is no clear break in the gradation of prices. The lower limit of the coloureds is probably represented by the cheaper Châlons cloths, particularly the blues, which were very widely sold, and by the similarly priced blues of Provins, and Lille.¹¹ It will have been remarked that, even excluding scarlets, which were in a

⁷ Amann, *Anfänge*, p. 277.

⁸ The form, *Aracii, Belvacii, Valentini*, and *Sanquentini*, as it appears in the Genoese notarial contracts, for example, is often used (in both upper and lower case). See also tables 6 and 9. It is suggestive of a cheaper, less highly prized, commodity.

⁹ In Castile, and sometimes elsewhere, a further distinction was made between coloureds and blues, whites, and camelins which were cheaper (tables 1 and 9). In England the assize of cloth distinguished simply between coloureds and rays. See for example the Statute of Northampton, 1328. *Statutes*, I, p. 260.

¹⁰ Espinas and Pirenne, *Recueil*, III, pp. 458-72 and 705-7.

¹¹ The category clearly did not include the cheaper single colours such as those from St Quentin, Orchies, Poperinghe, Tournai, and Huy, even, probably, when, as in the case of the last two in Nuremberg, they were qualified as *bono* (tables 4 and 5).

class by themselves, the category of coloureds embraced a wide range of prices, determined both by differences in colour, and by variations in quality in the same colour, sometimes associated with different places of manufacture. One example may suffice to illustrate this. The Del Bene sold Châlons *smeraldini* at £39 9s.-£61 15s., and *verdi-bruni* at £57 2s.-£64 15s., while identical cloths from Douai fetched £63 10s.-£65 11s. and £56 14s.-£76 1s. respectively. The Ranieri purchases exhibit similar differences for the same cloths from the same centres. These disparities in quality are also clear from the guild regulations, the *grands draps* of Douai, for instance, being made in three distinct grades.¹² Even at this top end of the market there was a considerable differentiation.

In the lower, highly heterogeneous, category prices basically spanned the gap—and it was a wide one—between northern coloureds and the products of the regional industries serving the north Italian, southern French, and Iberian markets from which the data come. There were overlaps at both ends. Detailed commentary on the tabulated evidence is unnecessary. But it can be seen that the best rays, stanforts, *biffes*, and says approached and sometimes exceeded in price the cheaper Châlons blues and their equivalents.¹³ This is particularly evident in the Ranieri purchases (table 3). Rays were often made in two distinct qualities. This was the case in Ypres, Provins, and in Bruges (where, as will be shown, the higher grade was assimilable technically to coloured cloth, as it was doubtless elsewhere). The Portuguese retail schedule (table 1) rates Ypres *renforchiés* (normally rays) at almost twice the price of rayed stanforts (*coverture*); and the difference between the *biffes rayées* of Provins and the mere rays, probably also stanforts, is well documented.¹⁴

Although some cloths within this category were comparatively dear, the price was typically about 40-60 per cent of that of the lowest grade of coloureds. This was the case with Tournai say and Arras, St Omer and Valenciennes stanfort at the outset of the period in Genoa and Siena (tables 1 and 2); as it was with Caen and Ghistelles say, Ypres *coverture*, Orchies blue, and Arras and St Denis cloth a century later in Florence (table 3). It was true of St Denis and most Paris *biffes* in Aragon c. 1300 and of Valenciennes and St Omer cloth at the same time in Castile (table 6). The disparity is even more marked in the Portuguese and Castilian price lists (table 1), in both of which

¹² For the Del Bene and Ranieri, sources as in table 3. For Douai, Espinas and Pirenne, *Recueil*, II, p. 323.

¹³ It should be pointed out that stanforts, *biffes*, *renforchiés*, *cordes* etc., but not says, were all made both plain and rayed. It seems likely that rays were always made in one or other of these types, probably because the particular weaves that appear to have distinguished them were appropriate to the production of a striped effect. Some places seem to have made the special types only in this form. This was the case in Bruges where the *biffes* (*pijfelarts*) were renamed "Bruges stripes", and in Malines and Ardenburg where the *lame de biffe* was prohibited for any other cloth. It seems also to have been true of Ypres where the half stanforts marketed in Italy and Spain as *coverture* seem from the commercial evidence to have been exclusively rays, and where the *renforchiés* are assumed to be such in the relevant *keure* or guild regulation for the cloth. The outcome could be a division of the industry, as in Rouen, between the *oeuvre rayée* and the *grande draperie* making higher quality plains, the same division as in the English cloth assize. See Espinas and Pirenne, *Receuil*, I, p. 41 and nos. 138-41; III, no. 755; Joosen, 'Recueil', p. 531; *Ordonnances*, II, pp. 396-8.

¹⁴ See tables 3 and 5. The local assize (1273) distinguished four types of cloth, plains, *biffes*, rays, and stanforts, the last two paying half the rate of the first, a classification similar to that in Perpignan (1284, table 8). The distinction probably corresponded to that in the organization of the industry between "granz" and "petiz hostieux". Bourquelot, *Etudes*, I, p. 236; Chapin, *Villes de foires*, p. 68.

the *tinti* are rated three or four times as high as the numerous cheaper cloths from Arras, Valenciennes, Tournai, and elsewhere. At this level such cloths were much closer in price to the better sorts made by the north Italian, Languedoc, and even the Castilian industries. By the end of the period, when the first two admittedly had begun to upgrade their product, they often overlapped, as the Florentine market (table 3) shows in the case of the group of northern cloths just cited.¹⁵ Even earlier, however, the basic point still holds. In Siena (1227) locally made cloth fetched 2.6-3.5s. per *braccia*; Valenciennes and Arras stanfort 4-4.3s.; Ypres and Douai coloureds 7.2-11s. (table 2). In Lucca (1246) Florentine cloth fetched 21-30s. 1d. per *canna*, and that made in the town itself 20-34s., precisely the price (33s. 1d.-34s.) of the cheapest Arras cloth; while Ypres green fetched 56s.¹⁶ The Castilian schedule (table 1) lists nine kinds of cloth made in the kingdom, one at 7s. per *vara*, four at 4s. and four at 1s. 6d.-2s. 6d. The cheapest northern cloth (Châteaudun frieze) cost 3s., and a great variety of others 5-8s. It would have cost a Burgos townsman an extra 2s. 6d. an ell if he wanted a *cote* of Arras or of Valenciennes *renforchié* rather than Zamora ray at 4s. He would have had to pay 7s. 3d. more if he set his sights on Ypres blue or Lille *camelin*; while if, sumptuary laws permitting, he tried to ape the court in Ghent or Douai coloured the additional cost would have been 18s. 6d. an ell.

At this point it may be objected that key questions are being begged about the comparability of these cloths. Is it not misleading to assume that the scale of prices reflected a scale of quality in what was basically a homogeneous product? Did not the various special types that formed the bulk of cheaper northern exports possess on the contrary, as their different names suggest, particular characteristics of weight, weave, or finish that limited their use to particular purposes and meant that they were not interchangeable with the average local cloth or for that matter with the fine coloureds? Stanforts, for example, are usually considered in the literature a cloth of "the first quality", although they were without question relatively cheap.¹⁷ Was this perhaps (as has been argued to have been the case with *biffes*) because they were a light fabric and therefore employed less wool than coloureds while not inferior to them? In answering these questions the results of the discussion of manufacturing must be anticipated. These show that the basic reason why all these types were cheap was that they employed lower grade wool and worked it up by lower cost methods. They were certainly coarser than coloureds. Admittedly they may also have been somewhat lighter, although all of them, including most says, were of a woollen rather than worsted type. Household accounts and other records show, moreover, that they were used interchangeably with coloureds and local cloth for the same articles of dress in the comparatively limited repertory that characterized the thirteenth century. Which sorts were employed was a matter of status not of purpose. Although they were clearly not identical in their characteristics, it would not appear to be a serious

¹⁵ Hoshino, *Arte della lana*, passim, and the same author's 'Rise of the Florentine wool industry'. A similar if less marked upgrading can be traced in the successive guild statutes of Toulouse. Mulholland, *Early guild records*, passim.

¹⁶ Hoshino, *Arte della lana*, p. 97. See also table 10, for the structure of prices in the Orvieto market.

¹⁷ For example, Verlinden, 'Comercio de panos', p. 312.

distortion to regard all the cloths under discussion as belonging to a single homogeneous class, and to infer that the structure of prices basically mirrored the structure of the market. How deeply into the latter the cheaper northern cloths penetrated is another question, to which we will return.

III

Scattered though it is, the documentation that has been assembled is both comprehensive and consistent enough to make it possible, with the help of guild regulations, to classify nearly all the seventeen towns and the major centres outside the hanse according to the kind of cloth that they produced. The élite of towns in which the manufacture of fine coloured cloth was concentrated has already been mentioned; it was fairly small, comprising, it will be recalled, Douai, Ghent, Cambrai, Ypres, Châlons, Provins and perhaps Lille. Within this élite there are signs of a hierarchy. When it is a question of standards of excellence in contemporary literature it is the names of the first four of these towns that are invoked. In terms of price Douai usually comes at the top, the two Champagne towns Châlons and Provins at the bottom. There was also a tendency to specialize in particular colours. Cambrai was noted for its greens, Lille for its *camelins*, Dixmude (at a lower level) for its whites. In the Italian and Levant markets Châlons seems to have sold blues and green almost exclusively. Interestingly there appear to have been no new entrants into the élite between *circa* 1200 and the very end of the century, when Brussels and Malines, hitherto absent from the international record, suddenly emerge into the limelight.¹⁸

The record provides few instances of the remaining members of the hanse marketing coloured cloth or any cloth of comparable price. The best documented are Arras, St Omer, Valenciennes, Tournai, and Bruges, an indication that, taking the period as a whole, they were probably the most important. Where the description of their products goes beyond the eponymous, it refers almost always to one or other of the special types, within which general category there was again a marked tendency towards further specialization. Further documentation on these and other producers of cheaper cloth is provided in the following tables.

The most striking example of specialization is Arras. In nearly all the sources in which its name appears—and that for the thirteenth century means the great majority—it is associated with stanforts, and in most cases exclusively so. Although there was some production of *biffes* and says, the fortunes of this great cloth town were clearly founded on the stanfort. Bruges and Tournai specialized in says, as the Italian sources in particular make plain (tables 1 and 7). So did St Omer, although this emerges less clearly from the commercial record than from the town's guild regulations, set down about 1275, which among many references to the cloth contain the stipulation that for every bale of twelve says merchants should export at least one piece of *drap*.¹⁹ All these

¹⁸ van Uytven, 'Cloth in medieval literature'. On the rise of the Brabant industry, see Bautier, 'Place de la draperie'.

¹⁹ Besides the tabulated evidence, Tournai says are recorded in Venice in 1225, and Bruges in Como in 1228 (Laurent, *Grand commerce d'exportation*, pp. 70 and 74). The latter were made up into hose—probably the kind for which Bruges was famous during the period (van Uytven, 'Cloth in medieval literature', p. 155). It was sold by the Holzschuher of Nuremberg (table 5) and is mentioned in tailors' regulations in the Austrian town of Krems, 1305 (Rauch, *Rerum scriptores*, III, p. 361). Bruges, Tournai, Ypres (and St

Table 7. *Statutory cloth lengths (local braccia) and sales in northern Italy*

		Bologna	Verona	Pisa	Cremona (sales)
Arras	stanfort	63	63	64	stanfort
Bruges	say	30	31	—	say
Montreuil		30	36	—	blue
Paris/St Denis		52	—	52	drap/biffe
Provins	ray	—	—	36	—
Rouen/Louviers	ray	18	18/17	—	—
St Quentin		43	26/39	—	—
Valenciennes		36	—	36	ray/valenc.
Ypres	ray	40	42	44	ray

Sources: Gaudenzi, *Statuti*, II, pp. 129-31; Simeoni, *Antichi statuti*, p. 36; Bonaini, *Statuti inediti*, III, p. 44; Astegiano, *Codex*, I, pp. 296-7.

Notes: The Bologna list, dateable *circa* 1250, includes also Arras *biffes* and says and Ypres says (as does the Venetian tariff of 1265, table 1) and Dixmude whites and *tinti*. The Pisa and Verona lists, from transcriptions of 1308 and 1319, appear from their content contemporary with those of Bologna and of Venice (table 1). Verona includes *brasii* as well as Bruges says. Although on neither the Verona nor Pisa lists, Beauvais cloth appears in (earlier?) tariffs in both cities, where it is distinguished from the general class of "French" cloth, in Verona, p. 488, in company with *raze*, in Pisa, p. 104, with Rouen (both rays and rated at half "French" cloth). The Cremona sales, from notarial contracts 1256-8, provide a further sounding of the north Italian market. They include coloureds from Cambrai, Châlons, Douai, Provins, and Ypres—all the élite apart from Ghent. Among the length lists the élite is fully represented only in Verona: Ghent is missing in Bologna, Ghent and Douai in Pisa.

towns, however, marketed other lines, the relative importance of which certainly varied over time. St Omer sold stanforts in northern Italy, southern France and Castile (tables 1, 2 and 8), Tournai cheap plains in Lyon and Nuremberg and probably also in Castile (tables 5 and 9). From regulations of around 1300 it appears that these were by then the chief manufacture of the latter town.²⁰

The Bruges *keures*, which date from the 1280s, show that besides says, rays (apparently *biffes*) were a major product, particularly the cheaper grades. (It was prescribed that clothiers make at least one piece of the finer wool-dyed for every four of the coarser hank-dyed variety.) Bruges rays feature in several contemporaneous commercial records. But their history goes back much earlier. In a Barcelona toll of 1222 "Bruges" is taken to be synonymous with ray cloth: "*pecia de bruydes et totus alius vergatus*". This gives a clue to the kind of cloth probably referred to when this form of designation (or the simple "drap de Bruydes") is employed, as it is in all the official southern French and Spanish documents (tables 1 and 8), including several of the older Castilian *fueros*, such as those of Cuenca and Sepulveda. In these last it is usually associated with *raz*—both were taxed at half the rate of Ypres cloth.

Omer) says are covered in the Castilian price list of 1268 (table 1) as are the same three (and Ghent) in a roughly contemporary Castilian customs schedule (Castro, 'Aranceles', pp. 10-1). Ypres was clearly an important producer of the cloth: it had a distinct guild organization (Espinass and Pirenne, *Receuil*, III, nos. 756 and 871); it sold in Genoa; and was subject to duty in Venice (table 1). For the St Omer regulation, *Receuil*, III, no. 651:194.

²⁰ The Castilian customs schedule mentioned above (Castro, 'Aranceles', pp. 10-1) itemizes stanforts of St Omer and *contrafechos* thereof, from which it seems probable that the very cheap *santomieri* and *contrafechos* imported into the country on such a large scale in 1293 (table 9) were also stanforts. For Tournai see Dubois, *Textes et fragments*, *passim*.

Table 8. *Cloth duties in southern France and Spain (d./piece)*

	Marseilles 1228	Narbonne* mid. 13 cent.	Perpignan mid 13 cent.	Perpignan 1284	Barcelona 1271	Valencia pre-1273
Coloured	12	6	12	4	8	6
Arras	stanfort	{ raz 3 stanfort 6	rases 4 stanfort 8	drap 4	snf./bif.	stanfort 4
Beauvais	barracan	barract 4	barract 4	drap 3	barracan 4	—
Bruges	Brous 36†	bruges 3	Brugia 4	drap 4	Bruydas 6	bruides 4
Chartres	cordat 8	chartres 3	Xartres 5	—	—	—
Dixmude	—	—	white 6	white 4	—	white 4
Huy	—	—	drap 8	drap 3	—	—
Paris/St Denis	—	—	biffet 6	drap 4	biffe	biffet 4
Provins	—	stanfort 6	Prois 6	ray 4	—	—
Rouen/Louviers	—	—	—	barracan 1	—	—
St Omer	dr/barrac 4	drap 3	—	drap 4	drap 8	stanfort 4
St Quentin	stanfort 12	stanfort 3	drap 8	—	—	sencanti 4
Valenciennes	—	—	drap 8	valenc. 3	Valenc. 6	—
Ypres	—	—	ray 6	ray(3p.) 3	—	ray 4

* brokerage rates † per bale ‡ unidentified

Sources: Méry and Guindon, *Histoire analytique*, 1, p. 345; Mouynès, *Ville de Narbonne*, pp. 206-8; Gual, *Vocabulario*, pp. 80-1, 113-8, 130, 142-7.

Notes: Ghent, Douai, and Ypres are included with coloureds in the Valencia tariff, and (with Cambrai) in those of Perpignan, although here they are not specified as such. In these three and in Barcelona Châlons is not associated with the coloured producers, which suggests that the cloth that it sold in the Iberian market was not of the top quality. See also table 6. The cheap *raz* are also found in the Genoese contracts (*aracti*). The series may be completed with an 1190 tariff from St Raphael (*Liber jurium*, 1, pp. 360-2), covering as well as coloureds, Chartres, Beauvais, Arras, and Etampes (also in Marseilles 1228); and with a tariff, also possibly from the twelfth century, from St Gilles (Bondurand, *Leude*, pp. 280-1) covering Beauvais, Bruges, and Arras.

Whether or not it was always rayed, *bryudes* was certainly a cheap cloth, in the early Marseilles and Perpignan *leudes* exceptionally so. It was above all by their low price that the products of the last member of the group, Valenciennes, were characterized. It seems to have concentrated exclusively on the bottom end of the market (tables 1, 6 and 9). The technical features of the *rafforzadas* and *cuerdas* that were so popular in Spain are unclear; but the former appear to have been allied to *biffes*.²¹

What is clear is that the range of lines, within which the five towns tended to specialize, was similar, and did not extend beyond the cheaper category consisting essentially of special types. It is true that the Bruges *keures* give quite a prominent place to coloureds, as to a lesser extent do those of St Omer. (In Arras and Valenciennes they are entirely marginal, and in Tournai apparently non-existent at this time.) But before 1300 they had not in either of the two former cases made any discernible impact on international trade. It was only during the fourteenth century that Bruges entered the ranks of the quality producers.

It is impossible here to analyse the evidence for the remaining seventeen towns, but it is fair to claim that it warrants the conclusion that none of them produced cloth in the higher price bracket in any quantity—apart from Dixmude and probably Amiens and Abbeville.²² The same is true, except for Rouen, of the centres outside the hanse, although Rouen too is more often associated, like its neighbour Louviers, with cheap rays and *barracans*. Chartres is named only in connexion with lower grade goods,²³ Caen almost exclusively with says. Lastly Paris, to judge by the number of references the most important of these centres and one on a par with the major members of the hanse, emerges as the producer of a wide range of cheaper cloths, but particularly (with its suburb St Denis) of *biffes*. Parisian *biffes* are the first (1239) and most frequently mentioned in the Genoese contracts; and by the

²¹ Espinas and Pirenne, *Receuil*, 1, nos. 137-48; no. 139:44 for the regulation on hank- and wool-dyed rays. Gual, *Vocabulario*, pp. 59-60. Allen, *Forum Conche* (Cuenca), pp. 128-9. Saez, *Fueros de Sepulveda*, pp. 223-4. For the range of Valenciennes products, see Espinas, *Documents*, *passim*.

²² The analysis may be exemplified from the case of Huy, clearly a centre of some importance and interesting as a solitary outlier from the main body of hanse members, situated on the Meuse south of Liège. In Lyon and Nuremberg circa 1300 it sold cheap plains (table 5), a description that seems appropriate even to the *boni* sold in the latter place. Much earlier in Trier (1248) its cloths with those of Beauvais rated a duty half that of Flanders cloth (Eltester and Goerz, *Unkundenbuch*, III, p. 700); and in Vienna at roughly the same time they paid the same as St Quentin, rather more than Valenciennes, rather less than Tournai (Tomaschek, *Rechte und Freiheiten*, 1, p. 7). In a quite different market, Perpignan (1284), Huy cloth with Beauvais and Valenciennes was rated at the lowest level for northern cloth (table 8). Only five references, but all consistent. A similar analysis of the data for Beauvais, St Quentin, and Poperinghe, among the more important, and Orchies, Aubenton, and Bailleul among the less important members would yield the same results. Montreuil cloth is difficult to classify. Amiens and Abbeville fetched high prices in Genoa; the latter intermediate ones in the two Iberian price lists (table 1), matched in a Venetian tariff of the period, which rates it close to Amiens (Roberti, 'Racio lombardi'). The cloths of both towns are included in the top category comprizing mainly plains but also the best rays, in the Castilian customs schedule cited above (Castro, 'Aranceles', pp. 10-1). The inference that both belonged typically to the fine category, if at the bottom end, is supported by their guild regulations, in which the accent is on *draperie ointe*, the distinguishing feature of fine cloth. Thierry, *Receuil des monuments* 1, pp. 340 and 521 (Amiens 1308 and 1346); and IV, pp. 66 and 130 (Abbeville 1300 and 1342).

²³ In the Castilian *fueros*, Chartres cloth is taxed at half the rate of Arras and Bruges. See for example Allen, *Forum Conche*, pp. 128-9. At the fairs of Chalon-sur-Saône (1278), it was sold (like that of Etampes with which it is sometimes associated, table 8) in the *halle de la burelerie* not the *grande halle*. Dubois, *Foires de Chalon*, pp. 63-4 (Burel was one of the coarsest kinds of cloth, and did not usually enter into long-distance trade).

turn of the century they crop up everywhere in the Mediterranean market zone. Together with Provins the city appears to have dominated the market in this type of cloth. The overall division of labour within the whole region that emerges from the above survey implies a highly developed and extensive market. That this was already established before 1200 is shown by the fact that the pattern is quite evident in Genoa at that date.

IV

How important a constituent of northern exports was the miscellaneous category of cheaper cloths? In establishing that among the northern cloth-manufacturing towns, those that marketed only cheaper cloths were in the great majority, we have already taken a first step towards answering this question. But it is an uncertain one. Whereas the élite of members producing fine coloured cloth were all major centres—in its heyday the annual output of Châlons was reputed to have reached 36,000 pieces—many of the others were comparatively small.²⁴ Yet this was by no means generally the case: Arras, St Omer, Tournai, Bruges, Valenciennes, and Paris all qualify as “grandes draperies urbaines”. It has been claimed that Arras was the biggest producer of all in the earlier thirteenth century.²⁵ Secondly, all the élite towns also produced cheaper cloth. In Ypres, Ghent, and Provins this formed a major branch of production: how important in the first two is shown by the way they seized the opportunity provided by the collapse of the Count’s authority in Flanders in the 1340s to try forcibly to stamp out production of *strijpte alf-laken* (the cheaper form of rays) in Poperinghe and Termonde, their two main competitors in this line. In the case of Provins, there is little doubt that of the 50,000 pieces said to have been made annually during the 1270s, at the peak of its prosperity, the majority were *biffes*, rays, and stanforts.²⁶

On the side of demand much of the evidence has already been cited in the discussion of specialization. Especially useful here are the official lists of duties, prices, and standard lengths, as itemization by the authorities arguably implies that the trade was of some importance. The evidence is largely confined to northern Italy, southern France, and the Iberian peninsula, including the three major ports, Venice, Genoa, and Marseilles, serving the Italian south and the Levant. It shows that although the “élite” towns are more consistently represented than any of the others apart from Arras, there were no significant differences as far as market geography is concerned, at least in this vast Mediterranean zone. Fine coloureds and the range of cheaper types were equally widely diffused. The one early glimpse that can be obtained into the central European market (through the Vienna *Wagenmauth* dateable to the

²⁴ The figure claimed by the clothiers in 1369, by which time production had fallen away drastically. *Ordonnances*, v, p. 193.

²⁵ Jansen, ‘Handel en nijverheid’, p. 159. In 1344 the Valenciennes cloth hall had 320 stalls (Espinass, *Documents*, no. 436). Clearly the Pirenne view contrasting *grandes draperies urbaines* producing top quality cloth and the smaller centres producing cheaper articles does not hold for the thirteenth century. A counter example is Dixmude, the scarlets of which are recorded in Genoa and Marseilles.

²⁶ The conflicts can be traced in de Pauw, *Ypre jeghen Poperinghe* and Espinass and Pirenne, *Recueil*, III, nos. 627-49 and 715-27. The Provins figure is for 1276 (Chapin, *Villes de Foires*, p. 69).

early thirteenth century) reveals the same picture: side by side with Ypres and Ghent are Arras, Tournai, and Valenciennes among others.²⁷ About relative volumes, the necessary quantitative evidence is almost completely lacking, apart from a few instances at the level of the individual firm. There is one exception, however, which is of the greatest interest—a detailed return of cloths coming into the two Castilian ports of San Sebastian and Fuentearabia during the course of the year 1293 (table 9).

Table 9. *Imports into San Sebastian and Fuentearabia, 1293*

		Price (<i>maravedi</i>)	Average	Pieces	%	Value (<i>maravedi</i>)	%
Coloureds etc*		500-600	545	265	5.9	145,730	16.0
Blues etc†		270-400	337	240		80,950	
Rays/biffes		280-350	305	45		13,720	
Says		280-300	296	10		2,960	
Total		270-400	331	295	6.5	97,630	10.7
Arras	raz	220-270	258	211		54,450	
Tournai	tornaes	200-240	215	158		34,000	
Total		200-270	240	378	8.4	90,650	10.0
Valenciennes	rafforzadas etc‡	140-200	167	2,420		404,750	
St Omer	santomieri**	135-170	147	1,022		149,790	
Misc.		100-180	151	142		21,380	
Total		100-200	161	3,584	79.3	575,920	63.3
Grand total				4,522	100.0	909,930	100.0

* includes 2 scarlets at 1200 † also camelins, blanquets and other varieties

‡ also *cuerdas* and *valancinas de Maubeuge* ** also *contrafechos de St Omer*

Source: Gaibros, *Historia*, I, appendix.

Notes: The dearer cloths are mainly unidentified, but coloureds (16) and blues (34) came particularly from Ypres, *camelins* (27) from Lille and rays (9) from Ghent. The accounts also include 350 pieces from Narbonne and Carcassonne at 50-220 *maravedi*.

The overwhelming preponderance of cheap cloth is remarkable, above all from Valenciennes which comprised 53.5 per cent by quantity and 44.5 per cent by value. There is no particular reason to suppose the year exceptional and the proportions unrepresentative of the Castilian market. That the pattern was also characteristic of Mediterranean Spain is suggested by the inventory (1307) of a Perpignan merchant—the town was an important point of entry—covering a stock sufficiently large and varied to have a good chance of being typical. Here the cheap cloths (in the great majority) are represented by St Denis *biffes* and Ypres *cutertas*.²⁸ The Iberian market was probably an extreme case. Even in Italy, however, a much richer country, and one in which domestic production of lower quality lines was much more highly developed, there was still considerable room for the cheaper northern imports. This is shown by transactions recorded in Orvieto in 1299 (table 10), and by the purchases of the Del Bene of Florence. These amounted to just over 1,000 pieces 1318-22, and 61 per cent belonged to the cheaper category, the great

²⁷ Tomaschek, *Rechte und Freiheiten*, I, p. 7. Of the three only Tournai is still included in a similar tariff of circa 1300 (p. 93). Of the cheaper producers Tournai seems to have been the major supplier of the German market during the period. See Amann, 'Deutschland und die Tuchindustrie', *passim*.

²⁸ Alart, *Documents*, pp. 377-81. Out of 365 pieces, 139 were Ypres *cutertas* (half-cloths), 87 were St Denis, and 61 Paris (almost certainly mainly *biffes*). For prices see table 6.

majority (45 per cent) being Caen says and most of the rest (11 per cent) low-priced Ypres and Poperinghe rays. By contrast of the 176 cloths bought by the Ranieri (1294) only 41 per cent came under this head. Cheaper cloths, mainly from Huy and Poperinghe again preponderated (56 per cent) in the retail sales of nearly 6,000 ells of northern cloth made by the Holzschuher of Nuremberg (1304/5). Only vague conclusions can be drawn from such isolated examples; and the same is true of the sample of some 2,500 pieces obtainable from the Genoese notarial records (1200-60), which are highly erratic in their coverage from year to year. Nevertheless, some items stand out strongly enough to provide pointers to the nature of the Levant and south Italian trades with which the transactions were mainly concerned. Out of about 1,000 pieces negotiated during the first two decades some 200 were stanforts mainly from Arras and 150 were Tournai says. In the last two decades stanforts, again mainly from Arras, were still a major item, accounting for about 340 out of something over 1,250 pieces. There were about 100 Provins rays and 70 *biffes*. It is impossible to classify the remaining cloths precisely. But most were probably coloureds, particularly from Ypres (170) earlier and Châlons (336) later. Shipments to Acre and Messina from Marseilles (1248) again show Arras as second only to Châlons as a supplier.²⁹

V

The wide variation in the price of northern cloths used for basically similar purposes, the fact that the cheapest among them were close in price to the products of local industries and that in some areas these formed the bulk of sales, casts doubt on the accepted view that lumps them indiscriminately together as, in the words of one of its proponents, "luxury goods catering for an aristocracy of lay and ecclesiastical dignitaries". This view is based on *a priori* reasoning rather than evidence about consumption, of which there is little. It is assumed that transport costs during this period were such as to limit long-distance trade to goods with a very high ratio of value to weight or bulk, and hence to the most expensive cloths—the trade in which is sometimes compared to that in spices. It is claimed further that the risks of the trade were such as to require very high unit profits if it were to be remunerative. Local producers were therefore shielded from competition in all but a narrow range of high-priced goods, "which only the rich could afford". If the seventeen towns came to dominate this restricted market it was because of advantages that they possessed on the supply side, and notably their privileged access to top quality English wools.³⁰

This argument is open to question at each stage. In the early fourteenth century—and there is no reason to suppose things were much different before—the cost of carrying cloth between the northern centres of production

²⁹ Saporì, *Compagnia di calimala*, pp. 273-8 (cloth under 15s. per *braccia*, table 3); Bautier, 'Marchands siennois', pp. 87-107 (cloth under 5.4s. per ell, table 3: the rays here were unusually dear); Chroust, *Handlungsbuch*, tables IV-VI (cloth under 100 hall. per ell, table 5); Doehard, *Relations, passim*; Blancard, *Documents, passim*.

³⁰ Citations from Jansen, 'Handel en nijverheid', p. 159 (referring to twelfth-century cloth, said to be less precious than thirteenth-century), and Thrupp, *Medieval industry*, p. 249. For the argument generally see works referred to in n. 1.

and Mediterranean markets was not so high as to make coarser cloths prohibitively costly. In fact, as the Del Bene records make plain, it was comparatively moderate. Even for white Caen says, the cheapest cloth imported, which after being dyed and finished in Florence retailed at a price similar to much local (and other northern) cloth, transport only added 7·5/8·8 per cent to the *primo costo*. As to risk, the company did not see fit to insure these cloths, although they did so in the case of the more valuable coloureds for the sea passage between Nice and Pisa (which tended to even out the difference due to proportionately lower transport costs). Admittedly other costs (the most important being duties) brought the total increment up to 16-19 per cent over prime cost for the two shipments of says recorded.³¹ But this level of disadvantage could easily have been counterbalanced on the supply side. What probably counted most here was access not to expensive English wools—which, as will be shown, were not normally employed for the lower category of northern cloth—but to cheap, middle-grade, locally produced wools, such as were not available to the north Italian or Languedoc industries at this time, the first of which relied upon imports for its better products. No one suggests that these Mediterranean industries were producing luxury cloth during the thirteenth century. But they too were actively engaged in the Levant trade.³² Moreover, the cost of transport did not prevent textiles that were far cheaper than any of these woollen cloths being traded over long distances. German linen, retailing at one *s./braccia*, was exported on a large scale from Genoa (and with Milanese stanfort is recorded as far afield as Persia), as was Lombard fustian, which also took the route north to the Champagne fairs.³³

Although the restrictive effects of transport costs (and risks) on medieval trade have been exaggerated, there was obviously a price floor below which northern cloth could not compete with that produced closer at hand. But the price relativities discussed earlier do not present the sharp discontinuities that might be expected if northern cloth constituted a distinct class of luxury goods. Rather the typical curve runs fairly smoothly from the cheapest local cloth up to the dearest scarlet, suggesting that the market followed a similar pattern and that so far as northern cloth was concerned it was not confined to an “exclusive public” but embraced quite a wide range of consumers in terms of income, even if these all came from the better-off sections of the community. The point is well illustrated by sales registered in Orvieto in 1299, which show moreover that most of the northern cloth sold came within the price bracket immediately above that of the most popular Florentine cloth.

VI

Such conjectures might be superfluous were the direct evidence about consumption more abundant. Much of what there is comes from royal and aristocratic accounts, which might be expected to give a misleadingly exclusive

³¹ Saporì, *Compagnia di calimala*, pp. 81-99.

³² According to Lopez, *Studi*, p. 78, n. 1, Lombard cloth exports from Genoa were as important as northern in volume terms.

³³ Doehard, *Relations, passim*; ‘Testamento di Pietro Vioni, Veneziano’, *Archivio Veneto*, 50 (1883), pp. 161-5 (will made at Tauris, 1262); Chiaudano, ‘Contratti di cambio’, pp. 648-9.

Table 10. *Cloth sales at Orvieto, 1299*

price <i>s/canna</i>	Florence		Northern		Total	
	<i>pieces</i>	%	<i>pieces</i>	%	<i>pieces</i>	%
15-20	66	23.0	—	—	66	10.0
20-30	203	71.0	12	3.0	215	33.0
30-40	18	6.0	219	62.0	237	37.0
40-50	—	—	80.5	23.0	80.5	13.0
50+	—	—	44.5	12.0	44.5	7.0
Total	287	100.0	356.0	100.0	643	100

Source: Hoshino, *Arte della lana*, p. 99. The ambiguity in the range of prices is in this source.

emphasis to the feudal élite. Interestingly, however, these accounts afford evidence about the use of the cheaper sort of northern cloth and suggest that it was chiefly purchased for servants' clothing. At the court of Aragon, for which a detailed picture can be obtained, St Denis *biffe* at 10-13s. per *canna* was bought exclusively for menial employees of the various departments of the household, such as grooms, cellarmen, cooks, and even washerwomen. Knights, heads of departments, and other higher officials were allocated coloured at 25-35s. per *canna*. The royal family itself wore much more expensive cloth (including scarlet) at 55-90s. per *canna*—luxury cloth “in the full force of the term”. Much the same happened in Castile, only here cheap St Omer and Valenciennes cloth took the place of St Denis.³⁴ That the employment of such cloth for menials did not reflect conspicuous consumption by royalty, but was common practice, is shown by the fact that the Portuguese price regulations of 1253 include a clause stating that when such a person (*rapax*) is given “a cape of burel and a tunic of *valancina*” in lieu of wages it should count for 30s.³⁵ Moreover, the Aragonese crown made bulk purchases of St Denis and Valenciennes cloth—one order in 1284 was for upwards of 500 pieces—for crossbowmen and other foot soldiers.³⁶ Clearly these and the other similarly priced cloths that were so widely sold in the Iberian market were comparatively coarse, hardly appropriate it might be thought for the apparel of the knightly class, but perhaps quite widely worn by those of lower social status.

The Iberian market may well have been exceptional, as has been suggested. A similar pattern can be seen elsewhere, however, in purchases by the counts of Savoy (1281) and of Artois (1310/35), for example,³⁷ and by the count Ulrich von Truhendingen, a minor magnate, who was the most important customer of the Holzschuher of Nuremberg, and who bought Ypres coloured for himself and the better Tournai cloth for his dependants, including his *meretricem*. About 60 per cent of the Holzschuhers' sales were to those from

³⁴ Hurtebize, *Libros de tesoreria, passim*; Gaibros, *Historia*, I, appendix.

³⁵ *Portugalliae monumenta*, I, 192. For the definition of the term, *rapax*, see Corominas, *Diccionario* and Machado, *Dicionário*. The latter cites a Portuguese will of 1337 which included a legacy of two *covadas de valencina* to each *rapax* employed in the household.

³⁶ Puiggari, *Estudios*, p. 65.

³⁷ Cibrario, *Economia politica*, III, pp. 363-77. The purchases run from £46 for a scarlet for the count of Savoy, £21.75 brunet for *cavaleri*, £16 camelín and *biffe* for *scuderi*, £9.5 Paris ray for *servienti*, and £5.5 unidentified ray for *garzoni*. Similarly in the Artois purchases. Espinas, *Draperie*, II, p. 919; Espinas and Pirenne, *Recueil*, III, no. 675.

the *milieu* of the nobility, which shows what a major market it could provide. But it would be a mistake to think that all or even perhaps most of this cloth, only 40 per cent of which can be classified as fine coloured, was worn by nobles themselves. Although some did also buy the cheaper sort for their own and particularly their children's use, much of it was bought for, and also by, servants and retainers. Even the small fry among the nobility could and did afford cloth in the higher price bracket: at Grasse the local knights and *demoiseaux* (squires) seem to have bought mainly Ypres and Châlons coloured and better quality Paris and Provins *biffe*—an example that can be repeated a few years later at another small Provençal town, Brignoles.³⁸

It is, however, rather to the towns that one should turn to find out how far down the social scale the market for northern cloth reached. There were countless places like the two Provençal towns just mentioned. Here the market appears to have been confined to a small élite of notaries, doctors, merchants, and clerics (who sometimes bought more expensive cloth). Just as their noble neighbours cannot be compared in wealth or status with the feudal magnates, these families cannot be compared with the patricians of Genoa and Florence and other cities, but rather with the middling stratum. None of the retail books of the Florentine merchants of the early fourteenth century has survived. But some idea of the consumption of this class can be gained by the sales recorded by the Del Bene to one of their *fattori* (salaried employees), which covered many of the cloths handled by the firm, Caen and Ghistelles say, Arras, Ypres ray, Orchies and even Châlons blue, but interestingly nothing of the top quality. The class was comparatively numerous; and given the number of sizeable cities in Italy it must have constituted a major source of demand in what was probably the most important single market for northern cloth. Elsewhere too there is evidence that the market reached beyond the ruling notables. In Nuremberg it included teachers and of course tradesmen, while the clerical component, everywhere important, was also stratified. Somewhat later, in the hanseatic port of Rostock, purchasers are recorded from no less than 29 different trades.³⁹ The butcher, the baker, and candlestick maker may have been people of some small substance when guild masters, but they hardly qualify as "an aristocracy of lay dignitaries". Despite the exiguousness of the evidence, it seems safe to conclude that both in its noble and bourgeois components the market for northern cloth was far more differentiated in terms of income than the accepted view implies, a contention that fits well with the wide variation in cloth quality evident from an investigation of the manufacturing process (section VII). There is no evidence that it extended to the "poor" either in town or country. But to state that it was confined to the "rich" is true only if that class is defined to include all social groups apart from the "poor".

VII

How did the cheaper types of textile differ from the fine coloured cloths and among themselves in their characteristics and in the raw materials and

³⁸ Chroust, *Handlungsbuch*, tables IV, V and pp. 1-74 and 115-21; Aubenas, 'Commerce des draps', pp. 200-12; Masson Bessière, 'Commerce et société', pp. 154-64.

³⁹ Saporì, *Compagnia di calimala*, pp. 345-53; Chroust, *Handlungsbuch*, pp. 89-114; Koppmann, *Johann Tolners Handlungsbuch*, pp. xix-xx.

methods of manufacture employed? A close reading of the guild regulations that survive from the five major centres specializing in their production, Arras, St Omer, Valenciennes, Tournai, and Bruges, as well as from Ypres with its varied output and Douai the leader in quality, makes it possible to go some way towards answering this question.⁴⁰

A first conclusion is that the diversification does not seem to have been along woollen/worsted lines. The classic eighteenth-century accounts of Roland and Duhamel suggest that in terms of the criteria of weight, warp count, and density, and of the finishing processes, almost all the varieties of wool textile entering into international trade in the thirteenth century were basically woollens.⁴¹ Admittedly, a combed rather than a carded yarn was used. (There is no documentary evidence of carding before the following century and it was certainly not standard practice.) But this was true of the whole range of cloths from says to superfines. Clearly combing (in conjunction with rock spinning, which was the norm) did not produce the characteristics later associated with it. The typically low warp densities point in fact to a loosely spun woollen yarn. Often, as in Ypres, Bruges, Douai, and Châlons, the cheaper types, stanforts, *biffes*, and rays, were less densely warped than the coloureds, indicating a coarser yarn, although this was not always the case. Only says stand out as a distinct category with consistently higher densities, which suggests that the warp yarn was closer to a worsted.⁴² But these were far lower than the densities found in the says that became so popular in the later fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries.⁴³ Unlike the latter, moreover, the early says were heavily fulled: those of Arras, for example, shrunk by over a third in width. In this respect, as in the finishing processes of raising and shearing, there appear to have been no major differences between any of these cloths. St Omer says could be mistaken for stanforts.⁴⁴ Like the says of Arras and Bruges, they were clearly for the most part what were called in contemporary Italian commercial records *saie cardate*, similar to the later *saies drappées* or cloth serge, a form of half-worsted.⁴⁵ The cheaper types at least were also similar in weight. Valenciennes *biffes*, *renforchiés*, *cordes* and cheap plains were all between 0.42 and 0.47 lb./sq. ell. Arras *grands draps* and says, Tournai *demi-draps*, and Bruges says fell within the same limits.⁴⁶ These kinds of cloth were generically described as *legiere draperie* in Douai, and it is

⁴⁰ The basic texts are: Espinas and Pirenne, *Recueil*, I, nos. 63, 66, 69, 77, 97-102 (Arras); I, 137-50 (Bruges); II, 24-46, 275-8, 348-9, 369-74, 380-90, and IV, 928-30 (Douai); III, 651 and 658 (St Omer); III, 750-93 (Ypres); Espinas, *Documents* (Valenciennes); Dubois, 'Textes et fragments', pp. 145-65 and 219-35 (Tournai). To avoid an intolerable plethora of footnotes, specific citation has been kept to a minimum. A full discussion of what are often obscure texts, some as early as the thirteenth century, would be out of place here.

⁴¹ Duhamel, *Draperie*; Roland, *Etoffes*.

⁴² In Ypres, for example, *draps de sort* were 1968 across 11 quarters in the loom; stanforts 1080 across 10, says 2600 across 8½. (Espinas and Pirenne, *Recueil*, III, nos. 753, 756, 781). In Châlons the range was 1000-2000 ends, but only rays could be made under 1600 (Fagniez, *Documents*, I, pp. 151-3). The 1600 minimum for coloureds was common.

⁴³ In Tournai, for example, says were 1800 across 1½ ell (Dubois, 'Textes et fragments', p. 229). By this time they were woven on a narrow loom.

⁴⁴ Espinas and Pirenne, *Recueil*, III, no. 651:137.

⁴⁵ *Saie plane* are also mentioned, but they seem to have been less common, and do not appear to correspond with the says in guild regulations.

⁴⁶ Espinas, *Documents*, nos. 296-301 (Valenciennes); Espinas and Pirenne, *Recueil*, I, no. 101:1, 2 and 34 (Arras), and I, pp. 349, 359 and 507 (Bruges); Dubois, 'Textes et fragments', p. 148 (Tournai).

possible that they were somewhat lighter than coloureds, to which quality control by weight was not normally applied. An exception was Provins where coloureds weighed 20 and *biffes* (of the same length) 17 *grandes livres*.⁴⁷ Where the various special types did differ was in the construction of the weave, a subject too intricate to discuss here.

The technical characteristics so far noted do little to explain the great difference in price between coloureds and the great majority of special types and the cheaper plains. Unquestionably this reflected a difference in quality—in the first place that of the raw material employed. It is a truism that the best medieval wool was English. For Pirenne its easy availability was the foundation of the northern industry's prosperity, the key to its domination of the European market in luxury cloth. It has recently been argued that this emphasis is excessive and that the role of "native" wools from the wider region of northern France and the Netherlands has been seriously underestimated.⁴⁸ Moreover, cheaper wools from other parts of the British Isles were also imported on a large scale. While the evidence precludes any firm conclusions about the relative importance of these different sources of supply, it does strongly suggest that in the five major centres that concentrated on cheaper goods—and by analogy in similar situations elsewhere—English wool was employed only to a limited degree, less than Scottish and Irish wool, and much less than *laine nostrée*, as it was called.⁴⁹

The picture was very different in the fine cloth centres. In Douai the traditional *grande draperie*, embracing the range of coloureds mentioned in the trading records, was largely made from English wool, and it seems to have been used exclusively at least for the *draps de sorte* of Ypres. Native wool was banned for these, as was Irish wool generally. The clearest evidence comes from Louvain (1298) one of the major centres of the rapidly developing Brabant industry. There English wool was used exclusively for all but the lowest grade of coloureds (and for the best says and wool-dyed rays). The lowest grade was made from common English or from native wool (as in Douai), while the latter, presumably of a coarser sort, was used for stanforts, ordinary says, and yarn-dyed rays. There is little information on the relative prices of all these wools. But as can be learned from the indispensable Pegolotti the English wools imported into Flanders themselves differed greatly in price; and there was presumably a similar variation at a lower price level in Scottish, Irish, and native wools.⁵⁰ Clearly the raw material employed by the industry

⁴⁷ Bourquelot, *Etudes*, I, p. 247. Comparisons are full of pitfalls not only because of possible variations in weights and measures, but also in the state of the cloth when tested. Later evidence from the Netherlands suggests that the weight difference between the traditional coloureds and the special types is unlikely to have been great.

⁴⁸ Verhulst, 'Laine indigène', pp. 281-322.

⁴⁹ In the guild regulations of Tournai and Valenciennes English wool is mentioned only once (in the context of cheap fell and lambswool); in those of St Omer much less frequently than Scottish, and less than Irish and Welsh wool. The latter wools were all used in Arras and there too there is a suggestion in the records that they were more important. In Bruges plains and rays were graded in four qualities, according to whether English, Scottish, Irish or Flemish wool was used (Espinass and Pirenne, *Recueil*, I, no. 141:67), and as the commercial evidence shows the top grade was not a major article of production. Says were particularly associated with Irish wool, evidently particularly suited to the fabric, which was exported by the Irish themselves in quantity. In all these centres the regulations make it clear that local wool was very widely employed.

⁵⁰ Prims, 'Eerste eeuw', pp. 133-4; Pegolotti, *Pratica*, pp. 259-69. Wool from Cistercian monasteries, for example, ranged from a high of 28 marks the sack for *buona*, 15 for *moiana*, and 14 for *locchi* (britch

spanned a very wide range in cost and quality. These were defined, moreover, not only by origin but also by type. Lambswool, which in the middle ages and later was considered unsuitable for fine cloth, was the staple material used for the weft of Tournai cloth and the *renforchiés* and the *draps de corde* of Valenciennes, where (like fell-wool) it was banned for wool-dyed *draperie ointe*, as it was in Malines, Louviers, and (later) Tournai.⁵¹ Although the early regulations of Douai and Ypres are silent on the subject—the quality controls in this as in other respects tended to be much more precisely formulated later in the fourteenth century—it is unlikely that anything but adult fleece wool was used for coloureds, while the use of lambswool, fell-wool, and to a lesser extent other low grade materials including wastes, is widely attested in the cheaper northern cloths.

Raw wool, accounting probably for about 40 per cent of costs, was the critical factor in them.⁵² Its quality predetermined within narrow limits that of the finished cloth, so that production costs were closely adjusted to it. This led to several important differences in the technique of manufacture, and in particular to a basic distinction, familiar at least in name to historians, between *draperie ointe* and *draperie sèche*. It is probable that this broadly corresponded to the two-fold division between fine coloured cloth and the range of cheaper types. While there is no question that the quality cloths of Ypres and Douai were *ointe* (“greased”), the status of the others is more problematic, as the regulations are rarely explicit on the point. They are clearest in Bruges: the finer rays, like coloureds and medleys, were wool-dyed and greased; the coarser, which formed the bulk of production, yarn-dyed and dry. The association with differences in dyeing method provides a valuable clue. In Arras, St Omer, and Valenciennes *teins en laine* formed a quite separate category from the main branches of production, stanforts, *biffes*, says, and (in Valenciennes particularly) *renforchiés* and *draps de corde*, which were either yarn or piece dyed. The *teins en laine* are the only type identified as *draperie ointe*.⁵³ From this it seems safe to infer (in conjunction with other evidence) that the process was not employed for the other types, although this is nowhere stated. In Tournai too, the fifth member of the group, the basic output of cheap plains and rays was almost certainly “*sec ouvrage*”. There is no hint of *draperie ointe* in the regulations before the mid-fourteenth century, after which it became increasingly important, one instance of the widespread shift away from dry draperies at the time. Other examples are provided by Dixmude and Poperinghe, where the traditional manufactures—the *blanquets* of the one and the rays and plains of the other—had been mainly *ongesmoutte draperie*. All the evidence points to this being also the case with the cheaper type of ray

wool) to a low of 12, 7½ and 5 marks respectively, for the three grades into which abbey wools were usually sorted. See also Munro, ‘Wool-price schedules’, pp. 118-69.

⁵¹ Joosen, *Recueil*, p. 500 (Malines 1331); Bonnin, *Cartulaire*, II, pp. 25-31 (Louviers 1325).

⁵² In the Datini manufacture at Prato (1390s) the proportion for the better wools varied on average between 33 per cent (San Matteo) to 44 (English) with most nearer the higher figure. Significantly it was much higher (51 per cent) for coarse wools from Romagna and the Barbary coast. Melis, *Aspetti*, p. 554, *prospetto XXVII*. Such proportions were normal in the eighteenth century, and doubtless also in the thirteenth, although there is no evidence for the latter period.

⁵³ In Arras and Valenciennes *teins en laine* paid a higher assize than the standard products: in Arras 24d. compared to 12d. for *grands draps* and says (Espinass, *Draperie*, II, no. 11) and in Valenciennes 8d. compared to 4-6d. for *biffes* etc. (Espinass, *Documents*, no. 4).

(the half-stanfort) made in Ypres, which the town was so anxious to prevent the Poperinghe clothiers from copying. Here it was forbidden for any clothier “ki fait draperie et met en oeuvre fileit oint” to work with “fileit nient oint”; and the process is mentioned only in the *keure de la draperie*, applying essentially to coloured cloths.⁵⁴ Again the other *keures*, for says, stanforts, and *renforchiés* are silent. But this characteristic silence may itself be revealing. If it is normally the *oint* process alone that is singled out explicitly in the earlier guild regulations, this is arguably because it was the exception rather than the rule.

The precise difference between the two processes, and its wider technical significance, is difficult to ascertain.⁵⁵ Such evidence as there is suggests that the dry method was not as dry as the term implies, and that sufficient of the natural grease was left in the wool to act as a lubricant for combing and spinning, as was the case in some of the coarser manufactures in eighteenth-century France and as might be expected *a priori*.⁵⁶ Washing (never described in the regulations) seems to have been a perfunctory process, perhaps no more than a cold rinse of wool that had normally been washed on the back before shearing. In Bruges and Ypres the yarn was checked before use and if still found to have too much natural grease, it had to be re-washed. The same was true, not surprisingly, in Arras, because here it was actually forbidden to wash the wool: it had to be combed “à tout le sun” (in the grease).⁵⁷ It is indicative that in Arras and in Valenciennes the weight loss during fulling was considerable, whereas in the latter town at least it appears to have been minimal during washing. The addition of a lubricant, in this case butter, in the *draperie ointe* implies on the contrary that the wool had been properly scoured. Dyeing in the wool would hardly have been possible otherwise. Conversely it is significant that this method of dyeing was not employed in the *draperie sèche*, with which it would have been technically incompatible, assuming that the above argument is correct.

The *oint* process (considered as involving scouring as well as greasing) entailed considerable extra cost, and produced corresponding advantages at the preparatory stage in respect of cleanliness, opening up of the staple, optimum lubrication etc., permitting the fabrication of a finer and more uniform yarn, and also of a cloth that could be more perfectly scoured. The technical interdependencies with dyeing methods noted above show, however, that the option between the two processes reflected also dyeing requirements. Apart from raw wool, dyeing was the most important variable in the cost-quality equation. Use of the *oint* process was implicit in the complicated and expensive procedure employed for high-class cloths, in which most colours were obtained by first blue-dyeing in the wool with woad and then redyeing in the piece with madder. It was unsuited to the cheaper but inferior method

⁵⁴ Espinas and Pirenne, *Receuil*, III, nos. 649 and 753: 20. The Ypres fullers' regulations (768:33 particularly) leave no doubt that the half-stanforts were dry draperies.

⁵⁵ de Poerck, *Draperie*, pp. 45-7, is unhelpful: as usual he makes no attempt to explore interdependencies between different technical processes.

⁵⁶ See the very useful eighteenth-century *Mémoire sur les manufactures*, pp. 12-7 and 89-91. Some wools required more intensive washing than others. Whereas Spanish merino needed a hot wash with a detergent, for some of the better French wools a cold wash was sufficient.

⁵⁷ Espinas and Pirenne, *Recueil*, I, no. 77:11.

of dyeing in the hank, which was banned in the *draperie ointe* in Douai, Ypres, and Malines, but widely used in lower grade cloths. For this the dry process (in any case cheaper) was better adapted. Such ramifications may explain why later, during the fourteenth century, the two terms *draperie ointe* and *sèche*, despite their narrow technical connotations, were often used to describe the two basic categories of finer and coarser cloth.

These were distinguished by differences in cost at each stage of manufacture. In weaving and the finishing processes of fulling and shearing this was a matter of the input of labour time and skill.⁵⁸ In the preparatory processes there were also important technical differences. Whereas in the fine cloth manufacture both warp and weft appear to have been exclusively combed and rock-spun, in the cheaper the situation was more complex. In Valenciennes and Tournai the lambswool employed for the weft of the principal products of the two centres was not combed but bowed—a technique of far greater importance in this phase of the European wool textile industry than has been recognized in the literature, as is attested by the prominence of bowing as an occupation in other centres specializing in cheaper goods such as Chartres, Beauvais, and Provins, where it was doubtless used for similar purposes.⁵⁹ The combination of bowed weft and combed yarn was certainly a standard one. It was characteristic too of the Italian industry before the advent of carding. Another significant difference that can be tentatively inferred from what is admittedly flimsy evidence is the use of wheel-spinning for the weft, again as in Italy. That the technique was already familiar in the north by the later decades of the century is proved by references to it in Abbeville (1288), Provins (1294), Douai (1305), and the small Rhenish centre of Spires (*circa* 1280), none of which can be regarded as exceptional.⁶⁰ All but one of the references involve restrictions, the most revealing being the stringent ban imposed in Douai in respect of *laine ointe*, which, coming as it does in a series of regulations concerned with the *draperie sèche*, clearly implies that wheel-spinning was employed in the latter. In Abbeville, which from the commercial evidence and the *keure* of 1300 seems to have specialized in a narrow range of middling *draperie ointe*, the ban was total.⁶¹ In Spires, on the contrary, which produced only coarse cloth, it applied only to the weft, the earliest of many such regulations both in the north and in Italy. To the extent that they were employed for the cheaper cloths, bowing and even more wheel-spinning must have lowered costs considerably. The latter does not seem to have been connected with the adoption of the dry process. But bowing very probably

⁵⁸ In Bruges journeymen's rates for shearing ranged from 11d. for says, 17d. for (cheap dry) yarn-dyed rays, 24d. for (dearer greased) wool-dyed rays, to 19-23d. for wool-dyed plains (Espinas and Pirenne, *Recueil*, I, no. 141:357-68). In Louvain fullers' rates ranged from 2s. 10d. for yarn-dyed rays (stanforts), 4s. for wool dyed rays, 6-8s. for coloureds (Prims, *Eerste eeuw*, p. 133). The regulations of the main centres provide no evidence that the fulling mill was used for cheaper cloths during the thirteenth century. In the small centre of Aire-sur-Lys (1358) the rate for foot-fulling was 16s. per cloth, for milling 14s., hardly a "revolutionary" reduction in costs (Espinas and Pirenne, *Recueil*, I, no. 10:42-4, one of the few references to the fulling mill in the collection).

⁵⁹ Acloque, *Corporations*, pp. 327-33 (Chartres); Fagniez, *Documents*, II, pp. 135-44 (Beauvais); Chapin, *Villes de foire*, p. 243 (Provins). Bowers are also mentioned in Bruges, St Omer, and Arras; and bowed yarn, specifically in the context of stanforts, in Ypres (Espinas and Pirenne, *Recueil*, no. 781:34-5).

⁶⁰ Thierry, *Recueil*, IV, p. 52 (Abbeville); Chapin, *Villes de foires*, p. 181 (Provins); Espinas and Pirenne, *Recueil*, IV, no. 930:9; Keutgen, *Urkunden*, no. 278:16.

⁶¹ See n. 22.

was. The combined percussive and vibratory effect upon which it depended was impeded if the wool was oiled. This, and the fact that it was often too short to be combed, may explain why the technique was largely limited to lambswool (and fell-wool), which is much less greasy than mature fleece wool.⁶²

The concern for quality that was behind the prohibition of wheel-spinning in the *draperie ointe*—it was said to produce a knotty uneven yarn⁶³—also led to controls designed to prevent the intermixture of inferior wools and wastes in the yarn and to ensure that it was uniform throughout the cloth. In Ypres and Douai the sale of greased yarn (and wool in the latter) was prohibited, whereas in centres like Arras and Valenciennes (and Ypres too in the dry sector) there was an active market for wool and yarn in all states of preparation. Again, the rule that warp and weft be drawn from the same wool (the norm for high quality cloth), was rarely applied to the cheaper types, where it was usually sufficient for the warp to be *poursuivant* (uniform). It would in any case have been impossible when the weft, as was often the case, was lambswool. The difference is clearly exemplified in Bruges, where the rule was in force for the wool-dyed greased rays, but the clothier was free to use “any but false wool” for the weft in the dry yarn-dyed variety.⁶⁴

VIII

It would be possible to analyse these differences in method and technique of manufacture in much greater detail. But enough has been said to explain why the price of northern cloths varied so greatly. Production costs, including the cost of raw wool, were much higher in the *draperie ointe* than in the *draperie sèche*. This was reflected in the qualitative superiority of the product, which broadly speaking corresponded to “coloured” cloth, as it was known in the trade. It is justifiable perhaps to characterize “coloureds” as a luxury article, even though they came in different grades. But the description hardly seems appropriate—indeed it is positively misleading—when applied to the miscellaneous range of cheaper types, in which costs were kept relatively low at the expense of quality. Such cloths constituted a very significant part of the trade. Altogether the European market for northern cloth was much more differentiated and reached further down the social scale than the accepted view allows.

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⁶² A detailed description of the technique can be found in Nollet, *Art*, pp. 21-6.

⁶³ van Uytven, ‘Cloth in medieval literature’, p. 175.

⁶⁴ Espinas and Pirenne, *Recueil*, 1, no. 138:17 and 18.

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