

Toll Collection and Economic Development in Twelfth-Century Flanders¹

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Abstract

The twelfth century is generally considered as a period of economic growth and trade intensification in Europe. This commercial development was characterized by a revival of long-distance trade, a growth of trade volumes and a diversification of commodities. However, due to the source bias, many historians have attributed a rather peripheral role to northwestern Europe in this narrative. Notably, the exact chronology and character of this commercial development in a fast developing region like coastal Flanders has long been disregarded by historians. By utilizing sources on toll collection – more specifically, toll exemptions and tariffs – the present paper aims to expand our understanding of this process, taking into account the relationship between economic change and the development of administrative practices.

In 1998, Adriaan Verhulst, Thérèse de Hemptinne, and Lieve De Mey made a remarkable discovery. Preserved within a fifteenth-century copy of the toll tariff of Gravelines, the outport of Saint-Omer at the mouth of the Aa River, they found a hitherto unknown toll tariff of Letterswerve, which – although its precise location is unknown – was in all probability the predecessor of Bruges's later outport, Damme.² This

1 This research was conducted as part of the research project *High Tide – Low Tide. Bruges' late medieval harbor system as a maritime cultural landscape*, funded by Ghent University. I would like to express my gratitude to my colleagues in the History Department for their valuable feedback. Special thanks go to Hans Blomme for creating the maps and to Catherine Rosbrook for her assistance in refining the English. I also wish to thank the anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments and suggestions.

2 Adriaan Verhulst, Thérèse de Hemptinne and Lieve De Mey, 'Un tarif de tonlieu inconnu, institué par le comte de Flandre Thierry d'Alsace (1128-1168) pour le port de 'Littersuerua', précurseur du port

list of goods and its rates, which is believed to have been drafted in the 1160s, was used by both taxpayers and collectors as an instrument to defend their fiscal rights. The document enumerates an unexpectedly diverse number of commodities that were imported and exported in the outer harbor, including both raw materials and finished products, such as weaponry and tableware. It provides us with a remarkably detailed insight into the economic and commercial development of coastal Flanders during a period for which written sources are scarce and quantifiable datasets almost completely absent. However, as a source type, the tariff of Letterswerve is not unique in Flanders: similar documents are preserved for Arras (1036), Nieuwpoort (1163), and Saint-Omer (1167 and late twelfth century). Along with charters concerning toll exemptions, a systematic study of sources on toll collection for twelfth-century Flanders has not yet been conducted. This paper will contribute to answering this shortfall by, on the one hand, offering an overview of the distribution and preservation of these sources and, on the other hand, demonstrating the intertwining between developing administrative practices and regional economic change in twelfth-century Flanders.

In the wake of the influential study on the “Commercial Revolution” by economic historian Robert Lopez, the second half of the twelfth century has generally been identified as a period of economic growth and trade intensification in Europe. The phenomenon was initiated in the eastern Mediterranean and expanded to the Italian city-states. In this narrative, Northern Europe was largely absent from the high medieval commercial landscape.³ However, recent scholarship focusing primarily on England has criticized Lopez and his followers, arguing that the peripheral role attributed to Northern Europe was largely the result of source bias.⁴ Indeed, the abundance of source material for the Mediterranean and Italian cities stands in stark contrast to the less favorable situation in Northern Europe. Besides narrative sources – such as hagiographies, which occasionally mention merchants, and

de Damme', *Handelingen van de Koninklijke Commissie voor Geschiedenis* 164 (1998) 143-172; DiBe ID 30602, in: Thérèse de Hemptinne, et al. (eds), *Diplomata Belgica. Les sources diplomatiques des Pays-Bas méridionaux au Moyen Âge* (Brussels 2015), https://www.diplomata-belgica.be/charter_details_fr.php?dibe_id=30602. Accessed 22 March 2022.

3 Robert Sabatino Lopez, *The commercial revolution of the Middle Ages: 950-1350* (Cambridge 1971). As Karn claimed in his study of English trade, this phenomenon can better be understood as an evolution: Nicholas Karn, 'England's trade with the Continent in the early thirteenth century. Customs and the port of Dover', *Journal of Medieval History* 46 (2020) 17.

4 Karn, 'England's trade', 2.

official correspondence concerning specific trade disputes – it is hard to find documents that reveal the real scope and the nature of trade in this region. Nonetheless, charters issued by territorial and seigneurial lords on levying taxes on goods at strategical economic points, such as cities, ports and bridges, are relatively widely preserved in some parts of Western Europe, as is the case for the region of Flanders. The production and preservation of these documents can partly be explained by a concurrent change in attitude toward writing and record-keeping from royal and seigneurial administrations, which increasingly felt the urge to construct a ‘written memory’ from the twelfth century, while also indicating the steady economic growth of this period.⁵

Indeed, sources on toll collection – more specifically, toll privileges – have previously been deployed to substantiate arguments on economic growth, as the discussion on the economic decline and depression between the eighth and tenth century demonstrates. In his famous 1930s thesis, Pirenne defined early medieval Western Europe as a closed agrarian-based economy, mainly caused by the Arab control of the Mediterranean area blocking commercial circulation with the East. Only since the eleventh century, a period which he called the “economic renaissance”, can one investigate the circulation of goods, pinpointing long-distance trade as a crucial catalyst for the development of cities and markets in Northwestern Europe.⁶ This famous hypothesis has since been questioned from different angles. In particular, archaeologists such as Hodges have, since the 1980s, shed new light on the Carolingian period as a period of economic growth, in which one can find the origin of medieval cities.⁷ To a certain extent, toll privileges preserved in *capitularia* illustrate this counterpoint, in which the economic recession that some historians previously argued for is far from evident.⁸ Ports like Quentovic, Domburg, and Dorestad came

5 François Menant, ‘Les transformations de l’écrit documentaire entre XIIe et XIIIe siècles’, in: Natacha Coquery, François Menant and Florence Weber (eds), *Écrire, compter, mesurer. Vers une histoire des rationalités pratiques* (Paris 2006) 33-50.

6 Henri Pirenne, *Mahomet et Charlemagne* (Paris 1992) 168-190. This debate is discussed in: Adriaan Verhulst, *The Carolingian economy* (Cambridge 2002) 1-2; Alfred Havighurst, *The Pirenne thesis: analysis, criticism, and revision* (Lexington 1969). Cipolla and Lopez, too, considered the period before the eleventh century as one of decline and depression: Carlo Cipolla, *Money, prices, and civilization in the Mediterranean world, fifth to seventeenth century* (Princeton 1956) 12; Lopez, *The commercial revolution*, 18-22.

7 Richard Hodges, *Dark Age economics. The origins of towns and trade: A.D. 600-1000* (London 1982).

8 Léo Verriest, *Institutions médiévales: Introduction au ‘corpus des records de coutumes et des Lois de chefs-lieux de l’ancien Comté de Hainaut’* (Mons 1946) 66-71.

into being along the estuaries of the Seine, Scheldt, Meuse, and Rhine, and became commercial centers for royal toll collection. Tolls were also levied further inland, along the Meuse from the eighth century onward (Huy 743, Dinant 747, Maastricht 779).⁹ These documents endorse archaeological evidence that commercial traffic was intensifying between the southern part of England and the continent from the beginning of the seventh century.

In spite of its significant potential to study economic processes, these sources have not yet been fully mined to study twelfth-century Flanders. Scholarship has almost exclusively focused on the oldest river tolls in the Low Countries.¹⁰ These were levied in the region of the Meuse and the Rhine, a commercially booming area, which from the Carolingian period until the eleventh century was involved in long-distance trade with Frisian merchants.¹¹ However, from the tenth century onward, the economic and demographic nucleus shifted toward the Scheldt valley and coastal Flanders, where population growth coincided with structural and technical changes in the Flemish rural economy, such as the intensification of agriculture, extension of agricultural lands by cultivating woodlands and moorlands, and regional agricultural and craft specialization. Higher revenues enabled the count and landowners to stimulate demand and production of (international) luxury and manufactured products and, thus, the revival of both interregional and long-distance trade.¹² The production of exclusive high-quality cloth in the growing cities being a prime mover for Flemish export, the actual trade was primarily organized by Flemish merchants actively reaching

9 Adriaan Verhulst, *The rise of cities in north-west Europe* (Cambridge 1999) 44-47; Cornelis Verkerk, 'Het tolsysteem in het mondingsgebied van Rijn, Maas en Schelde tot de elfde eeuw', in: Arnold Carmiggelt (ed.), *Handel, handelsplaatsen en handelwaar vanaf de Vroege Middeleeuwen in de Lage Landen* (Rotterdam 1992) 39-49; Stéphane Lebecq, *Marchands et navigateurs frisons du haut Moyen Age I* (Lille 1983) 139-163.

10 With the exception of Arras and Gravelines: Renée Doehaerd, *Note sur l'histoire d'un ancien impôt. Le tonlieu d'Arras* (Arras 1946). Originally published in *Mémoires de l'académie d'Arras*, 1943-44 and 1945-46; Roger Degryse, 'La navigation maritime et le tonlieu comtal à Gravelines (1100-1330)', *Revue Historique de Dunkerque et du Littoral* 38 (2005) 141-160.

11 For an extensive study of high medieval Frisian trade, see : Stéphane Lebecq, *Marchands et navigateurs frisons du haut Moyen Age*, 2 vols.

12 Adriaan Verhulst, 'The alleged poverty of the Flemish rural economy as reflected in the oldest account of the comital domain known as "Gros Brief" (A.D. 1187)', in: Erik Aerts et al. (eds), *Studia historica oeconomica. Liber amicorum Herman Van der Wee* (Leuven 1993) 382; Erik Thoen, 'The count, the countryside and the economic development of the towns in Flanders from the eleventh to the thirteenth century. Some provisional remarks and hypotheses', in: *Ibid.*, 259-278; Wim Blockmans, *Metropolen aan de Noordzee* (Amsterdam 2010), 98-99; Chris Wickham, *Medieval Europe* (New Haven 2016) 121-125; Bas Van Bavel, *Manors and markets. Economy and society in the Low Countries, 500-1600* (Oxford 2010) 325-329.

for consuming markets in France (at the Champagne fairs), northern Italy, and German cities.¹³ This phenomenon – the “Flemish active trade”, as Van Werveke called it – was not as definite as was previously thought.¹⁴ Already in the twelfth century, a variety of sources demonstrate international merchants actively trading in Flemish cities, too.¹⁵ The following centuries, trade became more diversified and its temporary character – which primarily took the form of annual fairs, most notably the cycles of Champagne and Flanders, which were prevalent until at least the 1260s – was gradually exchanged for permanent markets in commercially and industrially growing cities.¹⁶

The rising commercial importance of the county of Flanders during the High Middle Ages, stimulated by a rising elite demand for both luxury and manufactured products, contrasts with the lack of attention toward Flemish sources on toll collection and its integration into the narrative of economic development. To understand how twelfth-century economic development manifested itself in the Flanders region, this article uses two types of sources. Firstly, 261 charters containing toll exemptions covering the twelfth century (1100–1199) were selected from the *Diplomata Belgica* database (covering diplomatic sources from the contemporary area of Belgium and northern France before 1250).¹⁷ Geographically, this selection contains

13 Blockmans, *Metropolen*, 107–111. Toll tariffs preserved in England (London, ca. 991–1002) and the Rhine region (Koblenz, *ante quem* 1070) demonstrate the early involvement of Flemish traders (‘Flandrenses’ or merchants ‘de regno Baldewini venientes’) alongside merchants of the prince-bishopric of Liège, in this early international trade network; Georges Despy, ‘Pour un ‘Corpus’ des tarifs de tonlieux de l’Europe occidentale au moyen âge (Ve–XIIIe s.)’, in: Maurice-Aurélien Arnould, et al. (eds), *Recherches sur l’histoire des finances publiques en Belgique II* (Brussels 1974) 256–282. Despy wonders if ‘regnum Baldwin’ should refer to the county of Hainaut instead of Flanders, which many historians have supposed. The tariff relates to merchants living on the territory of the Holy Roman Empire, which was only the case for Hainaut, he states. However, the consideration that Flanders was partially incorporated into the empire (from the west of the Scheldt) weakens his argument. Despy, *Les tarifs de tonlieux* (Turnhout 1976) 30.

14 According to Van Werveke, passive trade meaning that international trade was organized by foreign instead of Flemish merchants, gained importance since the thirteenth century. Hans Van Werveke, ‘Der Flandrische Eigenhandel im Mittelalter’, *Hansische Geschichtsblätter* 61 (1936) 7–24.

15 Adriaan Verhulst, ‘Keulse handelaars in het Zwin tijdens de 12de eeuw en de vroegste ontwikkeling van de Vlaamse Zeehavens’, *Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis* 81 (1998) 351–358.

16 Masahiko Yamada, ‘Le mouvement des foires en Flandre avant 1200’, in: Jean-Marie Duvosquel and Alain Dierkens (eds), *Villes et campagnes au moyen âge. Mélanges Georges Despy* (Liège 1991) 787–789; Jeremy Edwards and Sheila Ogilvie, ‘What lessons for economic development can we draw from the Champagne fairs?’, *Explorations in Economic History* 49 (2012) 131–148.

17 This dataset contains official charters between 1100 and 1199, supplemented with later confirmations of ancient charters and stipulations found in toll tariffs. De Hemptinne, et al. (eds), *Diplomata Belgica*, www.diplomata-belgica.be. Accessed 22 March 2022.

charters on mainly Flanders, Hainaut, Vermandois, and Brabant, which were issued by – among others – the Flemish count, the German emperor, local lords, and confirmations by the pope. The main source type used here, however, are toll tariffs. By working through source editions, an overview was made of all tariffs before 1300 from the principalities of Flanders, Brabant, Liège, Artois, and Picardy.¹⁸ This selection shows the early presence of tariffs in Flanders compared to adjacent regions. Subsequently, five tariffs were selected (Arras (1036), Letterswerve (1160s), Nieuwpoort (1163), and Saint-Omer (1167 and late twelfth century) to demonstrate that, while these sources contain many methodological pitfalls and are often difficult to interpret, through a detailed thematic and comparative study, these issues can be overcome, and the sources employed to study economic change.

This paper is structured in four parts. The first part explores the early chronology of the economic shift in Flanders through charters containing toll exemptions. The second section explains the evolution of toll administration and the preservation of tariffs in the Low Countries, and the third points out of the specific characteristics and pitfalls of these sources. This paper concludes by tackling the question how tariffs can be perceived as witnesses to economic development.

Toll exemptions as an indicator of economic growth and the ‘economic politics’ of the Flemish counts

Previous research on England has shown that a quantitative analysis of normative documents concerning toll exemption can reveal more detailed insights on the specific chronology of economic development during the high Middle Ages. In this case, exemptions begin to abound from the second half of the twelfth century, which may indicate the increased relevance of tolls and economic change as a whole.¹⁹ In addition, Epstein showed for late medieval Sicily, Tuscany, and Lombardy that privileges concerning tolls and fairs intensified market integration and intraregional trade, considering these as a catalyst

18 For a more detailed overview see: Elisa Bonduel, *Alles heeft zijn prijs. Tolheffing en de commerciële ontwikkeling van de Vlaamse ruimte (1150-1300)* (PhD thesis in history; Ghent University 2024), 267-288.

19 James Masschaele, ‘Toll and trade in medieval England’, in: Lawrin Armstrong, Ivana Elbl and Martin Elbl (eds), *Money, markets and trade in late Medieval Europe. Essays in honour of John H. A. Munro* (Leiden 2007) 149-151.

for economic development.²⁰ The assumption that the amount of exemptions can be regarded as an explicit indicator of real economic change during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries should, however, be somewhat nuanced: the rise in source material could be a direct consequence of the development of writing practices.²¹ The sources' significance is strengthened, though, when considered in connection with the well-accepted historical narrative of the commercial revolution of the long thirteenth century. Economic and commercial growth also had an unmistakable impact on the production and preservation of (written) exemptions, which were used as an instrument in legal disputes concerning, for instance, unlawful levying of tolls.²² Based on the analysis of 261 exemption charters collected in *Diplomata Belgica*, a similar chronology to that of England can be observed. More specifically, there was substantial growth in the number of charters from the last quarter of the twelfth century onward (figure 1).

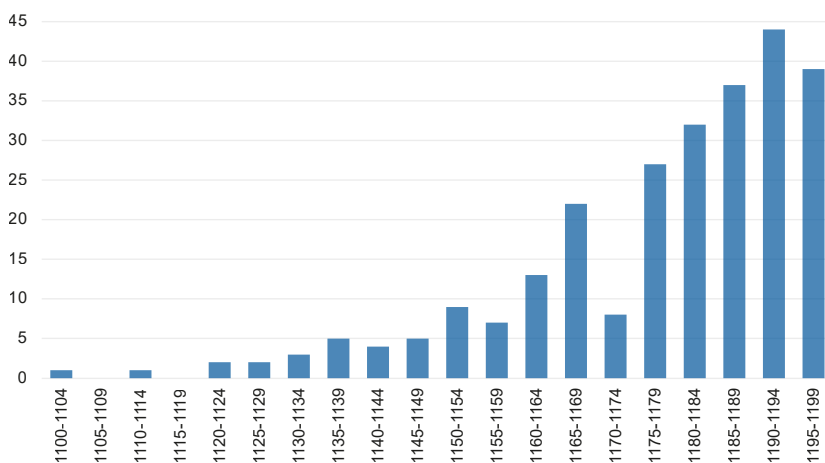


Figure 1 Charters containing toll exemptions located in the Low Countries (1100-1199)

20 Stephan R. Epstein, 'Cities, regions and the late Medieval crisis. Sicily and Tuscany compared', *Past and Present* 130 (1991) 28-29; *Ibid.*, *Freedom and growth. The rise of states and markets in Europe, 1300-1750* (London 2000) 147-167.

21 Michael Clanchy, *From memory to written record. England 1066-1307* (Cambridge 1979) 29-57; Paul Bertrand, *Documenting the everyday in Medieval Europe. The social dimensions of a writing revolution, 1250-1350* (Turnhout 2019) 5-14; Richard Britnell, 'Pragmatic literacy in Latin Christendom', in: Richard Britnell (ed.), *Pragmatic literacy, East and West 1200-1330* (Woodbridge 1997) 3-5.

22 For these practices, we have historical evidence since the fourteenth century. Tim Soens, *De rentmeesters van de graaf van Vlaanderen. Beheer en beheerders van het grafelijk domein in de late middeleeuwen* (Brussels 2002) 202-203.

Ecclesiastical institutions seem to have been the main group receiving these privileges from the count. They could be granted either completely free passage of goods or an exemption on goods for personal use only. The majority of these exemptions applied to abbeys located just outside Flanders, in adjacent principalities, such as Hainaut, Artois, and Picardy. However, institutions situated at more distant places, such as Scotland, England, and Burgundy, were also granted similar privileges. The geographical scope of these exemptions reveals the early commercial attraction Flanders exerted internationally (map 2). Exemptions belonging to urban communities were rather scarce compared to religious communities, which may be partially explained by the earlier development of administration and preservation conditions of these documents in these institutions.²³ Urban exemptions should, however, be understood in a context in which urban communities gained recognition and certain privileges from the Flemish counts. During this period, the Flemish counts Philip of Alsace and his father Thierry before him created a political equilibrium, which enabled them to initiate some changes on both an institutional and, above all, economical level. The founding (or at least invigorating) of ports in the coastal region by Philip and his chancellor Robert d'Aire, provost of the collegiate chapter church of Aire-sur-la-Lys, was the most pronounced example of their economic policy.²⁴ Several localities, such as Gravelines (1161), Nieuwpoort (1163), Mardijk (1168), Damme (1180), Dunkirk (1183), and Biervliet (1183) received comital recognition and city privileges. It had become indispensable to stimulate 'new' commercial settlements closer to the sea, to enhance the access of the county – foremost the commercial hubs of Saint-Omer, Ypres, and Bruges – to international maritime trade. Apart from their function as commercial outer ports, these places also played a major role in the reclamation of the coastal plains and the valorization of their wood and peat resources.²⁵

23 However, Tock demonstrated that the Cistercian abbey of Vaucelles was actively involved in receiving toll exemptions from different lords during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Benoît-Michel Tock, 'Les actes d'exemption de péage. Les cas de l'abbaye de Vaucelles et des seigneurs de Coucy', *Archiv für Diplomatik, Schriftgeschichte, Siegel- und Wappenkunde* 63 (2017) 115-164.

24 Hans Van Werveke, 'De economische politiek van Filips van de Elzas (1157/68 tot 1191)', *Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België. Klasse der Letteren* 14 (1952) 3-18; Blockmans, *Metropolen*, 90-93.

25 Adriaan Verhulst, 'Un exemple de la politique économique de Philippe d'Alsace. La fondation de Gravelines (1163)', *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale* 10 (1967) 15-28; Verhulst, 'Initiative comtale et développement économique en Flandre au XIIe siècle. Le rôle de Thierry et de Philippe d'Alsace

To commercially facilitate these ‘new’ settlements, Philip incorporated toll exemptions in their urban liberties, which unrestrictedly covered the whole county of Flanders. Van Werveke compared these with older and more important cities such as Saint-Omer, Ypres, Bourbourg, and Veurne, and noticed that the latter only held limited privileges related to a specific port or city. The inhabitants of Ypres, for example, were allowed to freely sail the *Ieperlee* in 1166, on the condition of one *denarius* per boat. This commercial, strategic waterway connected Ypres, Nieuwpoort, Diksmuide, and *Scipstal* (Scheepsdale) – a hamlet near Bruges – and linked Ypres with the North Sea.²⁶ Other limited exemptions were granted to the inhabitants of Bourbourg, who were allowed to freely trade in the newly founded harbor of Gravelines and were only exempt from other tolls for purchases *in proprios usus*.²⁷ These examples seem to indicate that the count used these privileges as an instrument to economically favor citizens of these smaller ports rather than the bigger inland towns, such as Ypres and Bourbourg.²⁸ Both the privileges granted to these harbors and the rise in exemptions from the 1170s onward need to be understood as part of the comital “economic politics” (as Van Werveke called it) during the second half of the twelfth century. The Flemish counts actively facilitated and encouraged commerce and trade in their county, so as to respond to the growing demand of the comital retinue and closely related nobility for luxury goods and high-end manufactured products.²⁹ Moreover, as the following section will demonstrate, the rising importance of commercial activities also had consequences for the organization of comital administrative practices.

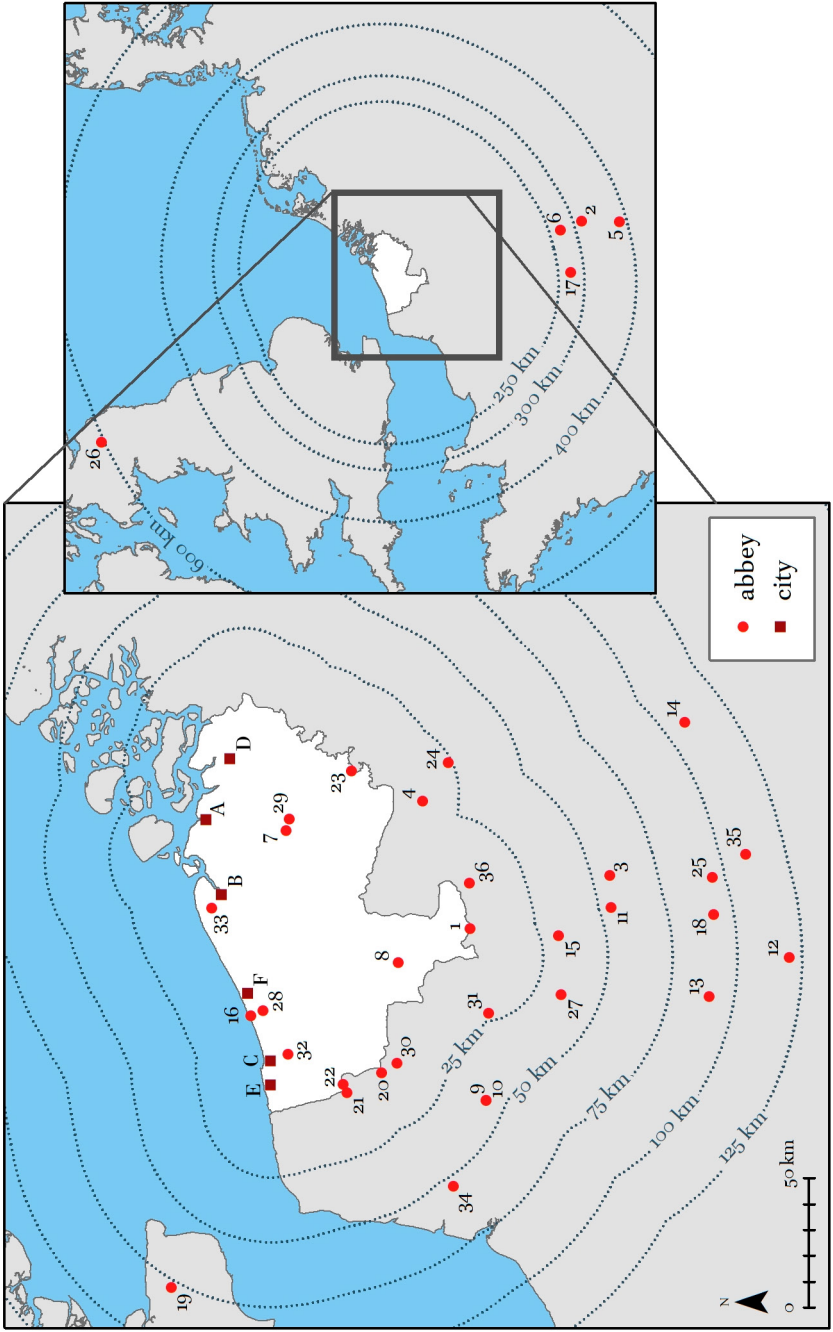
(1128-1191), in: Dirk Peter Blok (ed.), *Miscellanea mediaevalia in memoriam Jan Frederik Niermeyer* (Groningen 1967) 227-240.

26 Thérèse de Hemptinne and Adriaan Verhulst (eds), *De oorkonden der graven van Vlaanderen (juli 1128-september 1191) II. Uitgave – Band I. Regering van Diederik van de Elzas (juli 1128-19 januari 1168)* (Brussels 1988) 407-408; Verhulst, ‘Keulse handelaars’, 355.

27 De Hemptinne and Verhulst (eds), *De oorkonden der graven van Vlaanderen (juli 1128-september 1191) II. Uitgave – Band III. Regering van Filips van de Elzas (juli 1128-19 januari 1168)* (Brussels 2009) 201-202.

28 Van Werveke, ‘De economische politiek’, 9.

29 Thoen, ‘The count’, 262.



Map 1 Ecclesiastical institutions (numbers) and urban communities (letters) receiving toll exemptions in the entire county of Flanders (1100-1199).

	Ecclesiastical institution	Present-day location		Ecclesiastical institution	Present-day location
1	Anchin	Pecquencourt	21	Saint Augustine	Aire-sur-la-Lys
2	Auberive	Auberive	22	Saint Augustine	Canterbury
3	Bohéries	Vadencourt	23	Saint Bertin	Clairmares
4	Cambron	Brugelette	24	Saint Bertin	Saint-Omer
5	Cîteaux	Saint-Nicolas-les-Cîteaux	25	Saint Cornelius and Saint Cyprian	Ninove
6	Clairvaux	Villes-sous-la-Ferté	26	Saint-Donatian (chapter)	Bruges
7	Drongen	Drongen	27	Saint Feuillien of Roeulx	Le Roeulx
8	Foigny	La Bouteille	28	Saint Martin	Laon
9	Loos	Loos (Lille)	29	Saint Mary	Melrose
10	Mont-Saint-Martin	Gouy	30	Saint Nicolas	Arrouaise
11	Our Lady of Cercamp	Frévent	31	Saint Nicolas	Veurne
12	Our Lady of Fervaques	Fervaques	32	Saint Peter	Ghent
13	Our Lady of Igny	Arcis-le-Ponsart	33	Saint Saviour	Ham-en-Artois
14	Our Lady of Longpont	Longpont	34	Saint Vaast	Arras
15	Our Lady of Ourscamp	Ourscamp	35	Saint Winoc	Bergues
16	Our Lady of Signy	Signy	36	Ter Doest	Lissewege
17	Our Lady of Vaucelles	Vaucelles	37	Valloires	Argoules
18	Our Lady Ten Duinen	Koksijde	38	Vauclair	Bauconville-Vauclair
19	Pontigny	Pontigny	39	Vicoigne	Vicoigne
20	Prémontré	Prémontré			
	Urban community	Present-day location		Urban community	Present-day location
A	Biervliet	Biervliet	D	Hulst	Hulst
B	Damme	Damme	E	Mardyck	Mardyck
C	Dunkirk	Dunkirk	F	Sandeshove	Nieuwpoort

Toll administration and the conservation of toll tariffs in the Low Countries

As part of the traditional royal prerogatives (*regalia*) during the early Middle Ages, tolls were levied by public functionaries in favor of the Merovingian and Carolingian kings. Due to the disintegration of the Carolingian empire, territorial lords in Western Europe took control of most of these tolls during the tenth century and implemented new ones from the eleventh century onward.³⁰ In Flanders, this prerogative was reserved for the counts of Flanders. The majority of their revenues was extracted through the direct exploitation of its demesne, which were land and revenue rights. The oldest general account, known as the “Gros Brief”, of 1187, tells us that specialized repositories for different kinds of goods (*spicaria* for grain, *vaccaria* for dairy products, *lardaria* for other animal products, and *brevia* for money) were kept in the administrative centers of the local castellanies, where an official (*notarius*) was commissioned to collect and manage the revenues. Toll incomes, however, seem to have been less integrated in this financial administration – the so-called *redeninghe* – than other comital rights, making them difficult to study. Only some tolls were enumerated in the account of 1187, such as those of Rupelmonde, Diksmuide, and Biervliet (figure 2).³¹ The round numbers in the account suggest that the collection of tolls was leased out to local officials, who obtained these revenues in exchange for a yearly fixed sum. Nonetheless, more lucrative revenues such as the tolls of Bruges and Bapaume (the latter located on the main road to Paris and the Champagne fairs), seem to have been given in fief to particular recipients (*teleonarii*). Because these tolls were not integrated in the general administration, it is impossible to measure the overall importance of toll collection for the comital treasury.³²

During the twelfth century new sources of income, such as toll collection, became more crucial for the comital administration, since the traditional revenue from land exploitation dropped.³³ Incomes

30 Despy, *Les tarifs*, 17-18.

31 Adriaan Verhulst and Maurits Gysseling, *Le Compte Général de 1187 connu sous le nom de ‘Gros Brief’ et les institutions financières du comté de Flandre au XIIe siècle* (Brussels 1962) 142, 147, 156, 167, 173, 178, 182, 187, 192.

32 Bryce Lyon and Adriaan Verhulst, *Medieval finance. A comparison of financial institutions in Northwestern Europe* (Bruges 1967) 17-19. For the argument as to why this was probably leased out and not held in fief, see: *ibid.*, 31-33.

33 *Ibid.*, 19.

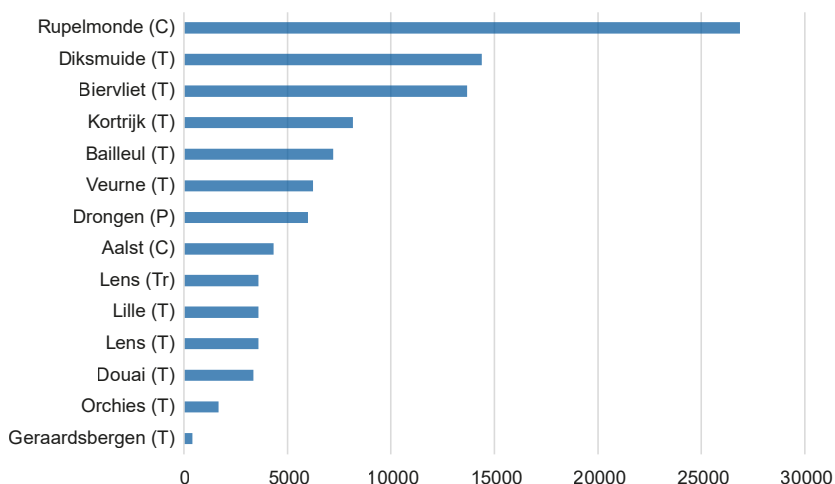


Figure 2 Yearly income through tolls (theloneum, conductus, traversum, and portum) in the oldest general account of the comital administration (1187) (in denarii Flandrensis)

from new criminal law provisions and land reclamation, along with the earnings of exploitation of marshland and wasteland, were incorporated into what was called the “new demesne”.³⁴ In addition, income from the economically-growing cities – more specifically, taxes on the transport and selling/buying of goods – became increasingly important for the treasury. Consequently, these new resources initiated the need for a more centralized financial organization, which was only developed properly in the thirteenth century during the reign of Margareta of Constantinople (1244-1278).³⁵ The administration of these ‘new’ revenues was henceforth organized in the so-called *renenhelle*, of which the first account only dates from the end of the thirteenth century.³⁶ This reorganization clearly demonstrates the increasing interest of toll collection for the Flemish counts.

Another indication of this phenomenon is the general rise in the number of documents regulating toll collection: in particular, toll tariffs. It went along with the administrative revolution of the thirteenth century, in which both tax collectors and payers were compelled to

34 Marc Boone, ‘Overheidsfinanciën in de middeleeuwse Zuidelijke Nederlanden’, *Tijdschrift voor Fiscaal Recht* 117 (1993) 108.

35 Theo Luyckx, *De grafelijke financiële bestuursinstellingen en het grafelijk patrimonium in Vlaanderen tijdens de regering van Margareta van Constantinopel (1244-1278)* (Brussels 1961) 48.

36 The summaries of the *renenhelle* of 1281 and 1293, and the full account of 1296 are preserved. Toll revenues can be found within the subcategory *censes de Flandre*. Ibid., 51.

record transactions in writing: the former wanted to legitimate and guarantee their income, and the latter wanted a fixation of the customs.³⁷ Tariff documents preceding the thirteenth century are rather rare, since regulations in Western Europe were commonly based on customary law (*consuetudines*) that were generally not written down. Merovingian tariffs have therefore not been preserved for the region north of the Alps. From the Carolingian period, a small fragment survives from Walenstadt, in the surroundings of Zürich (ca. 842-843), in addition to the tariff of Raffelstätten (along the Danube between Passau and Wachau) (903-905).³⁸ The next known example, from the beginning of the eleventh century, is the tariff of London, conceivably composed during the reign of Æthelred II the Unready (978 – 1016), well known in the Low Countries for its early reference to Flemish traders.³⁹

An extensive overview of all tariffs prior to 1400 has not yet been conducted for the Low Countries. This exercise can amend our understanding of both the chronology of these documents and regional differences in the Low Countries (map 2; appendix). One can detect the early emergence of tariffs in the counties of Flanders, Picardy, and Artois. The oldest, preserved, list is that of Arras (1036).⁴⁰ Similar documents from the second half of the twelfth century have been preserved for Saint-Omer, Tournai, Nieuwpoort, Boves, Letterswerve, Picquigny, Amiens, Ghent, and Dendermonde, respectively, all of which are located in the western part of the Low Countries.

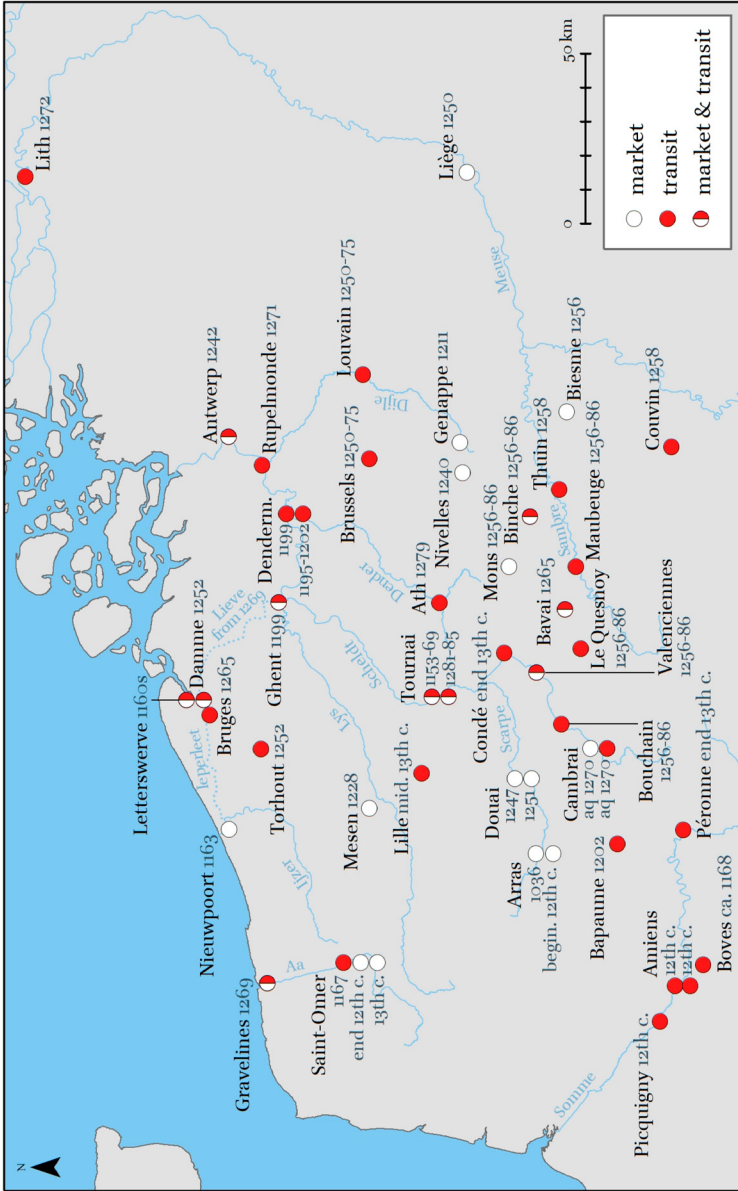
For adjacent regions such as Brabant, Hainaut, and Liège, tariffs – of which the majority are less comprehensive – are only preserved since the thirteenth century. Why other economically developing regions, such as the Meuse valley, do not possess similar documents for the twelfth century remains an unsolved query. Marie-Louise Fanchamps argued that merchants from the Meuse region actively traded commodities in other regions during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, rendering little need for written regulations in their own region. However, the argument that the presence or absence of sources was determined by a particular organization of trade is difficult to maintain: several documents, notably tax exemptions, reveal the presence of tolls levied

37 Despy, *Les tarifs*, 20.

38 François Ganshof, *Het tolwezen in het Frankisch Rijk onder de Karolingen* (Brussels 1959) 12-13.

39 Neil Middleton, 'Early medieval port customs, tolls and controls on foreign trade', *Early Medieval Europe* 13 (2005) 333.

40 Eugène-François-Joseph Tailliar, *Recherches pour servir à l'histoire de l'abbaye de Saint-Vaast d'Arras, jusqu'à la fin du xiii^e siècle* (Douai 1859) 247-251.



Map 2 Overview of toll tariffs in the southern Low Countries and northern France until the end of the thirteenth century (primarily Flanders, Brabant, Liège, Artois, Picardy). Sources: see appendix.

along the river since the eighth century.⁴¹ Moreover, the twelfth century has also been labelled as a period of Flemish active trade, while during this period Flanders still clearly produced a higher number of tariffs in comparison with the Meuse valley. In addition to looking at the nature of trade, one should primarily consider, as Fanchamps also noted, both the motive of these documents and the varying writing traditions of these different regions. Nonetheless, this overview clearly indicates the exceptional early presence of these sources for the county of Flanders. The contributions of primarily Despy and Billen, although invaluable, have only shed light on the thirteenth-century tariffs conserved for Brabant, Hainaut, and Liège.⁴² To study the early stages of the Commercial Revolution and the meaning of the coastal region in this narrative, some essential source-specific characteristics of these tariffs should first be discussed more extensively. The following part of this contribution will build upon five tariffs situated in this area, namely, Arras (1036), Letterswerve (1160s), Nieuwpoort (1163), and Saint-Omer (two tariffs, one from 1167 and one from the end of the century).

Typology and ancient remains

Tariffs do not follow a distinctive outline, fixed textual structure, or diplomatic form. On the contrary, these documents greatly differ from one another. Both the form and the constitutional origin of the document, as well as the nature and earlier tradition of the toll itself, seem to have had an extensive impact on the preservation and specific

41 Marie-Louise Fanchamps, 'Étude sur les tonlieux de la Meuse Moyenne du VIIIe au milieu du XIVe siècle', *Le Moyen Age* 70 (1964) 254.

42 Georges Despy and Christine Rouwez, 'Le tarif du tonlieu de Couvin de 1258', in: Arnould, et al. (eds), *Recherches sur l'histoire des finances publiques en Belgique* III (Brussels 1974) 63-83; Georges Despy, 'Recherches sur les tarifs de tonlieux dans le duché de Brabant au XIIIe siècle', in: *Tonlieux, foires et marchés avant 1300 en Lotharingie* (Luxembourg 1988); Jean-Marie Duvosquel, 'Le tarif du tonlieu et du winage de Comines établi en 1354 et son renouvellement en 1542', *Bulletin de la Commission Royale d'Histoire* 175 (2009) 343-370; Claire Billen, 'Pour une utilisation coordonnée des tarifs de winage et de tonlieu du Hainaut (XIIIe siècle)', in: *Tonlieux, foires et marchés*, 131-157; Chantal Zoller, 'Le tonlieu de Visé du Xe au XIVe siècle', in: Arnould, et al. (eds), *Recherches sur l'histoire des finances publiques en Belgique* III 7-29; Paul Rolland, *Deux tarifs du tonlieu de Tournai des xiiie et xiiie siècles* (Lille 1934); Noël Dupire and Edouard Perroy, 'Deux tarifs du tonlieu de Cambrai (XIIIe siècle)', *Revue du Nord* 36 (1954) 51-59; Noël Dupire, 'Tarif du travers et du tonlieu d'Amiens au XIIIe siècle', *Revue du Nord* 21 (1935) 185-201; Fanchamps, 'Étude', 205-264; Renée Doehaerd, 'Deux textes se rapportant à la navigation sur la Haine, au moyen âge', *Bulletin de la Commission Royale d'Histoire* 106 (1941) 315-345.

content of these sources.⁴³ Few original charters declaring tariffs are preserved for the twelfth century. In this case, only Nieuwpoort still has its original version, anchored in the original constitutional charter (*keure*) comprising the city rights granted by Philip of Alsace in 1163.⁴⁴ Tariffs are, however, usually found in secular and monastic cartularies, the former being the case for the Saint-Omer tariff, the latter for the Arras tariff, held in the cartulary of the Abbey of Saint-Vaast.⁴⁵ An overview of tolls in the principality could be collected on behalf of the central financial administration in so-called *recueils*. For Flanders, some were constituted by the *Chambre des Comptes* in Lille.⁴⁶ Additionally, the Letterswerve tariff was preserved in a fifteenth-century copy of the tariff of Gravelines (1269) and came about after Cologne merchants addressed their complaints concerning the unjust levying of tolls by the collectors.⁴⁷ For this reason, Thierry of Alsace aligned the tariff – “secundum formam et quantitatem” – with the earlier (unpreserved) tariff of Diksmuide.

Compared to more recent documents, twelfth-century tariffs do not seem to hold a logically organized structure.⁴⁸ At first sight, it appears that these older lists were still closely related to the oral tradition and were put into writing while dictated from memory by a toll official.⁴⁹ However, it may be that their sequence was roughly arranged according to importance: indispensable merchandise such as wine, grain, and wool are mentioned in the first part of the market tariffs of Nieuwpoort, Letterswerve, and Saint-Omer.⁵⁰ Moreover, some thematically related goods, including fish, metals, or animals, follow one another. On the

43 Despy, *Les tarifs*, 21.

44 De Hemptinne and Verhulst (eds), *De oorkonden der graven van Vlaanderen (juli 1128-september 1191) II. Uitgave – Band I*, 344-347.

45 A cartulary is a collection of transcriptions of original charters, bound in a volume and drawn up by the beneficiary of these charters. These often contain privileges and legal rights which were obtained by, for instance, ecclesiastical institutions and urban communities.

46 Archives Départementales du Nord, Série B, B218 (late fourteenth century) and B219 (seventeenth century).

47 Verhulst, De Hemptinne and De Mey, 'Un tarif', 167-171; DiBe ID 30602, in: *Diplomata Belgica*, www.diplomatabelgica.be/charter_details_fr.php?dibe_id=30602. Accessed 22 March 2022.

48 The fourteenth-century copy and vernacular translation of the Damme tariff of 1252, for instance, makes use of thematic subheadings to organize the text: Johan Hendrik Van Dale, 'Reglement voor de scheepvaart en de heffing der tollén op het Zwin, van den jare 1252', *Bijdragen tot de Oudheidkunde en Geschiedenis Inzonderheid van Zeeuwsch-Vlaanderen* 5 (1860) 54-72.

49 Jean-Marc Bienvenu, 'Recherches sur les péages angevins aux XIe et XIIe siècle (suite et fin)', *Le Moyen Age* 63 (1957) 439-440.

50 In the tariff of Dover (1233), a distinction in importance is clearly made. At the end of the export section is stated: 'omnibus aliis minutis exeuntibus de Anglia [...]'. Karn, 'England's trade', 5.

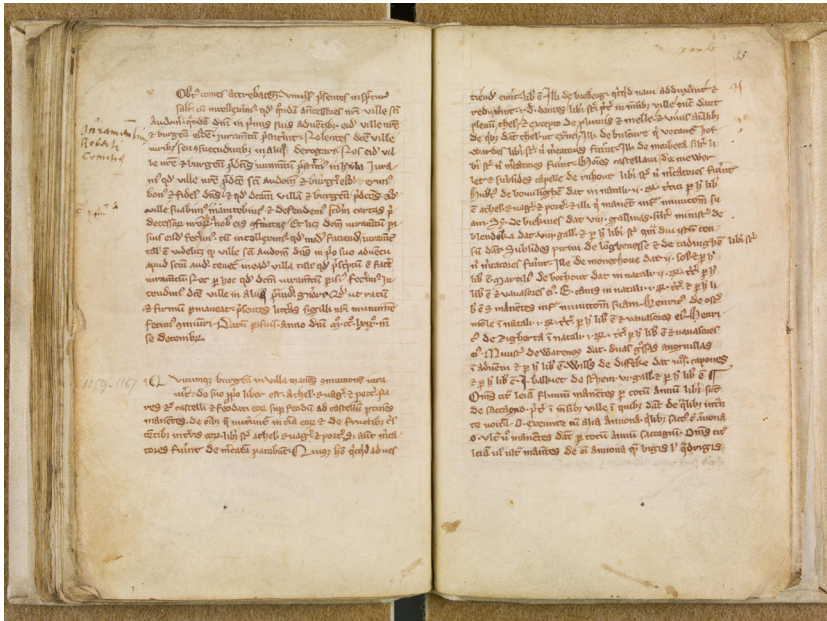


Illustration 1 The market tariff of Saint-Omer (late twelfth century).
(source: Archives Communales. Layettes AB XVIII, n° 15, fo. 34v-35r)

other hand, just as many examples are disorganized in structure: in the Letterswerve tariff, (salted) salmon, herring, and mackerel are mentioned in the first part of the tariff, while plaice, cod, and haddock are listed at the end.⁵¹

Examining the internal characteristics of these tariffs, one makes the distinction between market and transit tolls (map 2; appendix) – the former being tolls levied on the import, export, buying, and/or selling of commodities in a city or village; the latter, tolls levied on the transit of goods, often at crossroads and bridges. In some regions, such as Namur, Hainaut, and Brabant, a specific name has been given to transit tolls – *winagium* (in Middle Dutch, *gheleyde*) – to distinguish them more clearly from market tolls, *teloneum*. This distinction can also be found in Flemish charters involving toll exemption, however it is not mentioned verbatim in the tariffs themselves (map 2; appendix).⁵² Likewise, one document could contain two types of tolls, as seen in the Letterswerve tariff, which exceptionally incorporated regulations on the

51 This incoherency was also discerned in the Angevin tariffs, for instance. Bienvenu, 'Recherches', 439-440.

52 Despy, *Les tarifs*, 15-16.



Illustration 2 The keure of Nieuwpoort of 1163. Source: State archives Bruges, Gemeente Nieuwpoort Oud Archief, 399bis. DiBe ID 4000, in: Diplomata Belgica, https://www.diplomata-belgica.be/charter_details_fr.php?dibe_id=4000. Accessed 22 March 2022)

transit, import, export, selling, and buying of goods. From a legislative perspective, this tariff stands out from other twelfth-century tariffs, in its comprehensive description of different commercial actions to facilitate international merchants. By contrast, the *cueillote du fouich* of Saint-Omer (also called *delfghelt* in Middle Dutch) is a clear example of a state toll. It means “the collection for deepening the channel” and refers to the canalization of the Aa River in 1167, which aimed to create a direct connection with the sea. To maintain this waterway, a tax was

levied on the commodities passing through, resulting in the recording of a list consisting of bulk commodities, such as types of wood and grain.⁵³

Apart from market and/or transit regulations, the market tariffs of Arras and Saint-Omer contain other royal rights originating from the Early Middle Ages. Despite the continuity of terminology and collection methods through the Middle Ages, the toll system went through some rigorous changes during the Carolingian period, when both the terminology became more complex and incidences of toll-levying rose.⁵⁴ In the Arras tariff, fees on the weighing of goods, including salt (*sesteragium*), wool, yarn, butter, and cheese (*tronagium*), are mentioned, in addition to the rights for the unloading (*temonaticum*) and transport (*ruagium*) of fish.⁵⁵ Similarly, at the gates of Saint-Omer, a tax was levied for the profit of the count on the import and export of goods (*portagium*) and on the transport itself. Both tariffs also mention a seigneurial fee on the right to set up market stalls (*stallagium*). These additional taxes, at least the terminology, are not regularly present in other twelfth-century tariffs, such as the tariffs of Nieuwpoort and Letterserve. As Despy suggested, the distinction arising between transit and market tariffs in the eleventh century may have absorbed these individual rights.⁵⁶

In addition, some commodities mentioned in these tariffs may be traces of older Merovingian and Carolingian tariffs. Pirenne, Rolland,

53 The dating of this text is, however, uncertain, since the tariff has been preserved in a late thirteenth century register of public bylaws: Archives Communales de Saint-Omer, Layettes AB XVIII 16, 23v-24r. Derville believes this list must have already been enforced at the moment the canal was made in the middle of the twelfth century. Besides an extensive enumeration of types of wood and grain, this tariff does not differ much from the other twelfth-century tariffs, which makes this hypothesis plausible, though certainly not indisputable. Alain Derville, *Saint-Omer. Des origines au début du 14e siècle* (Lille 1995) 77.

54 Middleton, 'Early medieval port customs', 354; Renée Doehaerd, 'Exemption d'impôts indirects et circulation privilégiée en Europe occidentale pendant le Haut Moyen Âge', in: Fernand Braudel (ed.), *Éventail de l'histoire vivante. Hommage à Lucien Fèbvre II* (Paris 1953) 81.

55 *Sesteragium* (*sextariaticum*) is originally a seigneurial right for grain, in which one sixth of the grain was given to the lord. Du Cange et al., *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinatis VII* (Niort 1883-1887), col. 463b. *Tronagium* is derived from *tronare* (to weigh). Johannes Fuchs, Olga Weijers and Marijke Gumbert-Hepp, *Lexicon Latinitatis Nederlandicae medii aevi VIII* (Leiden 2005) T355. *Temonaticum*, derived from *temo* (beam), is defined as a toll levied on wagons, presumably when the beam was detached from the wagon and the goods were unloaded. Jan Frederik Niermeyer, *Mediae Latinitatis lexicon minus* (Leiden 2002) 1016. *Ruagium* (*rotaticum*) was an additional tax on the circulation of goods transported on wheels (*rola*) to maintain the roads and bridges. Paul Huvelin, *Essai historique sur le droit des marchés et des foires* (Paris 1897) 582-583; Pagart D'Hermansart, *Les anciennes communautés d'arts et métiers à Saint-Omer* (Saint-Omer 1879) 156.

56 Despy, *Les tarifs*, 18.

and Derville pointed out that the presence of slaves, gold (Arras, 1036; Tournai, 1153-1169), and animals such as bears (Saint-Omer, late twelfth century) related to an earlier period in history, since these trading goods had disappeared in the eleventh and twelfth century.⁵⁷ Doehaerd weakened this hypothesis by pointing out that the overall absence of gold in the high Middle Ages is an overstatement. Gold continued circulating in commodities, *lingots* (mass of metal casted into a bar), powder, and foreign money.⁵⁸ Ganshof and, more recently, Despy endorsed Doehaerd's doubts, and Verhulst additionally indicated the weak evidence for the presence of slavery in the early Middle Ages.⁵⁹ Although this suggests that the aforementioned trading goods need not necessarily be dated to the Merovingian period, a solid explanation for their presence in the sources is still lacking.⁶⁰

The prevalence of relics from older periods in (some of) these documents is, however, undeniable. Besides terminology – and commodities – the payment of taxes can also reveal traces of an older, pre-urban economy.⁶¹ In Arras, some payments in kind can be discerned for farming equipment (such as sickles and iron shovels) and weaponry (knives and spears). People who brought foodstuffs like grain, beans, salt, and fruit to Letterswerve were required to delate one of every fifty *raseria*.⁶² In our tariffs, however, most rates are expressed in money, which may indicate an evolution toward a monetized economy.⁶³ It reflects both the need for cash by elites to buy luxury products and

57 Pirenne, *Mahomet et Charlemagne*, 67; Rolland, *Deux tarifs*, 17; Derville, *Saint-Omer*, 77.

58 Doehaerd, 'Note', 22; Hans Van Werveke, 'Monnaie, lingots, ou marchandises? Les instruments d'échange aux XIe et XIIe siècles', *Annales d'Histoire Economique et Sociale* 17 (1932) 452-453.

59 François Ganshof, *Het tolwezen in het Frankisch rijk onder de Merovingen* (Brussels 1958) 12; Despy, *Les tarifs*, 35.

60 Adriaan Verhulst, 'The decline of slavery and the economic expansion of the early Middle Ages', *Past and Present* 133 (1991) 195-203. Verhulst criticizes the hypothesis of Bois on the continuity of slavery through the early Middle Ages. The case study of Burgundy in the tenth century which Bois presented cannot be used as model for Western Europe. Although slavery survived antiquity, the legal interpretation of this concept had been changed thoroughly through the Middle Ages.

61 Doehaerd, 'Deux textes', 328.

62 As Declercq indicated, *razier* – a measure for grain and other dry goods – is uncommon for the Bruges area. Since the Letterswerve tariff is preserved as part of that of Gravelines, the weights and measures were plausibly adapted for the region of Gravelines. Georges Declercq, 'Quarelen of quaren? Over een vermeende lezing in het toltarief van graaf Diederik van de Elzas voor Littersuerua (kort vóór 1163)', *Handelingen van het Genootschap voor Geschiedenis te Brugge* 156 (2019) 386-387.

63 Moreover, payments in kind can also be found in more recent documents, such as the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century tariffs of Damme – Letterswerve's successor. 1252: K. Höhlbaum (ed.) *Hansisches Urkundenbuch I* (Halle 1876) 145; 1367: Van Dale, 'Reglement', 56; Despy, *Les tarifs*, 46; Peter Spufford, *Money and its use in medieval Europe* (Cambridge 2009) 240-263.



Illustration 3 The payment of pontonage in Tournai depicted on the fifteenth-century stained glass windows of the Cathedral of Our Lady in Tournai. © Pierre Peeters

the process toward a consumption economy, the latter stimulating industrial production in the Flemish cities.⁶⁴ Besides this, the evolution of administration practices – as the final part below demonstrates – reveals how these tariffs may fit into the narrative of economic change in twelfth-century Flanders.

64 Thoen, 'The count', 276.

Tariffs as attestations for economic development in the twelfth century?

In the 1990s Verhulst, De Hemptinne, and De Mey highlighted the international origin and exceptional diversity of products – especially finished metal goods, such as weaponry – in the Letterswerve tariff. However, a comparative analysis between the oldest Flemish tariff of Arras (1036) and the four tariffs composed more than a century later invites us to consider a more nuanced understanding of changing administration practices, elite interests, and economic development in Flanders (table 1).⁶⁵

Where Arras (1036) only describes food in more general terms (*piscis* – but also *elft*, *salmo* and *sturio* – *annonna*, *fructus*), these twelfth-century tariffs seem more elaborate. For instance, Saint-Omer and Letterswerve make a distinction between fresh and salted herring, mackerel, and salmon. In the Letterswerve and Nieuwpoort tariffs, haddock, plaice, and sea bass seem to appear for the first time. Apart from fish, the tariff of Letterswerve and the *cueillote du fouich* of Saint-Omer contain an extensive list of fruits and vegetables: apples, pears, figs, nuts, peas, turnips, beans, and leeks, while the *cueillote* sums up an extensive list of grains: wheat, oats, barley, rye, and vetches. In addition, ‘new’ nutritional goods appear in some tariffs too, such as spices (cumin and pepper from the East), dried fruits (figs and raisins from the Iberian peninsula and North African coastline), and beverages (beer from the Hamburg region and mead from the Mediterranean) (table 2).

The tariffs of Nieuwpoort, Letterswerve, and Saint-Omer seem to reflect a process toward increased detail and accuracy in administration practices. To take it a step further, the registration of these products may reveal a growing need for basic nutrition (often of local or regional origin) because of growing demographic numbers. In addition to victuals, primary resources such as grind- and whetstones, presumably from the Rhineland area, and metals pop up. Occasionally, the origin of some goods was mentioned in the tariffs itself. In the market tariff of Saint-Omer, the quality between different sorts of iron was presumably distinguished: it came from Normandy (“gladifer de Normannia”), Basque country (“fer d’Espagne”), and Cologne (“garbes de fer de cologne”). Even more telling is the presence of products used for the textile industry in the tariffs of Nieuwpoort and Saint-Omer: primarily

65 Verhulst, De Hemptinne and De Mey, ‘Un tarif’, 165.

Table 1 Diversification of commodities in the tariffs of Arras (1036), Letterswerve (1160s), Nieuwpoort (1163), and Saint-Omer (1167 and late twelfth century)

Product	Arras (1036)	Nieuwpoort (1163)	Letterswerve (1160s)	Saint-Omer (End 12 th c.)	Saint-Omer (1167)	Presumed provenance
Fish	Piscium			Recentium piscium	Pisson	/
Shad	Elft					/
Salmon	Salmone	Salmones	Salmons	Salmo recens/salsus	Salmon	England Ireland
Sturgeon	Sturione			Sturio		/
Whale	(<i>Macrae carnis</i>) balenae	Ceti, id est walvisc				North Sea
Porpoise				Porcus marinus		North Sea
Herring		Alletia recentia	Allec recens, salsum	Saisorum allecium	Herenc	North Sea, Scandinavia
Mackerel		Macarelli	Makevis	Recentis marcell, macrelli salsi	Makerel	North Sea
Cod		Gabbelawi				Scandinavia, North Sea
Haddock		Scelvisc	Scellevis			North Sea
Plaice		Plathiz	Placitis	Plais		North Sea
Flounder		Zebutis	Buttis			North Sea
Flatfish			Grallingis			North Sea
Eel		Angullarum		Angullarum		Rhine/Meuse

FISH AND SEA MAMMALS

Product	Arras (1036)	Nieuwpoort (1163)	Letterswerve (1160s)	Saint-Omer (End 12 th c.)	Saint-Omer (1167)	Presumed provenance
Grain	<i>Ammonae</i>		<i>Annona</i>	<i>Annona</i>		Northern France
Wheat		<i>Frumento</i>		<i>Triticum</i>	<i>Blei</i>	Low Countries
Oats					<i>Avaine</i>	Low Countries
Barley					<i>Olge; soucrion</i>	Low Countries
Rye					<i>Soile</i>	Low Countries
Fruit	<i>Fructum</i>		<i>Fructus</i>	<i>Fructus</i>		Low Countries
Apples			<i>Pomis</i>		<i>Pomes</i>	Low Countries
Pears			<i>Piris</i>		<i>Pores</i>	Low Countries
Beans			<i>Fobam</i>		<i>Felijes</i>	Low Countries
Peas			<i>Pisam</i>		<i>Pois</i>	Low Countries
Turnips			<i>Rapus</i>			Low Countries
Vegetables			<i>Olere</i>			Low Countries
Leeks			<i>Porro</i>			Low Countries
Onions					<i>Ognos</i>	Low Countries
Wine	<i>Vini</i>	<i>Vinum</i>	<i>Vini</i>	<i>Vini</i>	<i>Vini</i>	Gascony, La Rochelle, Rhineland
Oil	<i>Olei</i>				<i>Oil</i>	Greece
Honey	<i>Mellis</i>	<i>Mellis</i>	<i>Mellis</i>	<i>Mel</i>	<i>Miel</i>	Iberic peninsula
Beer		<i>Cervisiam</i>	<i>Servisie</i>		<i>Goudale</i>	Hamburg
Mead		<i>Medonem</i>	<i>Medonis</i>			Iberic peninsula
Vinegar					<i>Aisil</i>	Iberic peninsula

FOODSTUFF

Table 2 International provenance in the tariffs of Arras (1036), Letterswerve (1160s), Nieuwpoort (1163) and Saint-Omer (1167 and late twelfth century)

Product	Arras (1036)	Nieuwpoort (1163)	Letterswerve (1160s)	Saint-Omer (End 12 th c.)	Saint-Omer (1167)	Presumed provenance	
SPICES, NUTS, DRIED FRUITS	Nuts		Nuces	Nucibus	Nois caureches	Iberic peninsula	
	Figs			Ficum	Fighes	North-Africa	
	Cumin		Cumini	Cumini	Comin	North-Africa	
	Peppers		Piperis		Povire	Asia	
	Garlic			Allio		Low Countries	
	Peat			Turbonibus		Tourbes de Berghes, d'Ardre, Ghisnes, And-erne, Viessmoustier, Nieuwerlet, Clermarés, Ardenborgh	Low Countries
	WOOD, FOREST BY-PRODUCTS, FUELS	Logging, firewood				Ligni	Ardennes
		Ashes	Cinerum	Cinerum	Cineris	Chendre	Scandinavia
		Soot			Roet		Scandinavia
		Pitch			Picis		Poi
Charcoal					(Carbonum)	Carbon de bos	Ardennes
Coal					(Carbonum)	Carbon de pierre	England, Liège

Product	Arras (1036)	Nieuwpoort (1163)	Letterswerve (1160s)	Saint-Omer (End 12 th c.)	Saint-Omer (1167)	Presumed provenance
METALS	Iron	Ferro <i>Fabri Garba ferri</i>	Ferri	Ferri, ferrum quod dicitur gladifier de Normannia; Saccus cum ferro	Gloes de fier, fer d'Espaigne; (grant) garbes de fer de cologne	Prussia, Castile, Normandy, Cologne
	Steel	<i>Garba achier</i>	Calibis, i.e. stali	Stael	Achier	Prussia
	Lead		Plumbi	Plumbum	Plom	England
	Tin		Stagni	Stannum		England, Bohemia
	Copper		Eris	Cuprum	Cupri, auricalci	Liège, Poland
	Brass			Mesinc		Meuse region
	Wool	<i>Laneorum novorum/ veterum</i>	Lanam	Lanam	Lanam	England, Scotland
	Yarn	<i>Fileti</i>	Filis	Fili	Fila	England, Scotland
	Cloth	<i>Pannorum</i>	Pannos	Panno		Low Countries Italy
	Linen	<i>Lineorum</i>			Linum	England
Butter		<i>Butiri</i>		Butiri	Low Countries	
Madder				Waranche	Low Countries	
Teasel				Carduones	Low Countries	
Argol				Arguelli, i.e. winsten		Gascony, La Ro-chelle; Rhineland
Kermes berry			Graine			Iberic peninsula Maghreb
Brasil wood			Brisili		Bresil	Asia
Alum			Alumi	Aluminis	Alun	Persia, Maghreb
TEXTILE INDUSTRY						

pigments and mordants (some from the Mediterranean area) such as butter, woad, madder, teasel, argol, kermes berry, brazilwood, and alum. Even a loom (“instrumentum textoris”) is mentioned in the Saint-Omer tariff. The appearance of this enumeration goes hand in hand with the early industrial development of the region of Saint-Omer and Ypres, from which Nieuwpoort was the outer port.⁶⁶

The (re)appearance of long-distance trade is reflected in the international provenance of the merchandise. However, the origin of these commodities is almost never mentioned in the tariffs. For this reason, we should look for other, more recent sources to inform us on this matter. An exceptional, presumably thirteenth-century list enumerating the origin of merchandise coming to Bruges and Flanders can be connected with the goods listed in the tariffs (table 2).⁶⁷ It is certain that goods such as spices, metals, stones, beer, and some dyes and pigments had an international origin, indicating the rising presence of long-distance trade in twelfth-century northwestern Europe (and perhaps already earlier) and the connectedness of Flanders with the rest of the (known) world.⁶⁸ These connections can also be demonstrated by the presence of international merchants in tariffs of both Letterswerve and Saint-Omer: the former referencing the complaints of Cologne merchants toward unjust toll-levying in the harbor, and the latter mentioning specific trade regulations for English and Scottish traders.⁶⁹ Both references indicate to us that the need for the governance of international merchants in coastal Flanders potentially increased during the second half of the twelfth century.

66 The development of the textile industry in the region of Bruges takes off approximately a century later. Michael Postan, ‘The trade of medieval Europe: the North’, in: Michael Postan and Edwin Rich (eds), *The Cambridge economic history* II (Cambridge 1952) 160.

67 The text “Cest li roiaume et les terres, desquex les marchandises viennent a Bruges et en la terre de Flandres [...]” was found in an early fourteenth-century manuscript. Both historical and linguistic arguments seem to imply the text itself dates from the thirteenth century. Original: Bibliothèque Nationale Français (BNF), Français 25545, *Recueil de dits, fabliaux, etc.* [...] 18v-19r; Kathy M. Krause, ‘The varied manuscript contexts of a little practical text. La devisions des foires de Champagne’, *Manuscripta* 62 (2018) 195-199.

68 The presumed provenance of the goods mentioned in table 2 is – besides this list – based on secondary literature. For instance: André Vandewalle and Simonne Abraham-Thisse (eds), *Hanzekooplui en Medicibankiers. Brugge, wisselmarkt van Europese culturen* (Oostkamp 2002) 73-74; Paul Freedman, *Out of the East. Spices and the Medieval imagination* (New Haven CT 2008) 104-129; Claude Gaier, *L’industrie et le commerce des armes dans les anciennes principautés de Liège, du XIIIe à la fin du XVe siècle* (Liège 1973) 175-227.

69 ‘Anglicus in Anglia manens, quicquid suum navi adduxerit vel quicquid infra villam emptum reducerit [...] Simili modo illi de Scotia’. Arthur Giry, *Histoire de la ville de Saint-Omer et de ses institutions jusqu’au XIVe siècle* (Paris 1877) 475.

As Lopez and Raymond illustrated in their study of trade in the Mediterranean, one of the main characteristics of twelfth-century economic development was the diversification of commodities and the reappearance of long-distance trade.⁷⁰ However, due to the character of twelfth-century sources, these documents cannot directly reflect economic change. The appearance of a diverse summary of merchandise (both bulk and luxury goods) in toll tariffs does not necessarily mean these were not exchanged during an earlier period of time. Still, the growing need to record these commodities more explicitly and thoroughly may reflect the desire of authorities both to keep a record of financial situations that were becoming more complex and to tighten control on import, export, selling, and transit of merchandise. Along with the transition toward a monetized economy – also reflected in the sources – economic change should be perceived alongside changes in writing practices of royal and seigneurial administrations alike, which occurred from this period onward.⁷¹ In revealing the impulse toward a stronger control over trade, these sources seemingly reflect elite interests, namely, the comital court and its close nobility, which stimulated a growing demand for luxury goods and high-end manufactured products.⁷²

Conclusion

Due to a paucity of source material, understanding the origins of the economic growth of coastal Flanders, and more generally the Low Countries, has been, and still is, a demanding task. This article aimed to draw attention to two specific types of sources comprising toll collection – toll exemptions and toll tariffs – that can offer more detailed insights into commercial and trade history. Eleventh- and twelfth-century sources on toll collection are often difficult to interpret because of their cryptic nature. Tariffs are often a blend of both Merovingian or Carolingian and twelfth-century elements, which on the one hand demonstrates how these documents survived, but on the other hand renders them inherently ambiguous; therefore, they warrant further scrutiny. Through detailed case studies and regional comparisons, some

70 Robert Lopez and Irving Raymond, *Medieval trade in the mediterranean world* (New York 1955) 108-135.

71 Menant, 'Les transformations', 18-19.

72 Thoen, 'The count', 260-261.

of these hindrances can be overcome, thereby allowing the deployment of these documents to study economic change in the transition between the high and late Middle Ages.

Compared to adjacent regions, (coastal) Flanders seems to stand out, both in quantity and quality, when it comes to twelfth-century documents on toll collection. The argument for the distinctiveness of the Flanders region in this regard is strengthened upon consideration of the regional economic shift from the inland to coastal regions which is known to have occurred during this period. In addition, the presence of the counts of Flanders, Philip and Thierry of Alsace, in the (renewed) imposition of tolls and the discharge of privileges, can be related to other aspects of their ‘economic politics’, such as the stimulation of new settlements along the coast. This connection between the reinforcement of toll regulations and the comital government enables us to thoroughly contextualize and determine this specific period of economic growth. Furthermore, the diachronic comparison of these tariffs reveals an evolution toward more complex administration practices which should not be considered separately from economic growth. On the contrary, the specific institutional and political structures created an environment to respond to a growing demand for both luxury goods and manufactured products.

About the author

Elisa Bonduel (°1996) worked until recently as a PhD researcher at Ghent University in a GOA-project entitled “High Tide – Low Tide. Bruges’ late medieval harbor system as a maritime cultural landscape”, which studies the import and export of bulk goods in Flanders via the Zwin tidal inlet (ca. 1150-1400). In 2018, she obtained her M.A. (also at Ghent) investigating late medieval migration to Bruges. She published two articles on this topic in the *Handelingen van het Genootschap voor Geschiedenis te Brugge* (2021-2022).

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Appendix: List of toll tariffs (11th-13th century) (see map 2)

Location	Date	Type	Edition/archival reference
Arras	1036	Market	Eugène-François-Joseph Tailliar, <i>Recherches pour servir à l'histoire de l'abbaye de Saint-Vaast d'Arras, jusqu'à la fin du xii^e siècle</i> (Douai 1859) 252-257.
	Early 12 th c. ⁷³	Market	Ibid., 247-251.
Tournai	1153-1169	Transit Market	Paul Rolland, <i>Deux tarifs du tonlieu de Tournai</i> (Lille 1934) 33-41.
	1163	Market	<i>De oorkonden der graven van Vlaanderen (juli 1128-september 1191) II. Uitgave – Band I. Regering van Diederik van de Elzas (juli 1128-19 januari 1168)</i> , Thérèse de Hemptinne and Adriaan Verhulst (eds.) (Brussels 2009), nr. 222, 344-347.
Saint-Omer	1167	Transit	Arthur Giry, <i>Histoire de la ville de Saint-Omer et de ses institutions jusqu'au XVI^e siècle</i> (Paris 1877) 548-549.
Boves	Ca. 1168	Transit	<i>Recueil de documents inédits concernant la Picardie IV</i> , Victor de Beauvillé (ed.) (Paris 1881) 3-6.
Letterswerve	1160s	Transit	Adriaan Verhulst, Thérèse de Hemptinne and Lieve De Mey, 'Un tarif de tonlieu inconnu, institué par le comte de Flandre Thierry d'Alsace (1128-1168) pour le port de 'Littersuerua', précurseur du port de Damme', <i>Handelingen van de Koninklijke Commissie voor Geschiedenis</i> 164 (1998) 167-171.
		Market	
Picquigny	12 th c.	Transit	<i>Recueil de documents inédits IV</i> , 6-10.
Amiens	12 th c.	Transit	Ibid., 10-12.
	12 th c.	Transit	Ibid., 12-14.

73 Doehaerd contested the date (1024) Tailliar assigned to this tariff. She proposed the early twelfth century. Renée Doehaerd, *Note sur l'histoire d'un ancien impôt. Le tonlieu d'Arras* (Arras 1946) 13.

Location		Date	Type	Edition/archival reference
Ghent	Brabant gate	1199	Market	<i>De oorkonden der graven van Vlaanderen: 1191 – aanvang 1206 II</i> , Walter Prevenier (ed.) (Brussels 1964) nr. 106, 226-232.
	Wasselintol	1199	Market	<i>Ibid.</i> , nr. 107, 232-235.
	Drongen gate	1199	Transit	<i>Ibid.</i> , nr. 108, 235-237.
	Bridge near Saint Jacob	1199	Market	<i>Ibid.</i> , nr. 110, 244-246.
	Scheiderode	1199	Transit	<i>Ibid.</i> , nr. 111, 246-248.
	Inside the center	1199	Market	<i>Ibid.</i> , nr. 109, 237-243.
	Dendermonde	1199	Transit	<i>Ibid.</i> , nr. 113, 250-253.
Saint-Omer		1195-1202	Transit	<i>Ibid.</i> , nr. 215, 447-449.
		Late 12 th c. ⁷⁴	Market	Giry, <i>Histoire de la ville</i> , 474-486.
Bapaume		1202	Transit	<i>Recueil d'actes des XIIe et XIIIe siècles en langue romane, wallonne et du nord de la France</i> , Eugène-François-Joseph Tailliar (ed.) (Douai 1849), 13-28.
		1211	Market	Georges Despy en Léon Zylbergeld, 'Jodoigne ou Genappe? Sur une chartre de franchise d'Henri Ier de Brabant de 1211', <i>Annales de la Société d'Archéologie, d'Histoire et de Folklore de Nivelles</i> 20 (1968) 27-28.
Mesimes		1228	Market	<i>Histoire administrative et constitutionnelle des villes et châtellenies d'Ypres, Cassel, Bailleul et Warneton</i> , L.-A. Warnkoenig en A.-E. Gheltof (Paris, 1864) 347-351.

74 The proposed date, between 1159 and 1167, by Giry has been questioned by Derville in Appendix nr. III of his PhD Thesis. He put this tariff at the end of the century instead. A. Derville, *Saint-Omer des origines au début du XVIIe siècle, essai d'histoire sociale* (PhD thesis in history: Sorbonne Université Paris 1970) 245-248.

Location	Date	Type	Edition/archival reference
Nivelles	1240	Market	Alphonse Wauters, <i>De l'origine des libertés communales en Belgique, dans le nord de la France, etc.</i> (Brussels 1869) 146-148.
Antwerp	1242	Transit Market	Jan Baptist Stockmans, 'De riddertol en joktol te Antwerpen (maart 1242)', <i>Bulletin Académique archéologique de Belgique</i> 1 (1904) 35-39.
Douai	1247	Market	Georges Espinas, <i>La vie urbaine de Douai au moyen âge III</i> (Paris 1913) 60-64.
	1251	Market	<i>Ibid.</i> , 245-249.
Liège	1250	Market	<i>Coutumes du pays de Liège</i> , Jean Joseph Raikem and Mathieu-Lambert Poain (eds.) (Brussels 1870), i: 76-77, note 1.
Damme	1252	Transit Market	<i>Hansisches Urkundenbuch</i> 1, K. Höhlbaum (ed.) (Halle 1876) 143-147.
Bruges	1252	Transit	<i>Ibid.</i> , 149-157.
Torhout	1252	Transit	<i>Ibid.</i>
Couvin	1258	Transit	<i>Cartulaire de la commune de Couvin</i> , Stanislas Bormans (ed.) (Namur 1875), 8-17, articles 8-10, 22, 30.
Thuin	1258	Transit	Archives de l'Etat à Liège (AEL), Conseil Privé (CP), Lettres de Echevins de Thuin de 1268. Partially edited: Victor Rousseau, 'Histoire des institutions politiques de Fontaine-l'Évêque sous l'ancien régime et des contestations dont cette ville fut l'objet de 1353 à 1757 entre le Comté de Hainaut et la Principauté de Liège', in: <i>Documents et rapports de la Société paléontologique et archéologique de l'arrondissement judiciaire de Charleroi</i> 39 (1931-1933) 108, note 17.
Gravelines	1269	Transit Market	Archives Départementales du Nord Lille (ADN), B1324/1599-1600.

Location	Date	Type	Edition/archival reference
Scarpe and Scheldt⁷⁵	1271	Transit	Léopold August Wamkoenig, <i>Histoire de la Flandre et de ses institutions civiles et politiques jusqu'à l'année 1305</i> (Brussels 1836) II, 461-492.
Ath	1279	Transit	<i>Cartulaire des rentes et cens dus au comté de Hainaut II (1265-1286)</i> , Léopold Devillers (ed.) (Mons 1875) 54.
Bavai	1265	Transit Market	Ibid., 113-114 and 114-115.
Biesme	1265	Market	Dieudonné Brouwers, 'Cens et rentes du comté de Namur au XIIIe siècle', in <i>L'administration et les finances du comté de Namur du XIIIe au XVIe siècle: Sources I</i> (Namur 1910) 139-150; II 351-352.
Mons	1256-1286	Market	<i>Cartulaire des rentes I</i> , 19-22.
Binche	1256-1286	Transit Market	Ibid., 121-124.
Valenciennes	1256-1286	Transit Market	<i>Cartulaire des rentes II</i> , 4-7.
Maubeuge	1256-1286	Transit	Ibid., 69-70.
Le Quesnoy	1256-1286	Transit	Ibid., 145-147.
Bouchain	1256-1286	Transit	Ibid., 218.
Lille	Middle of the 13 th c.	Transit	Archives Municipales de Lille (AML), Pièces aux titres (PAT), 155/2858.

75 This tariff enlists several places along the Scarpe and Scheldt rivers: Douai, Escarpieul, Râches, Lalaing, Warlaing, Hasnon, Saint-Amand, Mortagne, Antoing, Tourmai, Oudenaarde, Pamele, Schelderode, Ghent, Dendermonde, Rupelmonde and Valenciennes.

Location	Date	Type	Edition/archival reference
Cambrai	Ante quem 1270	Transit	Noël Dupire and Edouard Perroy, 'Deux tarifs du tonlieu de Cambrai (XIII ^e siècle)', <i>Revue du Nord</i> 36 (1954) 51-54.
	Ante quem 1270	Market	Ibid., 54-56.
Lith	1272	Transit	<i>Bronnen voor de economische geschiedenis van het Beneden-Maasgebied I</i> , Jan Frederik Niermeyer (ed.) (The Hague 1968), nr. 78, 34-35.
	1274	Transit	Ibid., nr. 82, 38-39.
Tournai	1281-1285	Transit	Rolland, <i>Deux tarifs du tonlieu de Tournai</i> , 51-88.
		Market	
Louvain	1250-1275	Transit	Herman Vander Linden, 'Tollen van den hertog van Brabant te Leuven in de xivde eeuw', <i>Bulletin de la Commission Royale d'Histoire</i> 99 (1935) 89-104.
Brussels	1250-1275	Transit	Archives Générales du Royaume (AGR), Chambres des Comptes. Chartes et cartulaires des duchés de Brabant et de Limbourg et des Pays d'Outre-Meuse, Register 131, fo. 118.
Condé	Late 13 th c.	Transit	Renée Doehaerd, 'Deux textes se rapportant à la navigation sur la Haine, au moyen âge', <i>Bulletin de la Commission royale d'histoire</i> 106 (1941) 340-345.
Péronne	Late 13 th c.	Transit	Jules Finot, <i>Étude historique sur les relations commerciales entre la France et la Flandre au moyen-âge</i> . (Paris 1894) 161-178.
Saint-Omer	13 th c.	Market	Giry, <i>Histoire</i> , 486-490.

