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# Fair rhythms: on times, spaces, and experiences of fairs

## Introduction

Markets arise wherever there is a society that cannot provide for itself or that, for other reasons, develops a need for goods which are not freely available locally or could not be locally produced.<sup>1</sup> This gives rise to exchange, which can be spontaneous and ephemeral, but which needs to be organised once it reaches a certain level of complexity and regularity. Beyond legal and economic issues, this concerns the organisation of space and time—that is, the provision of places of exchange, the organisation of the transport of goods and people (if the presence of merchants happens to be required), the fixing of times for exchange, and sometimes the fixing of prices and payment dates.

While markets in general might be a global phenomenon, these places of economic exchange are, of course, different in many respects in terms of chronology and region. This is already signalled by the various terms—market, annual fair, (trade) fair, bazaar, souk [*sūq*]<sup>2</sup>—even if the distinctions within a region can often only be made in idealised form. Although today fairs are primarily large international trade shows, if not marketing events—which, at least until the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, nearly always took place in large halls—pre-modern fairs were mostly held outdoors or in courtyards. Today, the term ‘market’ primarily suggests price formation processes that arise through supply and demand, whereas in pre-modern times, a market was primarily a place (for example, a marketplace) where products for daily needs could be purchased. Whilst markets often took place on a weekly basis, annual markets and fairs as places of wholesale and long-distance trade were held at longer intervals (one to five times a year and lasting several days). The bazaar, derived from the Persian word for ‘market,’ has tended to take place daily since the late Middle Ages and has a more specialised architectural structure: small and large shops lining a street or network of streets, often a separate area within a city where small- and large-scale trade intermingle. As bazaars tend to be found in cities influenced by the Islam-

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<sup>1</sup> Funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation)—Project number 430627254. I would like to express my thanks to my colleague Aaron French for proofreading this text.

icate world—for example in Persia or on the west coast of India<sup>2</sup>—they did not play a role in our research project, which focused mainly on western and central Europe. The same applies to the souk or merchants' neighbourhoods of Arabic-speaking cities.<sup>3</sup> However, these events, which varied in time and region, had one thing in common: they were generally not only economic places, but also places of sociability, entertainment, and (trans)cultural exchange.<sup>4</sup>

Our project, to which this article refers, focused on fairs in the period of about 1350 to 1600.<sup>5</sup> With the decline of the Champagne Fairs, fairs had already been established in many European cities, enabling merchants to conduct their business. They formed a tightly organised schedule—the so-called 'calendar of fairs'—which permitted merchants to meet in specific places on specific dates known well in advance.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, these fairs facilitated the interconnectivity between local and regional markets (rural as much as urban) and transregional commercial networks. It was largely this interconnectivity that made it possible for the old Champagne Fairs to be replaced by a new cycle, within which Lyon took centre stage for many years before being replaced by Besançon (as a financial fair).<sup>7</sup> The chronological boundaries of the project have, as such, been chosen to best account for the major transformations, such as the increasing market integration and the functional differentiation of trade.

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2 Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the 'bazaar' also reached European cities in the form of large department stores. One example is the Grand Bazar in the former rue Impériale (now rue de la République) in Lyon, a renaming of a department store that had existed since 1860. The Grand Bazar was demolished in 2005 and reopened in 2007 as a glass building housing various brands or retailers.

3 To start with the classics, see Clifford Geertz. *The Bazaar Economy: Information and Search in Peasant Marketing*. *American Economic Review* 68:2 (1978): 28–32; Mohamed Scharabi. *Der Bazar. Das traditionelle Stadtzentrum im Nahen Osten und seine Handelseinrichtungen*. Tübingen: Wasmuth, 1985. For more analytical and comparative perspectives, see Wolfgang Kaiser (ed.). *La loge et le fondouk. Les dimensions spatiales des pratiques marchandes en Méditerranée, Moyen Âge—Époque moderne*. Paris: Karthala, 2014.

4 Frank Grüner. Microcosm bazaar. Markets as places of cultural encounters and areas of conflict. In *Engaging transculturality: Concepts, key terms, case studies*, Laila Abu-Er-Rub et al. (eds.). London: Routledge, 2019, esp. 133: "[. . .] that bazaars are not just places where economic transactions of all kinds occur and services are offered, but simultaneously places of exchange, in particular exchange of information, opinions, cultural habits and practices, and they are, above all, places of social interaction." This is meanwhile a widely shared view in culturally orientated economic history.

5 See the project website <https://shs.hal.science/FAIRS-IN-HISTORY/> (29 March 2024).

6 Bur assumes that the annual cycle ("turnus") of the Champagne Fairs was finally fixed around 1190. See Michel Bur. *Champagnemessen*. In *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, vol. 2. Munich, Zurich: Artemis-Verlag, 1983, 1687.

7 Domenico Gioffrè. *Gênes et les foires de change de Lyon à Besançon*. Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1960.

Organising a large market or trade fair was a major undertaking for a number of different players: emperors, kings, sometimes bishops, city councillors, trading companies, individual merchants, and, last but not least, innkeepers. Keeping an entire system of fairs in balance was an even greater accomplishment as it was controlled by several actors or stakeholders, some of whom competed with one another. How these international trade fairs operated, which functions they had (as trading hubs or as money and credit markets, etc.), and how they contributed to the development of transregional economic networks has already been researched by a generation of historians.<sup>8</sup> Less attention has been paid to the individual perspective, that is, that of trade fair visitors: traders who wanted to buy, sell, exchange, or pay for purchases.<sup>9</sup> This perspective is also fundamental for a properly functioning economy, as it could not flourish without these temporary guests of the trading cities. It therefore seems necessary to start from the perspective of the fair merchants and to investigate whether and how they took advantage of trade fair dates, how they organised appointments, how they travelled between fairs, the peculiarities they endured (such as suspensions, reinstatements, relocations, bad weather conditions, etc.), the frequency and duration of the presence of merchants and agents or factors, and the timeline of payments (whether on account, from ‘fair to fair,’ at another place, etc.). All this requires space and time management, which incurs costs that can influence trading for better or worse. To analyse these dynamics in more detail, a rhythmanalysis approach seems well suited. In order to provide a rhythm-analytical interpretation of the history of the fairs, this article comprises three sections: (1) interest in rhythms and rhythmanalysis; (2) trade fairs, fair rhythms, and rhythmanalysis; (3) experience: individual traders visiting fairs—the example of Andreas Ryff.

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<sup>8</sup> Simonetta Cavaciocchi (ed.). *Fiere e mercati nella integrazione delle economie europee, secc. XIII–XVIII*. Florence: Istituto Internazionale di Storia Economica F. Datini, 2001; Franz Irsigler, Michel Pauly (eds.). *Messen, Jahrmärkte und Stadtentwicklung in Europa/Foires, marchés annuels et développement urbain en Europe*. Trier: Porta Alba, 2007. See also Markus A. Denzel’s contribution on “International Fairs” in this volume and Denzel’s own list of publications.

<sup>9</sup> The more recent studies on the larger firms or companies active at the trade fairs are an exception to this. See Hilario Casado Alonso. *Simón Ruiz y el mundo de los negocios en Europa en los siglos XVI y XVII*. Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 2017; Heinrich Lang. *Wirtschaften als kulturelle Praxis. Die Florentiner Salviati und die Augsburger Welser auf den Märkten in Lyon (1507–1559)*. Stuttgart: Steiner, 2019.

## Interest in rhythms and rhythmanalysis: a fresh approach

Rhythms are not typically the subject of historical scholarship, as the topic is more likely to be found in musicology, medicine, and psychology. Interestingly, two French scholars have paved the way for the observation of rhythms to be combined with the historical-critical method: the medievalist Jean-Claude Schmitt, who published “Les rythmes au Moyen Âge” in 2016,<sup>10</sup> and the urban thinker Henri Lefebvre (1901–1991), who initially introduced the concept.

Arranged in days of the week, Schmitt’s book traces the many rhythms of life, from the heartbeat to singing to the lunar cycles and their effects on daily and nightly rhythms and our calendars. His aim is to describe the “style rythmique de l’époque” in all the impressive variety and diversity of rhythms found in the Middle Ages, including time divisions and calendars, movements in space, depictions on pictures or in chronicles, etc. However, markets and fairs are given limited attention. This is surprising in that fairs have much to do with periodicity and the church calendar, as they took place on a regular basis (usually between two and four times a year) and often began on a saint’s day.<sup>11</sup> Schmitt does not ignore this phenomenon, yet he uses this observation to conclude that the subtle evolution of the agricultural economy and the development of markets remained inscribed within the matrix of the liturgical calendar.<sup>12</sup> The complex overlapping of different rhythms and the relationship between individual and social rhythms still require analysis—also for past societies, even if the key ideas in this regard owe nothing to a historian.

In the field of social sciences and cultural studies, the first analytical and systematic approach to the interplay of spatiality and temporality was introduced by the French philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1901–1991).<sup>13</sup> These studies

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**10** Jean-Claude Schmitt. *Les rythmes au Moyen Âge*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2016.

**11** To name the most common: Pentecost, Easter, but also All Saints’ Day, Michaelmas, Martinmas, and Candlemas. These are the church festivals and saints’ days on which fairs and annual markets were held most frequently. See Ulf Christian Ewert, Susanne Rau, Leif Scheuermann. *Räumliche Konfigurationen des Messehandels im frühneuzeitlichen Europa. Gedruckte Messekalender des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts und ihre computergestützte Analyse. Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 110:4 (2023): 525 (fig. 5).

**12** Schmitt, *Rythmes*, 561. See also the chapter of Nicolas Sarzeaud in this volume.

**13** Henri Lefebvre. *Éléments de rythmanalyse. Introduction à la connaissance des rythmes*. Paris: Éditions Syllepse, 1992; Susanne Rau. *Rhythmusanalyse nach Lefebvre*. In *Taktungen und Rhythmen: raumzeitliche Perspektiven interdisziplinär*, Sabine Schmolinsky, Diana Hitzke, Heiner Stahl (eds.). Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2018, 9–24.

were published posthumously in 1992 and, even though not finalised by its author, the text presents the notion of rhythm as related to urban research, while the term rhythmanalysis is implemented to explore routine movements in urban spaces. Lefebvre's method generally deduces concrete applications from concepts and categories. Two times, however, he focused on concrete applications: in the case of an observer's view from the window of a street in Paris and in a rhythmanalysis of Mediterranean cities (conducted with Catherine Régulier in the 1980s).<sup>14</sup>

Throughout his career, Lefebvre maintained a complicated relationship to various branches of Marxism. He was read predominantly as a Marxist theorist of urban research in the Anglo-American scientific community until his wider reception in France began in the twenty-first century.<sup>15</sup> It was Lefebvre's intension to establish rhythmanalysis as a new scientific discipline. His method conceptualised time in nature as cyclical, underscoring the fact that it is spatially perceived. Lefebvre notes that time in the social space of modernity is linear and artificial, conditioned by industrialisation and economic calculation based on market fluctuations. With reference to daily life rhythms, he concluded that natural rhythms based on the body are homogenised by the rationalising urban and market-oriented linear rhythms. He further claimed that remnants of non-adapted (or natural) time and rhythm react to this conditioning in the form of affectivity, energy, and creativity. The question of energy that arises in the subjects' interactions with space or time is irrelevant here, but we can state that market-orientated rhythms, particularly those in cities, influence traditional, body-based rhythms. In Lefebvre's case, this relates to modern capitalism and the market economy that resulted from industrialisation. This is not entirely unproblematic and must be addressed—not least in the context of a Marxist view of history.

The hidden distinction between nature and civilisation (or culture), as well as the blanket assumption that urbanised and market-oriented life leads to linear time rhythms (and that 'natural time' is non-linear), can be contradicted or, at least, viewed in a more nuanced way. Lefebvre is also not a historian and lumps many elements together. Yet, through his Marxist training, he at least included an important perspective on economic life and capitalism.

Rhythmanalysis thus generally examines the complex day-to-day interferences of different rhythms, cyclical or linear, particularly in urban space. In his (unfinished) book, Lefebvre emphasises repetition and difference as main catego-

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<sup>14</sup> Henri Lefebvre, Catherine Régulier. *Essai de rythmanalyse des villes méditerranéennes*. In Lefebvre, *Éléments de rythmanalyse*, 97–109.

<sup>15</sup> On his reception in France and Germany, see Susanne Rau. Preface. In *Perspectives on Henri Lefebvre: Theory, Practices and (Re)Readings*, Jenny Bauer, Robert Fischer (eds.). Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2018, VII–XV.

ries brought together in the notion of rhythm.<sup>16</sup> In any (dichotomic) manifestation, the latter—difference—is deeply involved with measurement. For and since Lefebvre, rhythmanalysis appears to be a new field of knowledge applicable to all the diverse phenomena of individual or collective life, music, the body and its movements.

While rhythm is not a new topic in various scientific disciplines, the reception of Lefebvre's concept of rhythmanalysis has only begun to develop.<sup>17</sup> Expanding it to an entirely new field of knowledge would require an interdisciplinary team that is able to analyse the complexity of intertwined cosmic, physical, social, and artificial rhythms that shape groups and societies. What we set out to do in this context is a more modest approach. The central point is that fair dates, both in their setting and in their use—that is, attendance—are social constructions and practices which depend not only upon political and economic, but also cosmological and religious factors.

Since a rhythm rarely appears singularly in real life, Lefebvre also introduced terms to describe the interplay of different rhythms. These are: isorhythmy (sameness) and polyrhythmy (diversity), eurhythmy (good coordination of the rhythms) and arrhythmy (the opposite).<sup>18</sup>

## Trade fairs, fair rhythms, and rhythmanalysis

Why should the concept of rhythm help us understand the history of trade fairs? My impression is that it is more open than the notion of fair system (*Messesystem* in German) which has been used up to this point and can include perspectives of individual fair traders who were not simply passive users but also actors that shaped the system. Up to now, trade fair research has spoken of “trade fair systems” or “market sequences” in order to consider the trade fair cities and their dates in relation to one another.<sup>19</sup> The starting point is correct, since hardly any

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<sup>16</sup> Lefebvre, *Éléments de rythmanalyse*, chapter 1 (“The Critique of the Thing”), 13–30.

<sup>17</sup> On historical temporalities and rhythms/rhythmanalysis, see the recent international conference on “Urban Co-Temporalities” (Erfurt, 21–23 February 2024): <https://urbrel.hypotheses.org/4709> (21 March 2024) and the conference report by Zahra Naghshband: <https://www.hsozkult.de/conferencereport/id/fdkn-142949> (27 May 2024).

<sup>18</sup> Lefebvre, *Éléments de rythmanalyse*, 91–92.

<sup>19</sup> Franz Irsigler. Messen, Jahrmärkte und Stadtentwicklung in Europa. Mittelalter und Frühe Neuzeit. In *Messen*, Irsigler, Pauly (eds.), 3–4; Ewert, Rau, Scheuermann, Räumliche Konfigurationen, 501. See also the article of Markus A. Denzel on annual fairs in Poland and Muscovy in this volume. He continues to use the notion of ‘system’ for the Western European fairs, which is perfectly legiti-

fair trader visits only one fair and many places were in a competitive relationship. Certainly, there are smaller regions, especially in the late Middle Ages, for which it has been plausibly shown that the fair dates were coordinated (for example, in Champagne, Flanders, the Rhineland, or southern England). The cycle of Champagne Fairs (Troyes, Provins, Bar-sur-Aube, Lagny), which appears to have been established around 1190, was not the result of chance but the active promotion of international trade by the Counts of Champagne.<sup>20</sup> Lesser-known examples of such scheduling are the Vienne (Rhône Valley) and Montbrison fairs.<sup>21</sup> This cyclical organisation enabled individual traders, at least theoretically, to visit the fairs one after the other.

However, the disadvantage of the notion of a system is that it is quite functionalist and presumes a perspective from above. It also suggests that the system was stable, although there were always interruptions, cancellations, new privileges, postponements of dates, or declining visitor numbers. While the fairs and annual markets depended on privileges granted by the authorities, many groups of actors were ultimately involved in their establishment and change, even across national borders. First of all, there were the kings and local rulers who, by granting privileges, wanted to enable lucrative trade and generate tax revenue in their dominions; then there were groups of travelling merchants, who sought security for themselves and their goods; finally, there were municipalities that organised fairs and annual markets that had to provide the market infrastructure for them and local merchants' companies which lobbied for these contracts. Established fair rhythms could be shaken or disturbed completely when the dates for fairs were set for towns in the neighbouring region at the same time, as examples in our fair exhibition—Lyon versus Geneva, Leipzig versus Naumburg—have shown.<sup>22</sup> But there

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mate if it is merely a matter of establishing that the fair dates took place from a certain point in time in a year-round cycle and if one is not so much interested in irregularities or disruptions.

<sup>20</sup> Bur, Champagnemessen, 1687.

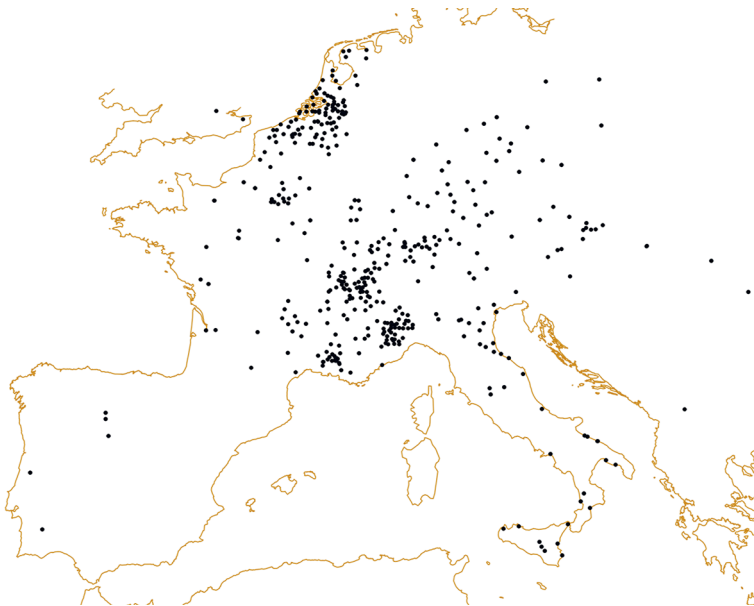
<sup>21</sup> Jacques Rossiaud. Regards sur Vienne au temps du concile. In *Vienne au crépuscule des temples*, Roger Lauxerois (ed.). Grenoble: PUG, 2014, 24: “Effet de cette heureuse convergence, l'existence de deux foires (l'une en juin, la seconde en novembre), attestées dès le début du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, qui attirent, outre les habituels maquignons régionaux, les marchands étrangers et les denrées chères. [ . . . ] En outre, la foire d'hiver de Montbrison, instituée par le comte de Forez en 1308, s'achève deux jours avant que ne commence, le 11 novembre, la foire des comtes à Vienne. Les marchands étrangers avaient donc la possibilité de fréquenter l'une et l'autre.”

<sup>22</sup> The exhibition “Fairs, cities and merchants” took place from 30 March to 30 June 2023 in Lyon, and from 1 September to 15 October 2023 in Leipzig. Most of the exhibited objects and texts can also be found in the online exhibition: <https://fairs-in-history.huma-num.fr/expo/home> (30 May 2024). On the abovementioned disputes, see: [https://fairs-in-history.huma-num.fr/expo/online/theme\\_lyon\\_3](https://fairs-in-history.huma-num.fr/expo/online/theme_lyon_3) (30 May 2024).

were also external factors such as wars or epidemics that sometimes caused the system to wobble.

Rhythmanalysis can depict these events somewhat better because it includes the irregularities (arrhythmias). Above all, it can also include the perspective of individual actors and their handling of the trade fair dates—perhaps not always the individual decisions, but nevertheless the adaptation or rejection of the trade fair calendar or its particular use, as well as the efforts that had to be made to be able to use the dates for one's own business. Thus, it is not about the perspectives of uninvolved observers, but those actors involved who have to adapt their appointments—that is, their calendars—to the general trade fair calendar (which prescribes a rhythm). Other factors included the quality of trade routes, the type of means of transport, the seasons, the weather, etc. Finally, it should be borne in mind that one needs time to travel these routes—more or less time depending on the current conditions.

Since the middle of the sixteenth century, fair calendars served as tools to organise the many dates. Yet they also do not allow for an immediate conclusion of a systematic or network character of several fairs, although all calendars would have more or less regional perspectives and could influence perceptions.



**Fig. 1:** Spatial distribution of trade fairs in Europe. Source: fair calendars of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, first published in Ewert, Rau, Scheuermann, *Räumliche Konfigurationen*, 520. This map shows the uneven distribution of fairs in Europe based on the fair calendars.

Even when taken together—that is, when several fair calendars from a period of 80 years are superimposed—they do not convey a complete picture of the situation at that time. According to Rothmann, there were an estimated 5,000 fairs and annual markets in 1,500 places in Europe around the year 1500.<sup>23</sup> In contrast, the calendars only list 740 fairs with different dates at a total of 467 locations, which means 1.6 fairs on average per location, ranging from one to five per town.<sup>24</sup> But what does the analysis of the trade fair calendars then show? Firstly, these calendars show a certain spatial configuration (as Ewert, Rau, and Scheuermann concluded, often from the perspective of their authors or readers), and secondly, they reveal the well-known periodicity and seasonality of the fairs. Both periodicity and seasonality are undoubtedly strong characteristics for rhythms. But what this looked like from the perspective of a merchant visiting these fairs, who had to deal with these calendars and dates, has not yet been fully considered. This user perspective will be reconstructed in the following section by drawing on the records of the Basel merchant Andreas Ryff.

## Experience: individual traders visiting fairs—the example of Andreas Ryff (1550–1603)

Born in Basel as the son of a cloth merchant, Ryff spent three years with a spice merchant in Geneva (1560–1563) after attending the German school and the Latin school in Basel, before completing his commercial apprenticeship (1565–1569) in Porrentruy (Pruntrut in German) and Strasbourg.<sup>25</sup> This was fairly typical train-

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<sup>23</sup> Michael Rothmann. Marktnetze und Netzwerke im spätmittelalterlichen oberdeutschen Wirtschaftsraum. In *Netzwerke im europäischen Handel des Mittelalters*, Gerhard Fouquet, Hans-Jörg Gilomen (eds.). Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2010, 149.

<sup>24</sup> The huge difference between the 740 fairs mentioned and the 5,000 estimated fairs (respectively: 467:1,500) is mainly due to the fact that the authors (or rather, ‘compilers’) of the fair calendars each make a specific (not at least regional) selection. This is clearly shown by the fact that only 17 fair dates (at ten sites) are mentioned in five of the seven fair calendars analysed. See Ewert, Rau, Scheuermann, *Räumliche Konfigurationen*, 527–528. In addition, the calendars do not include every single small annual fair.

<sup>25</sup> Veronika Feller-Vest. Ryff, Andreas. Version from 23 February 2012. *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*. <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/de/articles/018704/2012-02-23/> (14 March 2024); Albert Hauser. Andreas Ryff (1550–1603). Der reisende Unternehmer aus Basel. In *Unternehmergestalten des Alpenraums im 17. Jahrhundert. Kräfte der Wirtschaft*, Louis Carlen, Gabriel Imboden (eds.). Brig: Rotten, 1992, 177–189; Friedrich Meyer. Andreas Ryff (1550–1603), Reisebüchlein: Einleitung. In *Basler Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Altertumskunde* 72 (1972): 5–15. See also Ryff’s autobiography:

ing for a merchant at the time, enabling him to take over his father's business.<sup>26</sup> Ryff thus established himself as a successful merchant, especially as a draper and representative of an Antwerp drapery company (since 1573) as well as in the silk business, which he inherited from his wife, Margarethe Brunner, widow of Andreas Im Hof. Through his wife's dowry, Ryff also became partner and commercial manager of the silver mine in Giromagny near Belfort. As a member of the Saffron Guild and the Merchants' Guild (*Zunft zum Schlüssel*), Andreas Ryff was well integrated into Basel's civic society. He was a minor councillor (*Kleinrat*) in Basel from 1591, a deputy in charge of the churches, schools, and the university as of 1596, and from 1600 onwards, Lord of Thirteen, Lord of Buildings and Lord of Three (*Dreizehner-, Bau- und Dreierherr*), as well as holding several other offices. As the commander of Basel's expedition in the Rappen War (*Rappenkrieg*) of 1594, Ryff made a decisive contribution to resolving the conflict between the city and the subjects of the countryside.<sup>27</sup> He also represented the city of Basel in many legations, primarily in the conflict between Geneva and Savoy (from 1593 until the Peace of Saint-Julien in 1603).

One could argue that Ryff, who frequented the markets of his region more often than the major fairs, was not the typical fair trader, if one understands this to mean a wholesaler or long-distance trader who regularly visited fairs.<sup>28</sup> However,

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Andreas Ryff, *Selbstbiographie* (bis 1574). *Beiträge zur vaterländischen Geschichte* 9 (1870): 37–121 (hereafter cited as Ryff, *Selbstbiographie*).

<sup>26</sup> Ryff, *Selbstbiographie*, 48: "Dan, alß mein vatter viil jormerckt bruchte, hab ich allzith lust und liebe gehabt mitzureisen und mit kauffen und verkauffen umbzuogon, wie er mich auch uff mein trungenlichs begeren, alß ich 8 jorr alt gwesen, uff viil jormerckt angefangen mitzufieren, alß gehn Liestal, [etc.]." See Mark Häberlein. Commerce, formation et réseaux de compatriotes. La ville de Lyon vue par des marchands de l'Allemagne du Sud au XVI<sup>e</sup> et au début du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle. In *Lyon vu/e d'ailleurs (1245–1800). Échanges, compétitions et perceptions*, Jean-Louis Gaulin, Susanne Rau (eds.). Lyon: PUL, 2009, 141–159. In this article, Häberlein focuses on the training of Friedrich Endorfer, son of the eponymous Augsburg merchant and patrician, in the house of Daniel Herwart, another Augsburg merchant who had settled in Lyon. Business relations between southern German cities and Lyon existed between the end of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the Thirty Years' War. For further background on merchant training abroad, see Irmgard Schwanke. Briefe aus Lucca und Lyon nach Augsburg. Kaufmanns-ausbildung und Kulturtransfer im 17. Jahrhundert. In *Grenzüberschreitende Familienbeziehungen. Akteure und Medien des Kulturtransfers in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Dorothea Nolde, Claudia Opitz (eds.). Cologne: Böhlau, 2008, 253–271.

<sup>27</sup> He even wrote a treatise on this war. See Friedrich Meyer (ed.). Andreas Ryff (1550–1603), *Der Rappenkrieg*. *Basler Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Altertumskunde* 66 (1966): 3–131.

<sup>28</sup> Whether there was ever a typical merchant or fair merchant is questionable anyway. Pierre Jeannin once attempted to characterise the early modern merchant, emphasising, however, the different prerequisites, training paths, and the different knowledge depending on the goods traded. See Pierre Jeannin. *Marchands d'Europe. Pratiques et savoirs à l'époque moderne*, Jacques

in view of the development of trade fairs over several centuries, the increasing market integration, and the development of their training, it is by no means easy to categorise such typical traders. Furthermore, the amount of company capital, turnover, and merchandise played a role, as they required different specialisations from the traders. In other words, trade was often just one branch of their business. Fair traders in particular were often active in the credit business and acted as freight forwarders or ship owners. In the course of the early modern period, they increasingly became merchants in the putting-out system or manufacturing entrepreneurs. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, it can be observed that merchants or companies, which were frequently run within a family, handed over the transport of goods to their servants or carters.<sup>29</sup> This increasing dissociation of trade and transport led to the development of a transport or forwarding business and generally marked a structural change in the economy. As one of the wealthier city dwellers (although not part of the European financial elite), Andreas Ryff showcases the following trade fair behaviour: throughout his active area, he visited more markets and (regional) annual fairs than (international) fairs, but he was also present at the major trade fairs in Frankfurt am Main, Strasbourg, and Zurzach, not least—as he himself wrote<sup>30</sup>—in order to attend payment appointments—that is, not only for buying and selling, but also for clearing.

It should be emphasised that Ryff still travelled to many fairs and markets himself while keeping his base in Basel and Porrentruy. In this respect, he did not belong to the European financial elite (in Augsburg, Florence, and Genoa), who had their agents or factors in the major trading centres.<sup>31</sup> The owners of these companies no longer travelled themselves but instead had themselves repre-

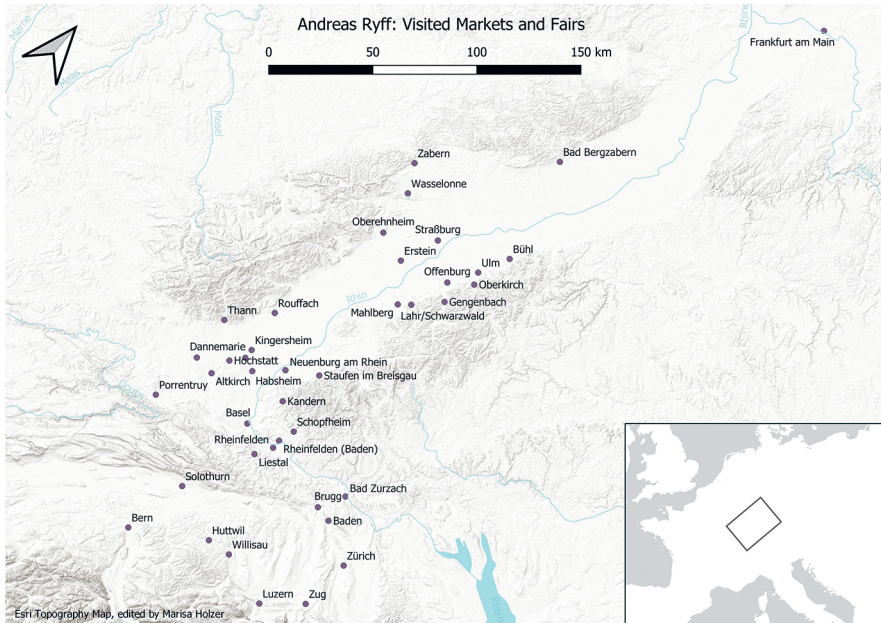
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Bottin, Marie-Louise Pelus-Kaplan (eds.). Paris: Éditions Rue d'Ulm, 2002, esp. 289–308. For the multiple occupations of merchants, see Michael North. *Kommunikation, Handel, Geld und Banken in der Frühen Neuzeit*. Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2000, 26 and 78.

29 Cornelius Neutsch, Harald Witthöft. Kaufleute zwischen Markt und Messe. In *Reisekultur. Von der Pilgerfahrt zum modernen Tourismus*, Hermann Bausinger, Klaus Beyrer (eds.). Munich: Beck, 1991, 75. The older economic history of Basel already referred to the first Basel haulage company as early as 1522 and noted that the haulage trade continued to develop over the course of the sixteenth century. See Traugott Geering. *Handel und Industrie der Stadt Basel. Zunftwesen und Wirtschaftsgeschichte bis zum Ende des XVII. Jahrhunderts, aus Archiven dargestellt*. Basel: Felix Schneider, 1886, 401.

30 Ryff, Selbstbiographie, 79: “Ich bin auch fir daß hin in alle beide Strosburger, Johanne- und wienechtmessen, auch in beide Franckforter, Herbst- und vastenmessen, gefahren; dan die handlung nam durch den segen Gottes deglich zuo und ervordert auch der handel von wegen der bezalungen, daß ich die messen brouchen muoste.”

31 For the Fugger company and their resiliencing strategies, see Markus A. Denzel. *Resilienz-Management in Unternehmen im langen 16. Jahrhundert. Fallbeispiele aus oberdeutschen Familienhandels-gesellschaften*. Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler, 2023, 129–145. The Fugger family had its head-



**Fig. 2:** Andreas Ryff: Visited markets and fairs.

sented. Ryff, on the other hand, travelled himself and covered the distances between the trading centres that he could manage by means of transport typical of the time, and thus he also experienced the geographical area.

He visited the following places with markets and fairs: Baden, Basel, (Bad) Bergzabern, Bern, Brugg, Bühl, Dannemarie, Erstein, Frankfurt am Main, Gengenbach, Habsheim, Hochstatt, Huttwil, Kandern, Kingersheim, Lahr, Liestal, Luzern, Mahlberg, Neuenburg/Rhein, Oberkirch, Obernai (Oberehnheim), Offenburg, Pruntrut, Rheinfelden, Rouffach, Saverne, Schopfheim, Solothurn, Staufeu, Strasbourg, Thann, Ulm (Renchen), Wasselonne (Wasselnheim), Willisau, Zug, Zürich, and (Bad) Zurzach.

Another aspect of Ryff's life is particularly interesting for us: he travelled a great deal and wrote about it in an autobiography and a travel booklet—the *Reisbüchlein* as he called it.<sup>32</sup> From these, we learn that he was aware of the arduous

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quarters in Augsburg, a main factory in Nuremberg, and an inspector who coordinated the other geographically dispersed factories.

<sup>32</sup> According to the editor, the travel booklet was written around 1600. This means that the entire text was written after the journeys, but based on notes Ryff made during or shortly after each journey. See Meyer, Andreas Ryff, 6.

nature of travelling at the time: “Whoever wants to go away or travel, should not trust too much in luck;/but take care of yourself,/ [otherwise] you will soon be brought to harm. [ . . . ] Andreas Ryff is my name,/I have often travelled in sweat,/ God will provide the end for us all/Blessed in Christ, our Lord.”<sup>33</sup>

In our project, we have recorded the fair visits of Andreas Ryff in the CoMOR database as they are documented in his self-biography and travel booklet.<sup>34</sup> They concern the period between 1566 and 1597, which forms the basis for the argumentation of this text. From this overview, we can see that his business travels often took him to Zurzach, Solothurn, Bern, Strasbourg, and Frankfurt am Main, and that his trading activities were embedded in the timing of the fairs and markets in the region.

**Tab. 1:** Markets and trade fairs (underlined) visited by Andreas Ryff. Data collected by Marisa Holzer on the basis of his autobiographical texts. English translation by the author.

<b>Markets/fairs visited by Ryff (modern name, present-day country affiliation in brackets)</b>	<b>Markets/fairs visited by Ryff (historic names used by Ryff)</b>	<b>Regular fair dates</b>	<b>Total number of Ryff's fair visits<sup>35</sup></b>
Altkirch (FR)	Altkilch	from Ash Wednesday to Invocavit <sup>36</sup>	

<sup>33</sup> Friedrich Meyer (ed.), Andreas Ryff (1550–1603), Reisebüchlein, mit einem Beitrag v. Elisabeth Landolt. *Basler Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Altertumskunde* 72 (1972): 25–26 (hereafter cited as Ryff, Reisebüchlein): “Wer wandlen oder reisen will,/der vertrauw dem glück nitg zvyll;/sonder uff sich selbst hab acht,/du bist gar bald zuo schaden bracht./[ . . . ] Andreas Ryff mit nam ich heiss,/habe greiset auch oftmol im schweis,/Gott well uns allen das end beschören/Sehlig in Christo, unsrem Herrn.” The translation is my own.

<sup>34</sup> Susanne Rau, Marisa Holzer. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Münchner Digitalisierungszentrum, Selbstbiographie des Andreas Ryff (bis 1574) (COL0091). *Configurations of European Fairs: Merchants, Objects, Routes (ca. 1350–1600)*, Jean-Louis Gaulin, Susanne Rau (eds.). <https://fairs-in-history.huma-num.fr/collection/COL0091> (27 March 2024); Susanne Rau, Marisa Holzer. Universität Basel Öffentliche Bibliothek der Universität Basel, Andreas Ryff (1550–1603), Reisebüchlein (COL0093). In *Configurations of European Fairs*, Gaulin, Rau (eds.). <https://fairs-in-history.huma-num.fr/collection/COL0093> (27 March 2024).

<sup>35</sup> Martin Körner. Le système des marchés annuels et des foires en Suisse dans le cadre du marché périodique et permanent (1500–1800). In *Messen*, Irsigler, Pauly (eds.), 148.

<sup>36</sup> Ryff, Reisebüchlein, 37.

Tab. 1 (continued)

Markets/fairs visited by Ryff (modern name, present-day country affiliation in brackets)	Markets/fairs visited by Ryff (historic names used by Ryff)	Regular fair dates	Total number of Ryff's fair visits
Baden (CH)	Baden	26 April <sup>37</sup>	
Basel (hometown) (CH)	Basel	Martini (11 November) <sup>38</sup>	
Bergzabern, Bad (DE)	Bergzaber(e)n		
Bern (CH)	Bern	Interest day after Shrove Tuesday, Easter interest day, St. Lucy (13 December), mid-Lent, Martini (11 November) <sup>39</sup>	29
Brugg (CH)	Bruk	14 September, 6 December <sup>40</sup>	
Buhl (Bühl) (Haut-Rhin, FR)	Bichel	Ascension Day <sup>41</sup>	
Dannemarie (Dammerkirch) (FR)	Dammerkilch, Tammerkilch	St. George's Day (23 April) <sup>42</sup>	
Erstein (FR)	Erstein		
Frankfurt am Main (DE)	Frankfort	Mid-Lent, 14 days after St. Bartholomew's Day (24 August)	53 <sup>43</sup>
Gengenbach (DE)	Gengenbach		

<sup>37</sup> Olivier Fordrin. *Almanach pour l'an M. D. LXXIII. Avec la pronostication vraye infallible à jamais*. Geneva: Fick, 1573. See also the CoMOR-Database: <https://fairs-in-history.huma-num.fr/source/SRC000122> (27 March 2024)

<sup>38</sup> Fordrin, *Almanach*.

<sup>39</sup> Ryff, *Reisebüchlein*, 37.

<sup>40</sup> Richard Rowlands. *The Post For diuers partes of the World: to trauaile from one notable citie vnto an other*. London: Thomas East, 1576. See also the CoMOR-Database: <https://fairs-in-history.huma-num.fr/source/SRC000043> (31 May 2024).

<sup>41</sup> Ryff, *Reisebüchlein*, 37.

<sup>42</sup> Ryff, *Reisebüchlein*, 37.

<sup>43</sup> Ryff, *Reisebüchlein*, 40: "Also hab ich, gönstiger läser, alle die strossen von Basel gehn Franckfort zimlicher mossen erklärt, hab dieselben alle woll geiebt und gebroucht, dan ich hab sidt anno 1569, do ich mein erste reiß dohin gethon, biß uff anno 1597 in eigner person 53 messen besuocht und do erschienen."

Tab. 1 (continued)

Markets/fairs visited by Ryff (modern name, present-day country affiliation in brackets)	Markets/fairs visited by Ryff (historic names used by Ryff)	Regular fair dates	Total number of Ryff's fair visits
Habsheim (FR)	Hapsen, Hapssen, Hapssenn	St. Simon and St. Jude Day (28 October) <sup>44</sup>	
Hochstatt (FR)	Sankt Gallenberg		
Huttwil (CH)	Hutwyl	1 or 2 weeks before Invocavit <sup>45</sup>	
Kandern (DE)	Kander	St. Catherine's Day (25 November) <sup>46</sup>	
Kingersheim (FR)	Kingerssen	Interest day after St. Bartholomew's Day (24 August) <sup>47</sup>	
Lahr (DE)	Loor		
Liestal (CH)	Liechstall, Liestal	Wednesday after St. Hilary's Day (13 January), Wednesday after Trinity Day (Sunday after Whitsun), Wednesday after Michaelmas day (29 September) <sup>48</sup>	
Luzern (CH)	Lutzern	Interest day after Shrove Tuesday, Easter interest day, interest day after Whitsun, interest day after St. Gall's Day (16 October) <sup>49</sup>	26 <sup>50</sup>
Mahlberg (DE)	Molburg		

<sup>44</sup> Ryff, *Reisebüchlein*, 36.

<sup>45</sup> Ryff, *Selbstbiographie*, 117.

<sup>46</sup> Ryff, *Reisebüchlein*, 37.

<sup>47</sup> Ryff, *Reisebüchlein*, 36.

<sup>48</sup> Ryff, *Reisebüchlein*, 37.

<sup>49</sup> Ryff, *Reisebüchlein*, 33.

<sup>50</sup> Ryff, *Reisebüchlein*, 33.

Tab. 1 (continued)

Markets/fairs visited by Ryff (modern name, present-day country affiliation in brackets)	Markets/fairs visited by Ryff (historic names used by Ryff)	Regular fair dates	Total number of Ryff's fair visits
Mulhouse (FR)	Milhousen, Milhusen, Mulhausen, Mulhuse	Interest day after Easter, interest day after Whitsun, interest day after Exaltation of the Holy Cross (14 September), fourth day after St. Gall's Day (16 October) <sup>51</sup>	
Neuenburg/Rhein (DE)	Neiwenburg	Saturday after Laetare Sunday, Monday after Assumption Day (13 November) <sup>52</sup>	
Oberkirch (Baden) (DE)	Oberkirch		
Obernai (Oberehnheim) (FR)	Obernähen		
Offenburg (DE)	Offenburg		
Pruntrut (CH)	Bruntrut	Reminiscere/second Sunday of Lent, "Vitae Modeste" (15 June), Exaltation of the Holy Cross, St. Andrew's Day <sup>53</sup>	24 <sup>54</sup>
Rheinfelden (DE)	Reinfeldn, Reinfeldn, Rinfeldn, Rynfeldn	Thursday after Candlemas Day (2 February), after St. Philip and James' Day (1 May), after Bartholomew's Day (24 August), after Martini (11 November) <sup>55</sup>	
Rouffach (FR)	Ruffach	St. Valentine's Day (14 February) <sup>56</sup>	

<sup>51</sup> Ryff, Reisebüchlein, 36.

<sup>52</sup> Ryff, Reisebüchlein, 111. This seems to be a local celebration of the Assumption of Mary (Mariä Himmelfahrt), usually dated 15 August.

<sup>53</sup> Ryff, Reisebüchlein, 36.

<sup>54</sup> Ryff, Reisebüchlein, 36.

<sup>55</sup> Ryff, Reisebüchlein, 37 and 110.

<sup>56</sup> Ryff, Reisebüchlein, 36.

Tab. 1 (continued)

Markets/fairs visited by Ryff (modern name, present-day country affiliation in brackets)	Markets/fairs visited by Ryff (historic names used by Ryff)	Regular fair dates	Total number of Ryff's fair visits
Saverne (Zabern) (FR)	Zabern, Zaberem		
Schopfheim (DE)	Schopfen, Schopffen	"der ein im meyen," Michaelmas Day (29 September) <sup>57</sup>	
Solothurn (CH)	Soloturn	Friday before Invocavit, Mitvasten, Monday after Whitsun, Monday before St. Gall's Day (16 October) <sup>58</sup>	35
Staufen im Breisgau (DE)	Stauffen	St. George's Day (23 April), Thursday after Martini (11 November) <sup>59</sup>	
Strasbourg (FR)	Strosburg	St. John's Day, Christmas <sup>60</sup>	55
Thann (FR)	Than, Thann	St. Theobald's Day (1 July) <sup>61</sup>	
Ulm (Renchen) (DE)	Ulm		
Wasselonne (Wasselnheim) (FR)	Waslen		
Willisau (CH)	Willesouw		
Zug (CH)	Zugg		
Zürich (CH)	Zirich	23 May, 12 September <sup>62</sup>	
Zurzach, Bad (CH)	Zurzach	8 days after Whitsun, <sup>63</sup> Saint Verena's Day (1 September) <sup>64</sup>	63

<sup>57</sup> Ryff, *Reisebüchlein*, 37.

<sup>58</sup> Ryff, *Reisebüchlein*, 32.

<sup>59</sup> Ryff, *Reisebüchlein*, 37.

<sup>60</sup> Ryff, *Reisebüchlein*, 40f.

<sup>61</sup> Ryff, *Reisebüchlein*, 36.

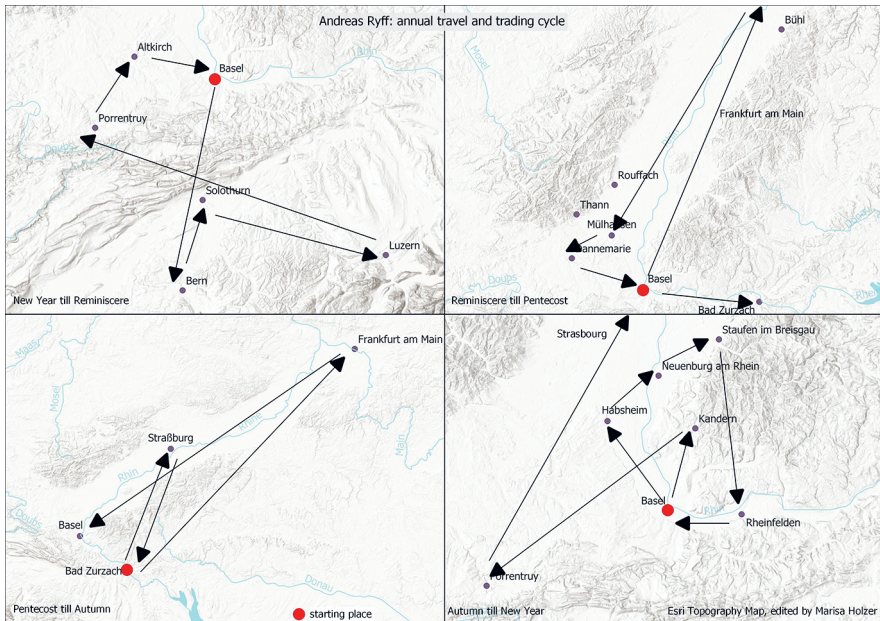
<sup>62</sup> Fordrin, *Almanach*.

<sup>63</sup> Ryff, *Reisebüchlein*, 31: "8 tag nach Pfingsten."

<sup>64</sup> Ryff, *Reisebüchlein*, 32.

## Travelling cyclically as a merchant to markets and fairs—and the production of a region

Ryff's visits to markets and fairs in the Basel area followed the coordinated annual rhythm of the regional trade fairs.<sup>65</sup> We can imagine these journeys as follows:



**Fig. 3:** Andreas Ryff: Annual cycle of travelling and trading.

At the beginning of the year, he started in Basel, went via Bern to Solothurn and Pruntrut, then he returned to Basel, stopping in Altkirch. He then travelled mostly to Frankfurt (on horseback) and sold some of the goods he had bought on his way back via Mulhouse and Dannemarie before arriving in Basel again. Once back in Basel, he cut the remaining cloth to size. He sent some of it ahead to Rouffach, Bühl, and Thann and sold another part in his boutique in Basel. Finally, he sent the remainder in advance to the Whitsun Fair in Zurzach. From there, he was able to return with a couple of bundles from his main supplier in Antwerp

<sup>65</sup> Körner, *Le système des marchés*, 146. Körner has already outlined a typical itinerary, which we have specified and mapped in the project.

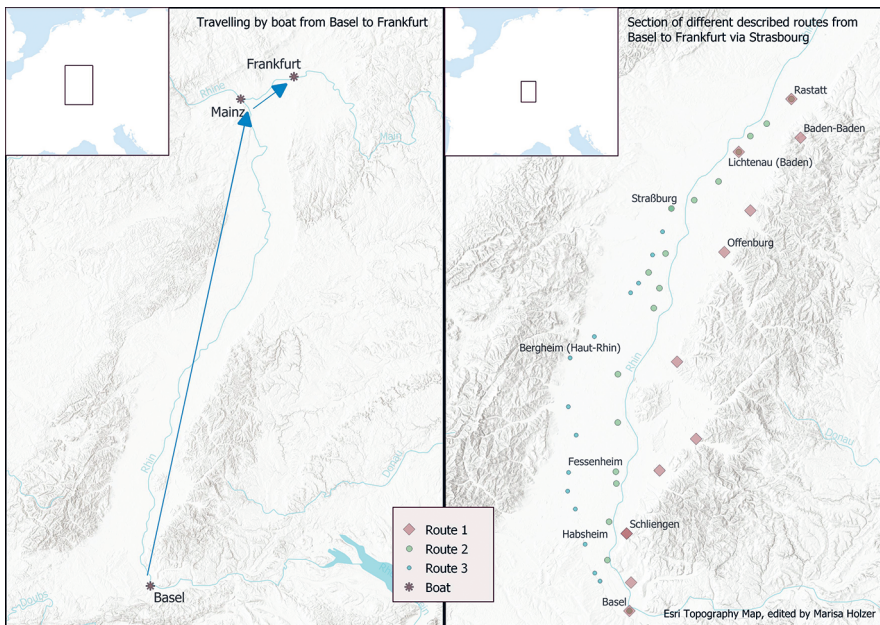
(Silvester-Schreiber). Shortly after the end of the fair in Zurzach, he went to Strasbourg to make further purchases. He sold these goods mainly at the St. Verena Fair in Bad Zurzach, from where he left directly for the autumn fair in Frankfurt. Around St. Martin's Fair in Basel, he travelled through the immediate surroundings of Basel with its annual markets (Habsheim, Neuenburg, Staufen, and Rheinfelden). Finally, at the end of November, he travelled from Basel to Kandern and directly to Pruntrut. Last but not least, and under great time pressure (as he complained),<sup>66</sup> he travelled to Strasbourg for the Christmas Fair.

Since Ryff indicated the means of transport he used—namely, by foot, on horseback, by covered wagon, a so-called “garotsche,” or by ship<sup>67</sup>—and the places

<sup>66</sup> Ryff, *Reisebüchlein*, 37: “aber die zeith ist mir am tag zuo kurtz worden” (see below, note 71).

<sup>67</sup> Ryff, *Reisebüchlein*, 36: “Ich hab in suma de anno 72 biß uff anno 98 gar starck mit duochen [Tuche, cloth] in die Eidgnoschaft gehandelt, wie meine schuld- und rechenbiecher anzeigen kennen, als daß ich gar stark im Schwitzerlandt hab über berg und thal reisen miesen, wan auch biswylen ander leuth geschlossen haben.” About the boat trip from Basel to Frankfurt (twice), Ryff writes: “Erstlich, so mag man von Basel auß uff dem Rihn per schiff vahren biß gehn Mentz und von Mentz den Mein auff/biß gehn Franckfort andt statt, also daß man nienen uffs land darff. Dise schiffart hab ich 2 mol volbrocht und ist bey guottem wetter kumlich [= bequem]. Aber wan die wind entstand, das gar bald und oft under Speihr hinab beschicht, so ist eß langwylig, vertrisig und sorglich [= besorgniserregend].” See Ryff, *Reisebüchlein*, 37–38. See also Ryff, *Reisebüchlein*, 61: “*Per Venedig*: Uff mitwuchen, den 15ten augusti, a° 99, bin ich mit meinem dienner auß Meilandt uff einer garotschen oder goutschen verweist und folgende stroß und auspän genomen. [. . .] An diser statt fleist die Ade, ein schiffreich wasser. Ist ein guotter paß und die stat zimlich groß./Demnach vahrt man ebenfeld per garotschen vom wasser denen in 3 stunden gehn *Kremme*; dorthin ist es 15 myllen. [. . .] Firbaß kompt man gantz ebner stroß gehn *Suntsing*; dohin ist 5 mylen. Suntsing, die alte, zimlich woll erbouwene statt, ist Meilender gebieths. Do sind wir übernacht glägen, ist mit Spannieren besetzt. 1/4 stund wegs vor der statt gegen Pressen zuo fleust aber ein schiffreich wasser, *das heist die Oy* [Oglio]. Do vahrt man/ahn einem seil über. Diß vahrt [Fähre, ferry] khert schon wider den Venedigieren zuo. Uff ein starcke stund wegs per garotschen von disem wasser, do ligt in freyem, ebne und wythem feldt *ein gwaltige, gar überauß woll erwartte neiwe vestung; die heist Urzenove, Venediger hörschaft zuostendig; dohin ist 5 myl*.” About a bottleneck between Cleven [Chiavenna] and Splügen, Ryff writes: “Von Cleven auß tritt man gleich das gebirg, den Spligenberg, ahn, ist ein böser, sorglicher berg zuo reissen. Fir mein theil wolt ich lieber den Gothart 2 mol dan disen 1 mol reisen, nit allein von wegen der bösen, stutzigen und hohen stalden und bergen enenvohr gegen Cleven; sonderen hiedisent dem Spligenberg hat es uff dem hinderen Rihn in der enge zwischen den engen, hohen felsen gantz sorgliche, von holtz gemachte strossen, so ahn die felsen gekleibt sind, so do der lenge noch gar hoch ob dem wasser des hinderen Rihns ahn den felsen kläben wie ein schwalmennäst an einem trom [Balken, beam], und sind nit breitter, dan daß bloß ein/soumroß passieren kan. Wan dan einem die soumroß oder sonst reither entgegen koment, so hat man nit platz, ein pferd umbzuokhören oder ohne gfohr uß dem weg zuo wychen. Wan man nun über den Splygenberg herab kompt, so kompt man hiedisent in das dorff Splygen. *Diser flecken Spligen hat vom berg den namen; dohin ist von Cleven über das gebirg 4*

he passed on the way in his notes, it is sometimes even possible to reconstruct the different routes he chose when he was on the move from one place to another.



**Fig. 4:** Andreas Ryff: Travelling by boat from Basel to Frankfurt (and his description of different routes from Basel to Frankfurt via Strasbourg).

For the route between Basel and Frankfurt, for example, he took the shipping route twice (on the Rhine and Main), but opted more frequently for the land route. Such information cannot be gathered from merchants' manuals or account books, but only from individual testimonies.

As can be seen from the table and the maps, he travelled quite frequently in an average year. From 1570 to 1572, he visited 110 fairs and annual markets—that is, on average about 36 per year.<sup>68</sup> Many of his trips to trade fairs resulted in his

*deutscher myl.* See Ryff, *Reisebüchlein*, 94–95. On the means of transport that Ryff used, see also Meyer, *Andreas Ryff*, 8–9.

<sup>68</sup> Körner, *Le système des marchés*, Annex 1, 158–159. This is consistent with our CoMOR database, which contains Ryff's trade fair visits for the years 1566 to 1597.

absence for several days, which meant that he was not often at home with his wife and her five children.<sup>69</sup> This only changed when he began working for the Basel Council and concentrated more on local sales.<sup>70</sup> But this time-consuming travel to one or several places meant that he could not be present at the roughly 100 markets and fairs that were held throughout the year in northwestern Switzerland and on the Upper Rhine around 1600. In his notes, he often complained about the arduous journeys and the associated hustle and bustle: “Now it is not a long journey, but the time was too short for me to travel from one place to the other, so I had little rest, so that the saddle did not burn my backside.”<sup>71</sup>

Yet the fairs remained necessary, especially for the textile trade as well as for the loans he regularly used for his trading and to meet the payment dates for goods he had purchased.<sup>72</sup> This can be grasped clearly from the source. From a rhythmanalytical point of view, it can be said that Ryff felt a certain amount of stress from all the external rhythms and the difficulties of travelling. Unlike the presumably model Champagne Fair trader, Ryff was by no means able to attend every appointment; nevertheless, over the years, he found his own rhythm in which he could visit the fairs and markets within his region, from Bern to Frankfurt. We don't know exactly why he occasionally skipped a market, but he certainly had the fair calendar at hand, which told him where he could buy or sell his goods and where to repay a loan. In a way, this calendar was his permanent mobiliser.

There are at least two concrete indications of when his rhythm of fair visits changed: one is seasonal, the other has to do with a structural change in his business. Seasonally—that is, on an annual basis—he travelled less in the summer months of July and August. At that time, there were only the smaller markets in Thann (1 July) and in Kingersheim (end of August) as well as the shop in Basel. The commission received from the Antwerp house represented a structural and organisational change: after 1573, he reduced his visits to the smaller markets.

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69 Hauser, *Andreas Ryff*, 177, 185; Ryff, *Reisebüchlein*, 113, note 48. These children were not his own but those of his wife Margareta Brunner, whom he married in 1574 after her first husband Andreas Im Hof (who was also his business friend) had died.

70 On the decision to take over his father's business, see Ryff, *Selbstbiographie*, 68 [anno 1568]: “dass ich entlich mir firsatzte ein feinne, lustige handlung und gwerb fürzunemen; auch gelustet mich meines vaters hauß zuom gwerb zu bouwen, daß es lustig und kumlich darzuo sein mieste.” It seems that he had taken over the affairs of his father in the year 1569, when he returned to Basel from Strasbourg. See Ryff, *Reisebüchlein*, 31: “in meines vaters haushaltung.”

71 Ryff, *Reisebüchlein*, 37: “Nun sind es zwor keinne withen reisen; aber die zeith ist mir am tag zuo kurtz worden, von einem orth an das ander ze reisen, hab also wenig ruow gehapt, daß mich der sattel nit ahn das hindertheil gebrent habe” (my translation).

72 Ryff, *Selbstbiographie*, 79 (see above, note 30).

The frequency of his visits to the fairs decreased even further as he became more involved in the services of the city of Basel.

## Conclusion

The main question is, of course, if this can be generalised and whether there are other such sources from individual merchants that shed light on the everyday practices of fair trade and the rhythms of visiting fairs.

Since the survival of such records is rare, it is almost impossible to conduct a comparative study from the user's perspective. There are the huge business archives of the Italian Salviati and Martelli families, which provide insights into their trade and financial activities at European fairs, but these are business archives in the narrower sense<sup>73</sup>—they provide insight into accounting practices rather than into the practices of individual actors. There is also surviving correspondence from the fair merchants (with other merchants or with their customers). In the early modern period, such letters were by no means purely business-related, but instead contained further information about business practices, the circumstances of the organisation, the expected (or absent) profits, the business cycles (which were dependent on politics, weather, or epidemics), the trips made or still planned to the fairs, the supply routes of goods, as well as family matters.<sup>74</sup> This type of correspondence allows us to reconstruct the space and time management of a merchant to a certain extent. The disadvantage is that these letters have very different addressees and represent a less cohesive narrative than a travel diary, and this makes it less likely that all the trade fairs visited during a particular period can be recorded.

Against this background, we can draw at least some interesting if preliminary conclusions from the analysis of the unique autobiographical and entrepreneurial documents written by a Basel merchant of the late sixteenth century. As an individual trader with business contacts as far away as Antwerp, he still travelled to the markets and fairs with the goods himself during his main years as a fair trader. In this respect, he could be described as a discontinued model. On the

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<sup>73</sup> See the article by Heinrich Lang in this volume.

<sup>74</sup> Such correspondence has already been partially analysed—for example, that of the company Specht & Gonzebat, which is held in the departmental archives in Lyon (ADRML 8B 1237/1–8), although this concerns only the early eighteenth century (1700–1721). On 4 May 2023, archivist Sophie Malavieille and I presented the inventory and some of the results of this study, a recording of which can be found on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0LqxPQSUzvU>. A publication of the research results is pending.

other hand, he may represent the ‘middle-class’ merchant who must have existed, as the fairs at the end of the sixteenth century were by no means all in the hands of European big business—that is, the financial elite. Besançon and some north Italian places developed at that time into pure financial fairs, but these cities lay in any case outside of Ryff’s geographical radius. Ryff was sometimes accompanied on his travels by a servant,<sup>75</sup> yet he never joined a larger group. Nor did he employ any representatives or factors at the major trade fairs or financial centres in Europe, which is also reflected in the geographical radius of his activities. His trading practices—that is, his travelling patterns and logistics—changed when he was given the commission for the Antwerp Cloth House (1573). He then received the high-quality cloth (*Lindische Tuche*) directly and no longer had to buy it at a fair on his own account.<sup>76</sup> He paid in cash, at least in the smaller markets. When he mentions the payment function of fairs, which created a time interval (between two fairs), he paid a trade credit. In any case, he does not mention bills of exchange. Lastly, even in the heyday of his travelling, he was never just a fair trader, for he also drew income from other sources.

To conclude on a general note: While scholars of economic history tend to ask which merchants went to the fairs, what goods they traded in detail, and which prices were negotiated, the urban and spatial history approach asks about the spatiotemporal dimensions of the merchants’ culture and how the micro and macro perspectives were connected. In particular, this means how individual merchants inserted themselves into the economic structures and opportunities and how they managed time and space (which was probably largely with the intention of reducing transaction costs). In this respect, such an observation is not a simple microhistory, but rather an approach that attempts to uncover the connections between the micro and the macro levels, between the individual perspective and the larger framework (in the sense of Carlo Ginzburg.)<sup>77</sup> Through having to adapt to the general trade fair calendar and yet not being able to be present at all trade fairs in his region, Ryff illustrates the individual link to the larger trade fair system of his time—admittedly only from the perspective of his own narrative—even as he cre-

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<sup>75</sup> Sometimes he mentions servants who supported him either in the Basel shop or when travelling to markets or fairs. See Ryff, *Selbstbiographie*, 85: “dienner.”

<sup>76</sup> Geering, *Handel und Industrie*, 402, 412–413.

<sup>77</sup> Carlo Ginzburg, *Mikro-Historie. Zwei oder drei Dinge, die ich von ihr weiß*. *Historische Anthropologie* 1 (1993): esp. 190–191. Ginzburg had already conceded at the time that microhistory was not an entirely unified movement practiced by a clearly demarcated group of historians—and it probably still isn’t today. Nevertheless, shared elements of microhistorians do exist: the stance against ethnocentrism, the relevance of small-scale observation, rejecting teleological assumptions, an emphasis on the perspective of the actors, and the importance of deviation from the norm.

ated his own, personal trading region. The analysis of his spatiotemporal ‘fair practices’ can ultimately help to explain the economic changes at the macro level.

Finally, what we can also learn from Ryff’s life is the simultaneity of different spatial relationships in the economy of his time: he went to markets and to fairs and he sold (mostly cloth) in his house in Basel, while other merchants met at the exchange fairs or at the Antwerp Stock Exchange, where much higher sums were negotiated over greater geographical distances.

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