

Textiles, Trade and Theories

From the Ancient Near East to the Mediterranean

Edited by Kerstin Droß-Krüpe
and Marie-Louise Nosch

Kārum – Emporion – Forum

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The Wool Economy of Roman Italy

Miko Flohr

Of the three regions in the Roman world for which we have larger bodies of evidence about textile manufacturing and trade, the Italian peninsula probably is the most important one when it comes to understanding the textile economy of the Roman world as a whole. This has in the first place something to do with evidence, of course. While the evidence from Italy mostly lacks the detailed, sometimes transactional specificity of the Egyptian papyri, and while the epigraphic record of Italy (not counting Rome) is to some extent rivalled by that of Anatolia, there is no doubt that both the archaeological and the iconographic record have no equal elsewhere in the Roman world; not unexpectedly, Italy is also treated best by Greco-Roman literary authors. Indeed, there are many discussions of textile economies in other regions of the Roman world where evidence from Italy at some point pops up to fill in an essential gap, or to provide a necessary parallel. Yet more important than the evidence is, of course, the fact that Italy, especially in the imperial period, was very much the spider in the web: it was the epicentre of the empire that tied together all the loose ends of trade and transport networks, and that exerted a strong influence on regional economies in other parts of the Mediterranean and beyond.¹ Italy was partially exempted from taxes, and profited enormously from revenues generated by Italian landowners who controlled property in other provinces but spent the profits in Italy.² Large parts of Roman Italy, but particularly the old Roman heartland of Latium and Campania became absurdly wealthy over the course of time and developed a rather demanding public dress culture, as is repeatedly observed by ancient commentators.³ Moreover, Italy had Rome, an extremely large metropolis with, in terms of demand for textiles, a fortuitous combination of both exceptionally wealthy and exceptionally many people.⁴ There can be little doubt that Italy was the largest single consumer market for textiles in the Roman world, and that demand from the peninsula at least potentially had an impact on the textile economies of other regions as well. It would thus be very hard to understand the history of Roman textile economies without understanding the textile economy of Roman Italy and of its historical development from the middle republic to the high empire and beyond.

This article intends to propose a model for the historical development of the wool economy of the Italian peninsula that may help to explain the geography of wool production as it is suggested by textual sources. It will do so on the basis of a rather traditional evidential basis: the core of the argument rests on a few snippets of literary evidence, which at a couple of points will be supplemented by some inscriptions. The archaeological evidence for wool production and textile manufacturing – basically consisting of loom weights and spindle-whorls – will be mostly neglected: it is not known to us sufficiently well enough to inform a discussion on the more

1 Particularly through Rome, cf. Morley 1996.

2 On the economic foundations of Roman Italy see Purcell 2000, 432–440.

3 On dress culture in Roman Italy see Flohr 2013b, 70–71.

4 On the impact of the Roman metropolis on the Italian economy see the classic Morley 1996.

macro-economic aspects of the Italian textile economy, even if its value in assessing local histories of textile trade and manufacturing is undeniable.⁵ The argument will start with a brief review of past approaches to the Italian wool economy, and will then focus on two key points: the historical development of the geography of demand and the development of the geography of supply. A key element of the argument will be that, in order to understand the geography of the early imperial Italian wool economy, it is essential to look at the way in which the Italian wool economy took shape in the period when the city of Rome became increasingly independent on the import of wool – the second century BCE.

While the present argument does not start from a very precisely circumscribed theoretical position on how the economic history of manufacturing and trading textiles should be written (it rather starts from what has been happening in the historiography of the Italian textile economy), it embraces a number of ideas that are worth pointing out explicitly here. In the first place, contrary to many past approaches to Roman textile production, ‘time’ will be a very central component of the present argument. This is because economic systems, as they emerge and evolve, do so not in a vacuum, but in a world already shaped by a variety of historical factors (and actors), and in which certain scenarios had already become impossible as the result of past developments, and others may have become less attractive that they may have looked on the theoretical drawing table – you can only understand the outcomes when you know the processes shaping them. Path-dependence is a real issue when discussing the development of economic geographies, and is, for that reason, a hotly debated issue among economic geographers.⁶ A second point is related: while it is tempting to focus on the development of one specific branch of the economy, these branches do not develop on their own, but are interrelated, especially when they involve large-scale land use: land can be used only once, and what is used for grazing cannot be used for cultivating cereals or grapes. There is no way to understand a wool economy, without understanding the other sectors of the agricultural economy too, and the extent to which agricultural economies were, actually, specialized in their orientation towards the outside world. Thirdly, and finally, the present argument quietly assigns a key role to social networks in shaping and maintaining supra-local trade economies: rather than acting on their own, and venturing into the big unknown, traders and manufacturers started from what (and whom) they knew and what they had easily access to: familiarity is a crucial issue in an economy in which the risks of trade over longer distances were considerable.⁷ As will be suggested in what follows, the complex Italian textile economy of the imperial period seems to have emerged from modest and familiar Republican period beginnings, with Romans initially tapping known and easily accessible markets, and expanding on that basis at a later moment.

Debating the Italian Wool Economy

There is a rich bibliography on textile manufacturing and trade in Roman Italy, but a large majority of approaches focuses on a specific city or region. This makes the debate rather fragmented, even if there are clear clusters of discourse on Cisalpine

5 Cf., on Pompeii, Flohr 2013a; Monteix 2013.

6 See e.g. Martin & Sunley 2006; Martin 2010.

7 This is also clear from, e.g. the role of freedmen in trade. Cf. Broekaert 2016.

Gaul and Apulia.⁸ Moreover, the standard approach traditionally also has been static: scholars have often tried to reconstruct ‘the’ textile economy of ‘the’ Roman period without considering historical development, and often without providing an awful lot of geographical context as well. There are a number of publications in which scholars highlight the supra-local importance of textile production in a certain place based on supposedly significant evidence, but without including a critical comparative component in the analysis. In this vein, there have been discussions of export-oriented textile economies for, famously, Pompeii, Tarentum, southern Latium, Modena, Altinum, and Canosa.⁹ Without denying the importance of the evidence at each of these places for understanding the broader picture, it is of course not particularly straightforward to reconstruct what was happening in Roman Italy on the basis of evidence from one place only, and it has led to a certain bias in scholarly discourse in which places with more evidence get more attention. Essentially, the present situation is that wherever you look for scholarship on textile production, you will find scholars arguing for export oriented industries, because they mainly discuss examples where this may have been the case.

There have been few attempts to discuss the textile economy of Roman Italy as a whole. The most important, and most recent one is by Wim Jongman, who around the turn of the millennium proposed a model in which wool was produced in North and South Italy, while he took occupational epigraphy to suggest textile manufacturing happened close to consumption in the densely urbanized regions in between, thus envisaging a system in which substantial quantities of raw wool – rather than finished clothing – were traded and transported, though even this involved only the better qualities.¹⁰ There are many things that can be said about the value of Jongman’s model for the first centuries of our era – it is sketchy to the point of imprecision, it is extremely thin and superficial on both evidence and discourse, and it neglects the role of Italy’s unique assemblage of coastal plains and mountain ranges in shaping the geography of wool production – but the real problem here, too, is that the model is a head without a body – a historical state without historical roots: Jongman sketched the situation as he envisaged it for the early imperial period, as if things always had been like that. Obviously, they had not. The wool economy of early imperial Italy, its trade flows and its geographical differentiation, was shaped by a complex set of historical developments about which we are extremely badly informed, but which we nevertheless somehow need to make sense of if we are to fully understand the dynamics of textile manufacture and trade in Roman Italy.

The only aspect of the Italian textile economy of which the history has been discussed to some extent is transhumance – the yearly migration of flocks between the low-lying winter pastures and the summer pastures in the mountains. For a large part however, this debate has developed completely independently of debates about textile manufacturing, and recent work on the textile economy of Roman Italy has engaged with this tradition only to a very limited extent. Indeed, Jongman does

8 Even regional overviews are scarce. For Cisalpine Gaul cf. Noè 1973; Vicari 1994. For Apulia, no overview exists.

9 Pompeii: Moeller 1976; Jongman 1988; Flohr 2013a; Monteix 2013; Tarentum: Morel 1978; Southern Latium: Coarelli 1996; Modena: Corti 2012; Altinum: Buonpane 2003; Cottica 2003; Canosa: Aciri 1983.

10 Jongman 2000.

not even refer to the transhumance phenomenon at all: he simply states that sheep need a lot of room and thus should be where there are few people.¹¹ Transhumance, however, undeniably was a key phenomenon in the Italian wool economy. It was discussed in print as early as 1905 by Albert Grenier, who dated the emergence of transhumance in the first half of the second century BCE and related it to the aftermath of the Second Punic War, which resulted in the availability of large amounts of public land.¹² Subsequent scholars have expressed a variety of views about the causes of long-distance transhumance, but the chronological horizon suggested by Grenier is still widely accepted, also because it fits nicely with the literary evidence: transhumance is not mentioned by Cato, but discussed to some detail by Varro.¹³ Only recently, some scholars have suggested that transhumance was actually a much older phenomenon that just became more visible in the late Republic, and maybe became more widespread or large-scale.¹⁴ Indeed, Cato's neglect of transhumance is not in itself a strong argument against its existence in the mid second century BCE or earlier; as MacKinnon suggests, the archaeological evidence is inconclusive, but transhumance is known to have existed in prehistoric societies all over the world.¹⁵ Moreover, the ecological circumstances fostering the movement of flocks from the plain to the mountains of course remained mostly unchanged, except for some minor variations in climate.¹⁶

Shifting Geographies of Demand

Key factor in the historical development of the Italian textile economy is without any doubt the explosive growth of the city of Rome and its consumer market in the middle and late Republic. It is important to distinguish two parallel but not directly related developments. In the first place, there is obviously the sheer increase in population. While there are no reliable figures, scholars tend to agree on an approximate size of Rome of around one million inhabitants in the time of Augustus, while the development of the aqueduct system has been thought to suggest a figure of about 200,000 at the beginning of the second century BCE.¹⁷ This would mean that Rome more than quadrupled in size in the last centuries BCE, a phenomenal development that had a defining impact on the entire Italian economy, including the peninsular wool economy: regular demand for textiles is likely to have grown with the city's population. Moreover, while a considerable proportion of the population increase in Rome was related to migration from Italy, there is a general agreement that the population of Italy also grew, though less exponentially than Rome. The more conservative scenario envisages a growth of about five million in the late third century to about six million under Augustus; a more optimistic scenario estimates the population under Augustus at 14 million, from a late third century figure of six

11 Jongman 2000, 192.

12 Grenier 1905, 314–322.

13 See e.g. Toynbee 1965, 286–295, Pasquinucci 1979, Gabba 1990, and, recently, Roselaar 2010, 173–176.

14 Frayn 1984; MacKinnon 2004.

15 MacKinnon 2004, 125–130.

16 On the climate in the Roman world see Scheidel 2012, 10–12; Sallares 2007, 17–20.

17 Morley 1996, 39.

to eight million.¹⁸ In both scenarios, net population increase created new markets for clothing throughout the peninsula, but especially in the Roman Metropolis.

Moreover, population increase is not the only development of the later Republic: through warfare and taxation, Roman Italy also became exceedingly rich; particularly after establishing hegemony over the Western Mediterranean at the end of the second Punic war (and even more so after Pydna), Italy developed a consumer economy with an increasingly demanding dress culture, and a public life that for many people was increasingly full of occasions where dress mattered.¹⁹ This increase in demand is exceptionally hard to quantify on the basis of the evidence we have, but developments in domestic architecture in, especially, Latium and Campania, make clear that this was not just a matter of a few senators and knights enriching themselves: we see the emergence of wealthy urban elites who participated heavily in conspicuous consumption.²⁰ This further drove up demand for textiles, and particularly for textiles of higher quality.

It is worth emphasizing that demand for textiles, and thus for wool, not only increased, but also shifted geographically and became less equally divided over the peninsula, with a growing emphasis on the city of Rome and the increasingly wealthy provinces of Latium and Campania. This, in turn, suggests that these regions also gradually became more dependent on import of textiles from further away, particularly because Rome itself, as a city of around 200,000 inhabitants in the early second century, probably had already been dependent on imported wool and textiles for quite some time.

It is clear that this gradually increasing and shifting demand created possibilities for investment: if people need substantial amounts of wool, a flock of sheep becomes a valuable property, and eventual profits may be used to create larger flocks that produce even higher yields. There is ample evidence that the Roman elite was not blind to these opportunities, and neither was the state. Varro reports how flocks driven over transhumance routes from Apulia to Samnium had to be registered with the tax authorities, which probably involved the payment of a small tax, but in any case reflect a desire on the part of the Roman government to control what was going on.²¹ This is also suggested by the late-republican *Lex Agraria* (111 BCE), which states tax exemptions for flocks below a certain size for the use of the pastures situated on public land.²² Varro himself reports to have possessed a flock of 700 sheep spending the

18 On the debate between scholars supporting the 'low count' of 6 million and those supporting the 'high count' of 14 million see De Ligt 2012, 5–10.

19 On the economic impact of conquest see e.g. Bang 2012, 201–203.

20 This is of course best illustrated at Pompeii, where there is a shift towards larger, more luxurious houses in the second half of the first century BCE, but comparable domestic architecture can also be found at other sites, e.g. Paestum and Vulci. On the development of domestic architecture in second century BCE Pompeii see Dickmann 1999, 49–158.

21 Varro, *RR* 2.1.16: "Hence, flocks of sheep are driven all the way from Apulia into Samnium for summering, and are reported to the tax-collectors, for fear of offending against the censorial regulation forbidding the pasturing of unregistered flocks". Transl. Hooper & Ash 1934, 323.

22 *Lex Agraria* (CIL 1, 200), 11: "Those who pasture on the common pastures larger animals of no greater number than ten plus their offspring up to one year of age ... or those who pasture there smaller animals of no greater number than ... plus their offspring up to one year of age, shall not owe any tax or fee for these animals ... to the State or to any tax farmer nor give

winter in Apulia, while pasturing close to Rieti in Latium in the summer; his friend Atticus is reported to have a flock of 800 sheep.²³ In all probability, they were not the only ones, and elite ownership of flocks is likely to have been a defining feature of the Italian wool economy for the entire Roman period: we know from the well-known second century AD inscription found on the north gate of Saepinum that, by that time, the emperor himself owned flocks as well.²⁴ Indeed, the entire conflict between the shepherds and the magistrates of Bovianum and Saepinum attests for the continued importance of the Italian wool economy to the Roman government: the point made, repeatedly, in the correspondence about the situation is the importance of the flocks, both those privately owned and those owned by the emperor, to the Roman tax authorities.²⁵

The developments in demand in the Late Republic fostered the emergence of a large wool economy in which both the Roman elite *and* the Roman state became and remained actively involved – so even if we start from a scenario in which the practice of transhumance already existed beforehand, it is likely to have increased in scale, and will have been more and more directed towards the needs of the Romans. As it became more visible to the Roman elite over the course of the late second and early first century BCE, they also started writing about it – hence, Varro discusses at length what Cato appears to neglect completely. There are, in Roman literature, two regions in Italy that are repeatedly mentioned in connection to wool production: Cisalpine Gaul and Apulia; both Columella and Pliny explicitly highlight these two regions together as outstanding, at least qualitatively.²⁶ It makes therefore sense to briefly discuss the roots of the wool and textile economies of these two parts of Italy.

Apulia

Wool production in Apulia is basically only known through literary texts. It is emphatically associated with the transhumance phenomenon – both in the Roman evidence and in later historical periods: in the early modern period, and basically up to the early twentieth century, there was a dense network of *tratturi* centering on Foggia but continuing basically until the Salento.²⁷ Roman authors of the early imperial period repeatedly single out two cities as places where wool came from: Tarentum and Canosa. Tarentum is best known, and was studied in an 1978 article by Jean-Paul Morel, which brought together and analysed the literary evidence, and

security nor pay anything for this reason.” Transl. Johnson, Coleman-Norton & Bourne 1961, 51.

23 Varro *RR* 2.2.10: “I had flocks that wintered in Apulia and summered in the mountains around Reate, these two widely separated ranges being connected by public cattle-trails.” Transl. Hooper & Ash 1934, 337; 2.10.11: ‘If flocks of sheep are very large (and some people have as many as 1000) you can decrease the number of shepherds more easily than you can in smaller flocks, such as those of Atticus and mine. My own flocks contain 700, and yours, I think, had 800; but still you had one tenth of them rams, as I do.’ Transl. Hooper & Ash 1934, 411.

24 CIL 9, 2438. On this text see esp. Corbier 1983.

25 Corbier 1983, 130–131.

26 Colum. 7.2.3; Plin. *NH* 8.190.

27 See on the transhumance economy of this period Marino 1992.

discussed the dynamics of the Tarentine wool economy.²⁸ Morel argued that while there is ample evidence for wool-production and wool-processing, the evidence for the actual production of textiles is very slim, suggesting that most of what left the city was raw wool, not textiles, an idea that was subsequently taken up by Jongman and projected upon the whole of Roman Italy.²⁹ A crucial element in the Tarentine wool economy was that south Apulia was the place where flocks had their winter pasture. In spring, they moved northwards, but not before they had been shorn, thus leaving, every year, large quantities of wool behind in the region. Thus, whereas our sources emphasize the quality of the Tarentine wool, it should not be forgotten that the very existence of a transhumance system also presupposes that it was regionally available in meaningful quantities: the yearly shearing of the sheep created an surplus that could be marketed – or, from a Roman perspective – that could be tapped to satisfy metropolitan demand. Tarentum played a crucial role in this: not only was it the traditional political centre of the region; moreover, as the only real port city on the Ionian sea it also enjoyed the easiest trading connections with Rome – much better than Metapontum and Heraclea, which, to judge from their location at the entrance point of major valleys heading in northern direction, may have been involved in the regional transhumance economy, but did not have a natural harbour.³⁰

The second centre, Canosa, was in a similarly privileged position at the winter end of several long-distance transhumance routes, but it lacked the direct connection to the sea, and for most of the Roman period, the road connection was not of the quality that the early second century Via Traiana would bring, though there probably was some overland connection between Canosa and the sea: Strabo suggests the Canusini had an *emporium* on the Adriatic.³¹ Actually, the city had a position that was quite similar to that of Foggia in the Early Modern period, though slightly more to the south. Very much like Tarentum, Canosa was the largest pre-Roman urban centre of its region, as well as the one situated closest to the coast: if there is one place in the region where Roman traders in the late Republic could easily enter the regional market to buy up wool, it was at here rather than further to the north at Arpi or Lucera, even if the latter had been a Roman colony since the late fourth century.³² Contrary to Tarentum, where there is no evidence for textile production, it has been argued that Canosa also developed a significant textile industry, specializing in the so-called *canusinae*, which were mantles.³³ The evidence on which this idea is based,

28 Morel 1978.

29 Jongman 2000, 190.

30 Metapontum was situated close to the mouth of the Bradano river, which carved out the largest north-south valleys of Southern Italy and formed a natural transhumance route. Heraclea was situated next to the Agri, the second largest valley of the region.

31 Strabo 6.3.9: "From Barium to the Aufidus River, on which is the emporium of the Canusiti is four hundred stadia and the voyage inland to the emporium is ninety". Translation Jones 1924, 127.

32 On pre-roman Daunia see Volpe 1990, 28–29. Grelle and Silvestrini have also argued that the location of Canosa, close to a key wade in the Ofanto, made that the annual shearing of flocks passing in Northern direction took place here. Grelle & Silvestrini 2001, 98.

33 This point is particularly emphasized by Grelle & Silvestrini 2001.

however, is very thin; most passages referring to the *canusinae* suggests that the toponym refers to the colour of the wool rather than to the shape of the textile.³⁴

In summary, both at Tarentum and at Canosa, the Romans seem initially to have connected to an existing infrastructure, and the wool economy came to reflect those earlier (political) realities. Once this trade pattern had been established, it also quickly settled in the mental geography of the Roman elite, at the relative expense of other places in the region from which wool was exported, such as Brindisi: these are only rarely mentioned in our literary sources, but this may reflect a cultural bias of the elite rather than economic realities.³⁵ It does not need to mean that Tarentum and Canosa completely monopolized the regional wool economy, as will also become clear when we discuss the evidence for wool-production in Cisalpine Gaul.



Fig. 1: Map of Roman Italy showing the places with particular evidence for wool production

34 For an overview of the sources see Volpe 1990, 268–271.

35 On Brindisi see Strabo 6.3.6: “Their country is better than that of the Tarantini, for, though the soil is thin, it produces good fruits, and its honey and wool are among those that are strongly commended.” Transl.: Jones 1924, 119.

Cisalpine Gaul

For Cisalpine Gaul, the evidence is much richer and also includes a significant epigraphic record. Contrary to the wool of Tarentum and Canosa, the wool of northern Italy was noted for its whiteness, and, as Columella notes, this made it increasingly popular in the early imperial period – perhaps primarily because, as Columella suggests, its white colour meant that it could be used with a greater variety of dyestuffs.³⁶ We have no direct information about long-distance transhumance in this part of Italy, but this is also unnecessary: throughout Cisalpine Gaul, summer and winter pastures could be found at a relatively short distance from each other, with the Alps on the north side, and the Apennines on the south. Wool was produced on both sides of the plain. On the north side, two of the main cities of the Veneti, Altinum and Patavium stand out in the literary sources; on the south side, authors praise the famous wool of Mutina and refer to Parma, and there is, for the Republican period, evidence for a yearly market at Campi Macri – near Mutina – where one could buy sheep.³⁷ All these places were situated at the winter end of transhumance routes, and, with the exception of Altinum, they were close to the mountains, suggesting that the regional flocks, in spring, left considerable quantities of wool when they left for the greener pastures. Significantly, both Mutina and Parma were situated close to four of the largest tributaries to the Po: their valleys constituted the most important transhumance routes of the region; the valley of the Scultenna (the modern-day Panaro) near Mutina is explicitly highlighted as producing wool of the highest quality.³⁸ The wool-exporting cities of Cisalpine Gaul were also well connected: Parma and Mutina were directly on the Via Aemilia, while Altinum was situated directly on the Venetian Lagoon, and Patavium was not far from it; all had their own hinterland: there may have been competition between them, but this must have been about finding markets rather than about finding wool. Moreover, like in Apulia, some of the cities that in the Roman period got a reputation for their wool had been traditional regional centres – Altinum and Patavium were two major pre-Roman settlements of the Veneti.³⁹ In the South, Parma and Mutina were the two original colonies related to the construction of the Via Aemilia and were both founded in 183 BCE, a few years after the road had been constructed, and for that reason enjoyed a privileged position in the Roman trade network right from the start.⁴⁰

However, there is some evidence suggesting that underneath this schematic geography of our literary sources lies in fact a much more complex one, in which smaller

36 Columella 7.2.3–4: “Our farmers used to regard the Calabrian, Apulian and Milesian as breeds of outstanding excellence, and the Tarentine as the best of all; now Gaulish sheep are considered more valuable, especially that of Altinum, also those which have their folds in the lean plains round Parma and Mutina. While white is the best colour, it is also the most useful, because very many colours can be made from it; but it cannot be produced from any other colour.” Transl. Forster & Heffner 1954, 235.

37 See e.g. Columella 7.2, Pliny, *NH* 7.43, Strabo 5.1.12.

38 Mutina is surrounded by the Panaro (Scultenna) and the Secchia rivers; Parma has the Taro and Parma rivers in its direct environment. Strabo 7.1.12: “As for wool, the soft kind is produced by the regions round Mutina and the River Scultenna (the finest wool of all).” Transl. Jones 1923, 333.

39 Cf. Pellegrini et al. 1976, 39–41.

40 Livy, 39.55.6.

centres also played a role, whereas the bigger centres were simply better known or specialized in better qualities. In the first place, at Regium Lepidi – half way between Mutina and Parma – an inscription refers to a group of *lanarii pectinarii et carminatores* honoring a member of the local elite.⁴¹ Both their number and their close ties to the elite suggest that these were not poor, marginal craftsmen but rather representatives of a (small) wool export economy. There is evidence for a *sodalitium* of *lanari carminatores* from the small town of Brescello, situated in the same region directly on the Po.⁴² A small dossier of inscriptions suggests that the city of Brescia had a flourishing wool economy, with epigraphic attestations not only of *many* people involved in the local wool economy, but also of a variety of specializations: we have a professional group of *coactores lanarii* – probably they are the wool equivalent of the *coactores argentarii*, so involved in buying up wool – a group of *sodales lanarii pectinarii* and, separately, a group of *sodales lanarii carminatores*.⁴³ Moreover, there is a passage in Strabo claiming that the coarse wool of the Insubri – living in the region around Mediolanum – together with that of the Ligures was used to produce large quantities of cheap, simple clothing used throughout the peninsula.⁴⁴ Most likely, therefore, there was a lively export-oriented wool economy in the entire region, and Mutina, Parma, Altinum and Patavium should be seen as the tip of the iceberg, perhaps serving the better section of the market because of their historical connections to Rome, or perhaps simply being more renowned.

A more difficult issue concerns the amount of textile manufacturing in the region. There is a strong Italian tradition of scholarship assuming that Cisalpine Gaul produced textiles, but in fact the only direct evidence we have is Strabo's remark that lots of locally manufactured textiles left Patavium for Rome: all other evidence points to wool rather than textiles.⁴⁵ Hence, Jongman believed textile production took place closer to the centres of consumption in central Italy, and dismissed the situation at Patavium as 'exceptional'.⁴⁶ This may be too pessimistic: there is evidence that import of textiles into the Roman metropolis was common practice.

41 AE 1946, 210: 'C(aio) Pomponio | Rufi lib(erto) | Felici | VIvir(o) Aug(ustali) | Claud(iali) | lanari(i) pect(inarii) | et carmin(atores) | ob merita eius | quod testamento | suo legaverit | eius non sufficientib(us) | sibi dationes et | vestiarium quoq(ue) | et si qui(s) defunctus | esset certa summa | funeraretur'.

42 CIL 11, 1031: 'D(is) M(anibus) | haec loca sunt | lanariorum | carminator(um) | sodalici | quae faciunt | in agro p(edes) C | ad viam p(edes) LV'.

43 CIL 5, 4501: 'Accepto Chiaie | servo | lanari(i) pectinar(ii) | sodales posuer(unt)'; CIL 5, 4504: 'C(aio) Cominio | Succesori | lanari coa(c)tores | d(e) p(ecunia) s(ua)'; CIL 5, 4505: 'Dis Manib(us) | L(uci) Corneli | Ianuari | vixit ann(os) XVII | lanari coa(c)tor(es) | et | L(uci) Cornel(i) Primion(is) | patris'; Inscr. It. 10.5, 875: 'M(arco) Domitio | Fi(r)m]o | lana[r(ii) carmi]nator(es) | so[da]les'.

44 Strabo 5.1.12: "As for wool ... the coarse [is produced] by Liguria and the country of the Symbri, from which the greater part of the households of the Italiotes are clothed; and the medium, by the regions round Patavium, from which are made the expensive carpets and covers and everything of this kind that is woolly either on both sides or only on one." Transl. Jones 1923, 333.

45 Strabo 5.1.7: "The quantities of manufactured goods which Patavium sends to Rome to market – clothing of all sorts and many other things – show what a goodly store of men it has and how skilled they are in the arts." Transl. Jones 1923, 313.

46 Jongman 2000, 190.

First of all, as I have argued elsewhere, the infrastructure of large-scale fulling establishments situated on the major transport routes to Rome at Ostia and in the Roman Suburbium suggests that there was a substantial influx of finished textiles.⁴⁷ Secondly, the anecdote about Patavium does not stand completely on its own: Strabo also noted that the Ligures also exported finished cloaks and tunics through the *emporium* of Genoa.⁴⁸ Furthermore, besides disproportional amounts of inscriptions involving *lanarii*, Cisalpine Gaul also has returned a lot of inscriptions mentioning of *vestiarii* and *sagarii*. Particularly, this is true for Mutina, Regium Lepidum and Mediolanum.⁴⁹ While these may have been locally operating traders, some appear tied to other regions as well – one of the *vestiarii* from Mutina had direct ties with Rome, and a *sagarius* from Mediolanum ended up buried in Ricina, in Picenum.⁵⁰ The evidence is not strong or explicit, but I would say that, at the very least, it argues for a model in which right from the start, together with the wool *some* of the textiles produced in the region also began to be exported and it is very well possible that some of this export after some time also lead to an increased production of textiles and thus, to some extent, to export oriented manufacturing: labour costs associated with spinning and weaving may have been higher in the city Rome than they were in Cisalpine Gaul, especially on the countryside, thus making it more profitable to import woven textiles rather than raw wool.

Discussion

The geography of the Italian wool economy that emerges from early imperial literary sources is a geography of trade and transport rather than a geography of production: few of the flocks of which the wool was traded via Mutina, Altinum, Canosa and Tarentum spent most of their time in the direct environment of these cities, and the owners of the flocks may have lived as far away as Rome itself; where textile manu-

47 Flohr 2013b, 84–87.

48 Strabo, *Geogr.* 4.6.2.: “and this is the country from which come ...also the Ligurian tunics and *sagi*”.

49 Mutina: CIL 11, 868: ‘*Vivus vivis fecit | L(ucius) Lucretius L(uci) l(ibertus) Primus | vestiar(ius) sibi et | L(ucio) Lucretio L(uci) l(iberto) Romano | vestiar(io) l(iberto) et | Decimiae L(uci) l(ibertae) Philemation | Romani matri | in f(ron)te p(edes) XIII in a(gro) p(edes) XIII*’; CIL 11, 869: ‘*Nonius Anius | vestiarius taber|nam signa et quae | vides d(e) p(ecunia) s(ua)*’; CIL 11, 6926a: ‘*T(itus) Offfilius 3 | Here|nnianus | et Com(inia) 3 | T(ito) Offfilio 3 | vestia(rio) fil(io) et | Cinn(amo) lib(erto) | suo et |*. Regium Lepidum: CIL 11, 963: ‘*Epidiae |(mulieris) l(ibertae) | Daphinini | concubinae suae | C(aius) Nonius C(ai) l(ibertus) Hilario | vestiarius | sibi et suis v(ivus) f(ecit) | in fr(onte) p(edes) XV | in ag(ro) p(edes) XV*’; AE 1946, 210 (see above, n. 40); Mediolanum: CIL 5, 5925: ‘*[D(is)] M(anibus) | [M(arco) C]ludio | Tertullo | negotiatori | sagario | ex Apulia*’; CIL 5, 5926: ‘*C(aius) Firmius C(ai) | l(ibertus) | Flaccus | sagarius | sibi et | Lychoridi l(ibertae) | Faustae l(ibertae) v(ivae) | Fido l(iberto) v(ivo) | Nymphe l(ibertae) v(ivae) | Auctae l(ibertae) v(ivae) | h(oc) m(onumentum) h(eredem) n(on) s(equetur)*’; CIL 5, 5928: ‘*P(ublio) Iulio | Macedoni | negotiatori | sagar(io) et pell(icario) | P(ublius) Iulius Senna | lib(ertus)*’; CIL 5, 5929: ‘*D(is) M(anibus) | perpetuae | securitati | M(arco) Matutinius Maxim[o?] | negotiatori sagario | civi Mediomatrici | p(onendum) c(uravit) | M(arcus) Matutinius | Marcus frater | et C(aius) Sanctinius Sanct[us]*’.

50 Mutina: CIL 11, 868 (see above, n. 48). Helvia Ricina: CIL 9, 5752: ‘*Q(uintus) Lucilius | Charinus | Sagarius | Mediolanensis | V(ivir) Mediolani | sibi et | Q(uinto) Sulpicio Celado | amico | in fr(onte) p(edes) XII in agr(o) p(edes) XIII*’.

facturing took place remains mostly unspecified, but the idea that at least some manufacturing took place in wool-producing regions remains attractive. Arguably, the default model of the Italian wool economy should be one in which both raw wool and finished textiles were traded, and the debate should be about the relative proportions, though we have little way of knowing or even modelling these.

Yet the central point made here is that we should approach the economic geography of the imperial period as a product of the Republican past. Probably, the Italian wool economy took its more-or-less definitive shape in the course of the second century BCE: this was both the moment in which the demographic explosion of Rome necessitated fundamental changes to its supply system *and* the moment in which Cisalpine Gaul developed its first direct social and political ties with the Roman metropolis; it is possible, and perhaps likely, that wool from Apulia had already been exported to Rome before, but there is no direct evidence. Once established, this system remained fundamentally unaltered, though it may have spread from the initial centres that got the name to surrounding areas and, as Columella suggests, there may have been a shift of emphasis away from Apulia and towards Cisalpine Gaul when white and light-coloured clothes became more popular somewhere in the early empire. However, even though the Roman economic network became increasingly complex, and even if Italy became a net consumer of wool, Cisalpine Gaul and Apulia never seem to have encountered any competition challenging their dominant position on the Roman wool market. This makes perfect sense: the summer pastures in the Apennines and Alps could not be made profitable through other forms of agriculture, and were closer to Rome than possible competitors. Moreover, they were closely tied to the Roman market, from early on, through the Roman elite, who owned a significant proportion of the flocks and quite simply never encountered any strong incentive to divest.

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