

**The Fratelli Loscho in Brig.
Entrepreneurs on Small Markets of the Alpine area during the Napoleonic Era**

by Gabriel Imboden

In the second half of the 18th and in the first half of the 19th century North Italian and Tessin merchant families, which were engaged both in international and local retail trade, established a network along the trade route Milano – Simplon Pass – Lausanne – Lyon – Paris. This close meshed and clientelistically organized network was kept together by marriages, patronages etc.

Preliminary, my presentation gives an overview of the family interdependences because the functioning of the trading company is simply not understandable without any knowledge of the according structures. The relevance of familiar relationships is fundamental as historical research concerning the economic system in modern times has repeatedly showed.

Subsequently, by analysing the so-called «Libro maestro per li pelli», the business partners of the *fratelli Loscho* at the end of the *ancient regime*, the organization of the leather and fur trade, which is one of the main economic sectors of the Loscho family, and furthermore, a quantification of the flows of goods will be located.

The examination of the forwarding book – a rarely found historical source – will eventually offer the opportunity to reconstruct the distribution channels, the trade partners and the means of transport as well as the palette of goods.

Based on this, my presentation attempts to address the issues of the session's subject: markets, institutions and entrepreneurs in the Alpine area.

As an outlook, I will make some cases about the following topics: about markets versus self-sufficiency, about questions concerning the relation between the integration in international long-distance trade and activities in local retail trade in the so-called «bottega», as well as the practice of door-to-door sale. According to the current state of research, the Loscho-study will modify the image of the Alpine «vagrant merchant» («marchant ambulante») dealing with urban goods generated by the hawking research. This conception will be replaced by that of the specialised long-distance merchant, who has permanent bases of business, where he certainly sold masses of short-distance trade goods in his «bottega».