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Buying and Selling: the circulation and local acquisition of cottons and *indienne* in early modern Switzerland

The doctoral project is concerned with the question of the ways in which Indian calicoes and Swiss-produced *indienne* reached early modern consumers. Rooted in the history of trade, and the history of consumption, it explores how global processes played out on a local level.

Historiographically, the project takes its departure point from the extensive work done on the history of consumption, and the history of retail in England and the Netherlands. This work has demonstrated that distribution channels and regional trade networks were of vital importance, not only for the introduction of new goods, but also for changing consumer habits. The spread of these new products was not just restricted to the wealthy, but rather extended to most of society, effecting changes in retail and marketing, such as the emergence of stores and new advertising techniques.

As intermediaries between consumers and producers, merchants stand at the forefront of this study. To consumers, merchants offered access and expert knowledge about these new (consumer) goods; and to producers, they offered feedback on the changing needs and desires of consumers.

The project has two major goals. The first is to reconstruct the development of the calico and *indienne* distribution channels in Switzerland. The objective here is to identify retailers, shopkeepers, and representatives of *indienne*-producers, and probe their connections to each other, their sources of supply, and their markets and target groups. Besides these more macro considerations, attention will be paid to the role that fairs, shops, and hawkers (or other informal distribution networks) played in the distribution of calicoes and *indienne*. Such an approach will highlight the links between local and global networks, and the transformation of local structures through these new goods.

The second part of the project shifts the focus to the interaction between consumer and merchant. It explores what role(s) the merchant played in the dissemination of knowledge about new goods, and how merchants used advertising and marketing tools, such as newspaper ads, promotional flyers, display windows, in-store consultation, and cloth samples to promote new products. These processes will not only be considered from the merchant's point of view, but also considers how consumers reacted to changing retail practices.

Geographically, the intent is to compare these developments in a selection of Swiss cities to draw comparisons, and construct a broad regional tapestry. Temporally, the project begins roughly in 1650, and continues through 1800, covering the period in which most of these changes occurred elsewhere.