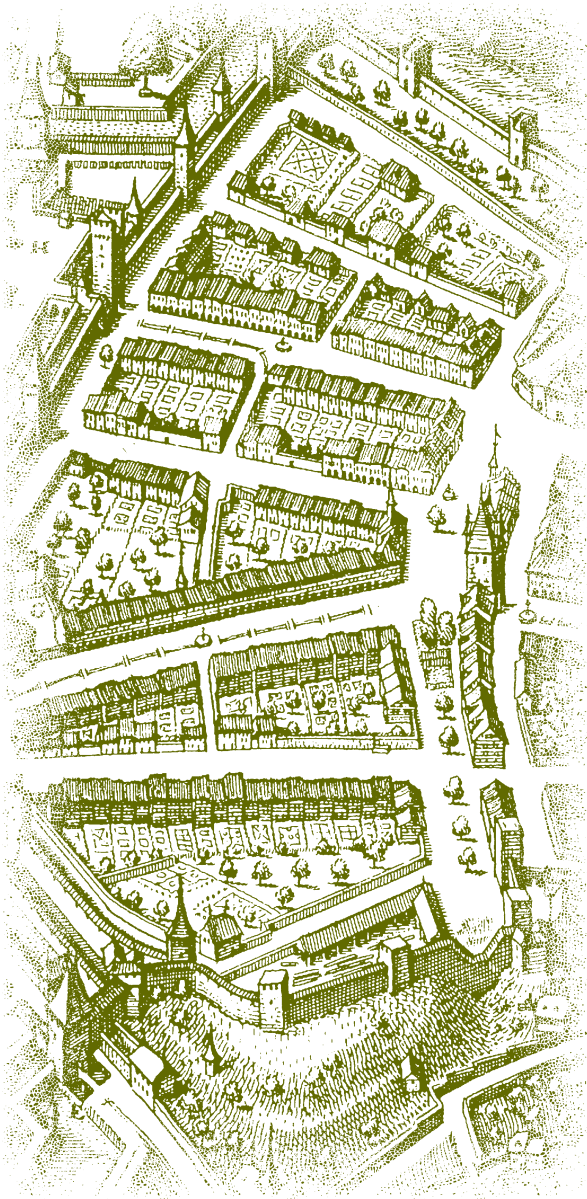


Town

A City-Dweller's Look at Thirteenth to Fifteenth Century Europe

by Lisa J. Steele



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Introduction

Medieval cities and towns were home to a tiny percentage of Europe's population. The vast majority of people were farmers who lived their entire lives within the sound of their own parish church's bell. To a farmer, a town was a market for his goods, and a source of those few items that could not be made in his village. Rural adolescents went to towns looking for work, before returning to take up their roles in village life. Others immigrated permanently in hopes of a better, or at least different, life. The sick, injured, or dying sometimes went to a town with hope for a miraculous healing via the relics held in its churches and cathedral. And, of course, towns were the homes of powerful indirect influences on a farmer's life – the local bishop, and, if not the landholder of the farmer's fief, then perhaps that landowner's feudal superior.

To a townsperson, farms and fiefs were the source of their food, fuel, and industrial raw materials like wool and hides. Clergy and regional landholders depended on rural parishes and fiefs for their incomes. A steady influx of rural immigrants maintained and grew urban populations. Wealthy townsfolk sometimes owned rural estates, providing a private source of fresh food and a refuge from the town during hot, often disease-ridden summer months.

Towns and cities were important nodes in a vast network of international trade, commerce, and finance. They were home to scholars, artists, and administrators. Clergy were trained in their cathedrals, monasteries, and universities. Workers came from the countryside, many in hopes of escaping feudal duties and attaining better lives.

Traditionally, medieval society was divided into three classes or estates – those who fight (nobles), those who pray (clergy), and those who work (farmers). Urban merchants did not fit cleanly into those divisions, an uncomfortable problem for medieval theologians and

philosophers. In England and France, the urban working estate was subdivided into two basic groups: the wealthy merchant class which ruled the towns (the “worthy men”, *prud'hommes*, or *probi homines*), and everyone else (the “lesser people”, *le menu people*, or *animale viles*). The tension between these two urban classes became an ongoing feature of town life.

Town is the companion volume to **Fief**, an introduction to English and Norman French small landholdings in the 9th to 11th century. **Town** primarily focuses on urban life in the 13th to 15th centuries in England, France, and Italy, with some digressions into other areas and times. Like **Fief**, this book discusses the fundamentals of a town's political, economic, and religious roles, as well as its logistics, physical architecture, and inhabitants.

Town is designed for armchair historians, medieval re-creationists, and role-playing gamers. Its focus is to help the reader understand the interlaced structures of town governance and life, in an effort to portray or recreate that setting, rather than for purely academic study. It was written, in part, from the author's curiosity about the urban portion of medieval society and a frustration with implausible fictional settings. In the course of the project, the author was amused to discover how many aspects of medieval urban life remain unexplored, perhaps because historians seem to focus on their particular specialties, and not on the town as its own entity.

As always, many people have been involved in this project over the decades since it began, including several helpful reference librarians at a variety of universities and libraries including the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Boston Public Library, Mount Holyoke College, and the Worcester County Law Library. Their help has been invaluable.

Any errors are the author's.



Fundamentals

What was a town? For the purposes of this book, it was a permanent settlement where most of the inhabitants made their living in administration, trade, and industry, rather than as farmers or monks. It was defined by its economic function, by its religious role, by the political rights of its citizens, or by its political rights as an entity. Its key feature, however, was its role as a trade center. Thus, a town can be defined as a settlement holding one or more permanent (year-around) markets.

Towns evolved in natural locations where people came to buy and sell goods. A large village might hold markets once or twice a year, often on the feast day of the village's patron saint. Market towns of a thousand inhabitants or more held more frequent regional markets, generally collecting goods from fifteen or more farming villages within a day's travel by laden cart (about 7 miles).

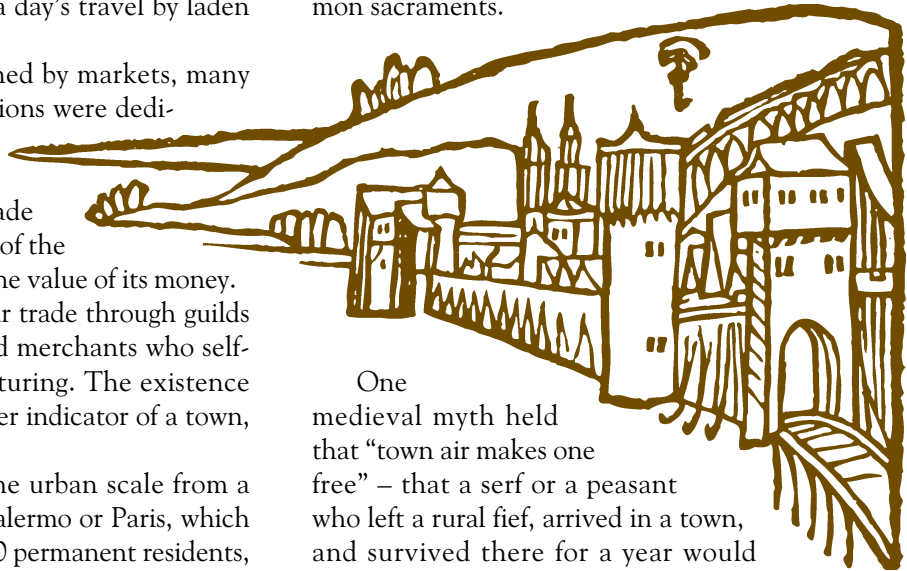
Because towns were defined by markets, many of their characteristic institutions were dedicated to protecting peaceful relationships with key trading partners, maintaining safe trade routes, controlling the quality of the town's goods, and protecting the value of its money. Towns regulated much of their trade through guilds – organizations of artisans and merchants who self-regulated trade and manufacturing. The existence of one or more guilds is another indicator of a town, rather than a village.

At the opposite end of the urban scale from a market town was a city like Palermo or Paris, which might have 200,000 to 250,000 permanent residents, and several specialized markets collecting goods from multiple nations. Cities were rare. One historian estimated that in 1300, there were only six or seven towns in all of Western Europe with a population greater than 50,000, thirty with a population between 20,000 and 50,000, forty with a population between 10,000 and 20,000, and perhaps a hundred with a population between 5,000 and 10,000.

Many towns grew around, and in the shadow of, a bishop and his cathedral. Bishops were powerful political figures and major landholders, as well as spiritual leaders. Often the cathedral and its associated prop-

erty was virtually a separate entity intermingled with the secular town – tenants of cathedral property and clergy had their own jealously guarded privileges and rights, but might not share in the rights given by the secular ruler to the town's other inhabitants.

In addition to a cathedral, most towns had several neighborhood parish churches, monasteries, and, in a few cases, a university, all of which comprised a complex religious society. The leaders of the cathedral, various wealthy, powerful monastic orders, mendicant orders, parishes, and universities all had their own traditional privileges and rights, and often jealously competed with each other for power and prestige. Churches competed for donations and tithes from the faithful, and in turn provided vital charitable services, as well as daily religious rites and common sacraments.



One medieval myth held that “town air makes one free” – that a serf or a peasant who left a rural fief, arrived in a town, and survived there for a year would become a free citizen of that town. The reality was more complex. On the one hand, towns depended on rural landholders and farmers for their food and could not afford to take in every discontented peasant. On the other hand, urban mortality rates were high; towns needed a constant influx of immigrants as workers and artisans. (See p. 95)

Towns often accreted specific rights for their inhabitants. Townspeople (*bourgeois*) had protected rights within their home town and lands subject to it, or to the landowner who controlled the town. Outside of those boundaries, the bourgeois became

a foreigner (*aubaine*), protected by the grace of the landowner in whose lands he traveled. Towns negotiated with their neighbors and trade partners on behalf of their bourgeois to protect their inhabitants' rights to safe travel and commerce. Often reciprocal treaties gave inhabitants of one town similar rights in the other. A town, or its landholder, also might become involved in disputes between its inhabitants and others, seeking to redress the losses of a prominent citizen wronged on another's lands, including raising a ransom or threatening trade restrictions or punitive taxes on the offender's inhabitants and their goods.

As collective entities, towns often acquired many, or all, of a noble landholder's rights. Towns often had their own law courts, or were subject to the courts of powerful large landholders, rather than local knights. Many were, to a greater or lesser extent, self-governing and self-regulating, with customs and rights set forth in written charters purchased from landholders, rather than having their rights dependent on rural custom and oral memory.

Perhaps the most common indicator of a town was physical – its walls. Many towns had large stone barriers which provided some protection during war and unrest, and made it easier for the town to enforce its monopoly on goods and services. Walls also provided a sense of urban solidarity, providing a physical separation between the urban household and its rural counterparts.

A SHORT EUROPEAN URBAN HISTORY

The medieval town evolved from Roman and pre-Roman settlements, although their historical continuity was often more tenuous than proud urban historians alleged. In some cases, parts of the old Roman street plan or Roman building foundations survived into (and past) the Middle Ages, but that was often the only connection between the medieval and Roman town.

The Romans often laid out their towns on a rectangular plan with two major cross streets – one running east-west, the other north-south. The two streets met at a central market forum. The Romans renovated some conquered settlements into a rectangular plan. Roman towns were also likely to be found on plains, where they could be more easily connected to Roman roads, rather than more defensible hilltop locations.

As the Roman Empire began to crumble, unwalled settlements on the plains either were fortified, or abandoned in favor of more defensible sites. Between wars and a general collapse in trade, town

populations shrank. The Catholic Church, recognized by Emperor Constantine in 312, had established churches in urban centers. As other authorities collapsed, its bishops asserted themselves as urban leaders and defenders. By the 5th century, bishops were common rulers in most towns in Italy, France, and the remains of the Roman Empire.

In other places, monasteries became the nucleus of new towns as people settled near them. Although monasteries, like rural manors,

were generally self-sufficient, they often produced and exported surplus wool and food. Monastery-based towns were often smaller than those based around a cathedral or landholder's castle because the monastery's market was smaller. Monastic towns often had their market place right outside the monastery's gates, with streets radiating outward, which created a different street plan than towns evolved from Roman settlements.

As invading tribes like the Visigoths and Franks settled around the surviving towns, their leaders began to challenge the bishops for control of towns and their surrounding lands. Some towns were divided: the bishop ruled the area around the cathedral, often within the old Roman center; the settled invading leader ruled the remainder of the town and the countryside. Ruling landholders made favored towns their capitals, generally stripping the bishop of any

Walls provided a sense of urban solidarity, providing a physical separation between the urban household and its rural counterparts.



GLOSSARY

Alderman: English name for a member of a guild council or representative of a ward on a municipal council. Equivalent terms include: *échevins* (Fr.), *schepenen* (Flanders), *Schöffen* (Gr.), and *scabini* (It.).

Aljama: (Sp.) Jewish quarter within a city. A corporate body with its own officials and taxes, often directly subject to the monarch.

Arte: (It.) Trade guild.

Ban mile: The area outside a town's wall in which it had legal powers.

Bourgeois: (Fr.) A town citizen who owned land within the walls.

Burgage: A way of holding urban land in England and Scotland where the landholder rented urban property to another person in return for a yearly rent or service. It was easier to sell, inherit, or dispose of burgage land than most rural property. Burgage tenants often had to refer their disputes to the borough court, which was an important source of urban revenue.

Burgess: (En.) An urban citizen who owned land within the town, rather than renting it. Often associated with a higher social status and legal privileges. Where applicable, the term implies a member of the sworn association of the town.

Burgrave: Count of the "burg", a kind of seigniorial officer.

Citizen: Urban resident with full civic rights. Citizenship could be inherited or earned, and often required a citizenship oath at majority. In England, full-citizenship (described as having the "freedom" of the city) could be inherited, purchased, given, or earned by service or apprenticeship. Prospective citizens generally had to be of "free birth" (not slaves or serfs) and not involved in any lawsuits that might embroil the town if citizenship were granted. Some towns required a period of residence in the town, guild membership, minimum property qualifications, and/or a history of tax payments.

Commune: (Fr.) A sworn association of inhabitants of a town or neighborhood pledged to mutual aid, the oath acknowledged by the landholder. In the 11th century, French landholders began to recognize town governments as communes, but the recognition was separate from a charter or grant of liberties. By the 13th century, a commune was expected to have a written charter granting its liberties, a communal bell to summon or warn citizens, and a municipal seal.

Commune: (It.) A sworn association of the inhabitants of a town pledged to mutual aid. An Italian commune was an assertion of independent self-government against a secular or ecclesiastical landholder. In some case, the populace came together as a commune; in others, it evolved from pre-existing associations.

Agriculture

The country is very fertile and pleasant, with an abundance of wine, fruits, and vegetables, and cereals of every type. These nourish a warrior race ... The city is surrounded by woods and marshes, and thus well protected against enemy invasions.

The city [Noyon] is located between two streams: to the east flows the Goële, and to the west the Marguerite. A third, called the Verse, receives both streams, and the waters of all three flow into the Oise, that river of renown, not far from the ramparts. In the vicinity grow many fruit trees, and the radiant soil, enlivened by its meadows and green verdure, is very agreeable to the inhabitants. In addition, to the east as well as to the west, the city is well fortified by rocks, rivers, hills, and valleys, all around that it could not be simpler to defend her with just a handful of men against a huge and mighty invasion.

*– Radbod, Bishop of Noyon
(late 11th century)*

A town could not grow enough food within its walls to feed its populace. Thus, a town's leader's primary, often paramount, concern was the security of its food supplies and the stability of the price for grain. Grain was vital to make bread and ale, and to feed the town's many animals. Prodigious quantities of grain, vegetables, fruit, ale, beer, wine, livestock, and fish had to be brought into town. The amounts involved could be staggering. In the late 13th century, Milan, one of the largest cities in northern Italy, consumed an estimated 1,200 bushels of grain per day. An inhabitant of early 14th century Frankfurt ate more than 220 lbs. of meat per year. Late-13th century Paris annually consumed nearly 270,000 animals: 189,000 sheep, 30,000 oxen, 20,000 calves, and 31,000 pigs. Early 14th century London imported 140,000 tons of wood each year to cook its food, warm its inhabitants, and supply its industries. An inhabitant of mid-14th century Lucca consumed five to six barrels of wine per year. When possible, meat, fish, and produce had to be fresh, as medieval storage methods were limited. Thus, it was crucial for a town to be located in a fertile area which could supply the vast majority of its typical needs. A major city like London or Paris might draw supplies from a

radius of fifty to sixty miles. A 13th century town of 3,000 inhabitants might need the produce of at least 14 square miles of farmland, generally within 20 miles of its walls. When a bad harvest threatened local supplies, a wealthy city might try to purchase grain from great distances – in 1268, Venice sent ships to the Black Sea for wheat.

A town sought to control its food supply. If it had military control of the surrounding countryside, it could force its subject farmers to sell their surplus grain to it and make it illegal for them to seek other markets. Where the town's military influence was more limited, it became very interested in the politics of the rural nobility. It could directly set grain prices and units of measurement within the town's limits. If it wished to influence the market more subtly, it could tax imports and exports of other foods. A town could also purchase and store grain in plentiful years as a hedge against famine. When those stores were exhausted, a town might first cancel its taxes on imported goods (*gabelle*) in order to encourage rural farmers to bring in needed supplies tax-free. Generally, the remittance was for a short duration, typically four to five days, to encourage prompt action. If supplies remained low, towns spent large sums of money and endured heavy financial losses to purchase grain and sell it at low prices to undercut speculators and avoid unrest over scarce supplies. Some even paid bounties to



war. The city's magistrates appointed supervisors to oversee the aqueduct from its entrance to the city to its exit at the Trevi fountain. The supervisors tried to prevent private siphons and preclude unsanitary behavior at the fountain like bathing, washing laundry, or washing animals. Paris began building new aqueducts in the late 12th century. Orvieto built one in the late 13th century. The Pozzo di S. Patrizio in Orvieto is an extreme example of an urban well built slightly after the Middle Ages. Built from 1527-37 as a water supply for the Albornoz fortress, the well is 175 feet deep, and lined with two spiral stairwells large enough for mules to transport jugs of water to the surface.

Venice may be the sole example of a major town which is not located on or near a river. Instead, Venice was built on a series of islands in a salt-water lagoon. Much of its fresh water came from wells which collected and filtered rainwater. At times, Venetian sailors brought additional amounts of fresh water to town from nearby rivers in boats and dumped the water by bucket into the urban wells. (Medieval technology was not sufficient to reach an aquifer deep under the city.)

Whatever its source, water had to reach homes and craft shops. Wealthy families and some businesses hired professional water carriers or dug private wells. Those less fortunate families had to carry their own water home from the river, public wells, or public fountains. (By the mid-13th century, towns were increasingly able to pipe water to communal fountains – Milan had 6,000 fountains supplying drinking water in 1288.) By the 15th century, English towns were increasingly installing closed underground water conduits, often lined with lead. A municipal conduit-keeper was charged with ensuring repairs and prohibiting merchants and artisans from using the conduit water for trade, instead of for cooking and drinking. Homeowners paid a fee to maintain the conduits.

While bathing was not common in the Middle Ages, Roman-style public baths were found in a

few regions from the 10th to the 14th century. Other towns offered a series of tubs, called stews, for bathers. Many baths and stews were closed in the 14th century due to scandals over the bathers' conduct.

Crafts needed water to produce goods and to power various kinds of water mills. Thus, towns dug canals. A typical canal was three feet deep, six feet wide, and had a sufficient grade to create a reasonable current to power mill wheels. Butcher shops, tanners, millers, and dyers all located their shops along the canals for waste disposal.

Town leaders were concerned about water pollution. They did not understand precisely how water quality affected public health, but they knew that drinking water contaminated with human waste, offal, dye, and tannin (used to treat leather) was unhealthy. They also knew that contaminated water could lessen the quality of their cloth manufacturing, and thus sometimes organized crafts and trades so that the waste from each would have a limited impact on those downstream. The

freshest water was used for drinking, cooking, and cloth cleaning. Dyers deposited alum in the water as a byproduct of their work. Skinners, glove-makers, and curriers could take advantage of the dissolved alum to treat their skins and thus were located downstream of dye works. Butchers, who needed large amounts of clean water while slaughtering animals, could be located upstream from tanners, who needed less water and who dumped tannin downstream as a byproduct of their work. (On the other hand, the smell of slaughtered animals often resulted in butcher shops being located as far from residential areas as possible, often well downstream of other artisans.)

While dyes and tannin were a health concern, the amounts used in a typical town were not highly polluting. Some of the chemicals even helped break down organic wastes, making the water less dangerous to downstream communities.



Architecture

The city of Rouen is very populous and has been made wealthy by different sorts of commerce. It is an agreeable city due to the number of buildings surrounding the port, the murmur of running waters, and the charm of the meadows. A large abundance of fruits, fish and all sorts of products adds to her wealth. The mountains and forests, with which she is surrounded on all sides, the walls, the trenches and other military constructions, make this city very pleasant indeed. Much of her luster comes from her churches, as well as the appearance of her houses and buildings.

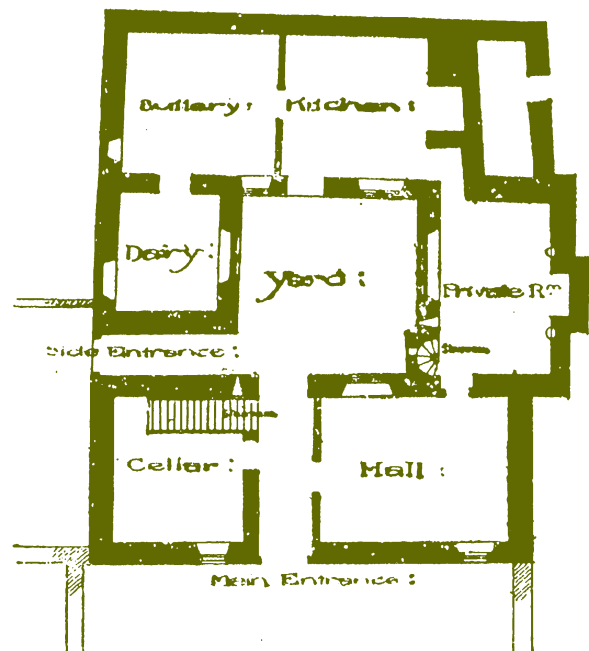
– Orderic Vital, monk of Saint-Evroul, Normandie (c. 1148)

A town's physical structures, like its geography, have a strong impact on its character and its economy. The town's climate, wealth, common local building materials, and social structures will be reflected in its simplest residences as well as its grandest cathedrals and guild halls. Each town had its own quirks, but there were some common features.

Due to the constant risk of fire, town rulers encouraged residents to build in stone and brick, and to replace older wooden buildings with less flammable materials. London's Assize of Buildings (1189) encouraged builders to make residences from stone, to use stone party-walls when buildings shared structures, and to use tiled roofs. In 1213, London forbade roofs of reeds, rushes, straw, stubble, or thatch. In the 14th century, London forbade wooden chimneys. By 1381, the city also required every house to keep a container of water by the door to fight fires.

Towns also limited building density, both to prevent fires and to maintain the width of streets and squares for travel and trade. Lots were typically narrow on the edge facing the major streets, which encouraged narrow, deep homes. A typical English burgage lot was 60 feet wide and 200 feet deep or 70 feet wide and 400 feet deep. Street width and orientation was also affected by the prevailing climate. In colder areas, streets might be angled to break up winter winds and make it easier to clear snow. In warmer climates, buildings might be oriented to cast cooling shadows on hot streets and squares.

Urban builders relied to a large extent on professional artisans like brickmakers, carpenters, wallers, and stonemasons instead of the traditional peasant and serf labor available to rural landholders. Towns could conscript labor for municipal projects – in 1486, Genoa required its stonemasons to each contribute a day's labor to building the Molo (a municipal wharf) – but typically preferred to pay skilled workers. Urban builders also had to purchase their materials; peasants and serfs could often gather wood from the landholder's forest.



CONSTRUCTION METHODS

Urban construction generally depended on professional builders, not family members and neighbors. On the smallest projects, the patron acted as contractor, hiring and supervising artisans, and purchasing materials directly. Many projects involved written contracts, although patrons rarely seemed to ask for competitive bids or try to minimize costs. In England, patrons tried to protect themselves from delays and poor work with penalty, surety, and bond clauses. Italian patrons rarely used similar means, although

SAMPLE REAL ESTATE PRICES AND CONSTRUCTION COSTS

Item	Date	Location	Cost
Barn, large	1309-10	Buckinghamshire	83 livre (see p.38 for a discussion of coinage)
Brick, per thousand	15th C.	Florence	4 lire per 1,000 including transportation to work site
Brick, per thousand	1429	Venice	10 lire, 10 soldi
Bridge, stones, purchase	1412	Romans	72 florins per 100 stones for arch
Bridge, stones, transport	1412	Romans	40 florins per 100 stones for arch (by land); 20 florins per 100 stones per arch (by water)
Bridge, wood, purchase	1390	Romans	50 florins per thirty 30' high fir trees
Bridge, wood, transport	1390	Romans	42 florins per thirty 30' trees
Chapel within church	14th C.	Florence	210 fl. (typical)
Church, large	15th C.	Venice	38,000 lire (for construction)
Iron bars	1425	Venice	6 soldi for 4 bars
Iron door lock	1431	Venice	1 lire 5 soldi
Gatehouse, stone	1313	Warwickshire	16 livre, 13 sou, 4 dernier (not including timber, or transporting stone)
Glass	1436	Venice	1 ½ soldi/pane
Gold Leaf	1432	Venice	10 lire 14 soldi per thousand
Kiln, for bricks, tax value	1427	Florence	100-200 florins
Kiln, for tiles, tax value	1427	Florence	30-40 florins
House, bishop's	13th C.	London	50 marks
House, row of 8	1415	London	46 l 13 s 4 d
House, small	1335	Paris	70 l
House, large	1341	Paris	200 l
House, Mercer's, with chapel	Mid-15th C.	London	100 marks (carpenter's fee)
House, Merchant's	1313	London	36 l (carpenter's fee)
Lead	1425	Venice	2 soldi/ pound
Lime, barrel	1429	Venice	6 soldi, 9 denari
Market stalls	1380-1	Exeter	£ 11 (for 12 stalls in enclosed meat market)
Mill	1299	Fladbury	80 marks
Mill	1396	Ivinghoe	65 l 9 s 3 ½ d
Mill, fulling	1293	Kent	38 s 6 d
Mill, horse-powered	1408	Ivinghoe	108 s 4 d
Mill, weir in river	1370	Downton	118 s 3 d
Mill cogwheel	1373	Castleford	6 s 8 d
Mill stone, for bread	1301	Taunton	2 l 2 ½ d
Mill stone, for malt	1301	Taunton	9 s
Mill stone	1390	Congleton	11 s 1 ¾ d
Mill waterwheel	1373	Castleford	10 s

The tables are drawn from various sources, and to some extent reflect the idiosyncrasies both of surviving records and of information reported by various historians. Prices have not been translated into a standard measure; some differences may reflect changes in the metal content of coins. Thus, the tables are of more use for showing trends and examples than for allowing direct comparison of prices from one region or time to another.

Church

The religious life of a town centered on its many churches and monasteries. The Catholic Church was a significant political, economic, and social presence. In older towns, the local bishop often became the center of urban government after the Roman Empire's fall. Other towns grew around a monastery, whose abbot had a significant voice in the town's government. Even if a town subsequently gained political independence, its bishop or abbot remained a powerful political force.



Many towns started with only one parish church, which might be the cathedral (seat of its bishop). As the town's population expanded, it generally outgrew that church. More parishes were created, along with monasteries, friaries, and other religious houses. Some large towns became the sites for communities of scholars, who formed a university. Each parish priest, abbot, and university leader had his own political and economic interests. Some were subject to the local bishop, others to their own orders, and all ultimately to the Pope in Rome. There could be a large number of churches. Medieval London was divided into nearly 100 parishes; Norwich and York into over 40 each; Worcester and Cambridge into 10 each. A few towns, such as Westminster, remained essentially one parish. Of course, the number of parishes does not include monasteries, mendicant houses, and other religious organizations.

The Church held a variety of legal privileges for its property and clergy. As a general rule, its property was exempt from secular laws and authorities. It did not pay taxes or tolls to the town. Clergy, about six percent of a cathedral city's population, were immune from prosecution by secular rulers and could be punished only by their own superiors. Some of these rights extended to tenants of church property, even if they had not taken holy orders. Moreover, the church's property tended to expand at a slow pace because parishioners donated or sold land and buildings to it, and it rarely sold property to secular rulers. This expansion caused significant friction between the town and its clergy, and often resulted in agreements about the scope of church properties and when newly acquired properties obtained privileges and exemptions.

Within the clergy, tithes were a frequent source of disagreement. The tithe was a tax on one-tenth of every family's annual profits from agriculture or business. Everyone was subject to it, even the clergy. In addition, when someone died, their heirs owed their parish church *mortuary*, a fee "for tithes willfully or ignorantly detained, or imperfectly paid." Churches and religious orders struggled between themselves over which urban residents owed tithe to their churches and how tithe revenues would be divided between the receiving church and its superiors. Churches also quarreled over donations from the public, burial rights (and their attendant fees), and other gifts.

For the public, the Church was a key part of daily life. Many urban residents worried about their souls. Usury was a sin. The New Testament itself suggested that "It is easier for a camel to pass through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter heaven." (Matthew 19:23, 24) Clerics preached, often in vain, against vanity and ostentatious displays of wealth. Thus, urban merchants and artisans often made public displays of their faith by gifts to their parish churches and to religious orders. Each guild had its patron saint and donated generously to its associated parish. Workers who could not afford cash gifts offered labor or in-kind goods. In later centuries, merchants and artisans became more respectable in the

TO BE A BISHOP

A new bishop's role was complex and contradictory. If he were fortunate, his election was essentially undisputed and he could quickly receive his pall from the Pope. If he were unlucky, he might find himself dealing with years of expensive litigation in the papal courts, while perhaps being locked out of his own see by a rival claimant.

The new bishop then had to take possession of his secular estates, which might involve fees paid to his feudal liege. He had to decide whether to keep existing officials, or replace them with his own officers, and deal with any debts and disputes left to him by his predecessor. This would likely involve a tour of his estates, which might extend over a wide area.

Finally, he had to resolve his supervisory duties in his parish, which again would likely involve touring major parishes, monasteries, hospitals, and other clerical institutions to assess the state of the parish's physical and spiritual health. Again, this might involve keeping or replacing his officials. He would also be expected to hold a synod, often in the spring, to introduce himself and to discuss issues facing the diocese. (His administrative duties would make it hard for him to be a scholar, if he were so inclined, although a few bishops and archbishops managed to balance those roles.)

If he were fortunate, he already had experience administering complex estates either as the son of

a landholder, as an abbot, or as an official in his predecessor's administration. If not, he would be more dependent on his officials, who might have their own agendas.

The new bishop would find himself expected to act as a judge, resolving disputes on his many manors, and between his parishes and clergy. He likely had his own prison, where errant clergy could be imprisoned for misdeeds. Depending on the state of his parish, he might find himself involved in reform efforts, or battling heresy among his parishioners. He would likely find himself in a tangle of existing disputes involving his neighboring landholders over his secular lands, and resolving his parishes' disputes with each other and with rival clergy.

He would have to set up a household able to travel with him as he made his rounds among his parishes and estates. He might also be expected to attend the royal court and that of the nearest major landholder for his diocese. He would be expected to be a good host to guests, and to participate in hunts and other social activities among nobles. As a secular landholder, he would also be expected to maintain knights and to lead them into battle if necessary.

All of those duties generally came with a generous income and a lifestyle luxurious by medieval standards. If his health permitted, he might well enjoy the benefits of his new role for many decades.

Unlike other landholders, bishops were elected and held their office for life unless promoted to another office or deposed by the Pope. Before the 11th century, they were elected by popular vote of their parishioners, often with considerable influence from the local landholders. The Papacy struggled to assert its power over appointing its own officials during the Investiture Controversy. The issue was finally resolved by the Concordat of Worms (1122), which eliminated the overt role of secular landholders and monarchs in appointing church officials, but allowed some influence over the process.

Thus, starting in the 11th and 12th centuries, bishops were elected by the chapter of monks who served the cathedral. In practice, powerful landholders often drafted a list of nominees for the chapter to

consider; normally, the bishop was a clergy member from a noble family, often related to nearby secular landholders. If the chapter chose a candidate who was not on the list, neighboring landholders might resist the new candidate, sometimes violently. The Papacy would then intervene to protect the Church's nominal independence, but Rome was quite far from most bishoprics and its influence waxed and waned depending on the Pope's reputation and ability.

Although the bishop was chosen by the chapter, his relationship to it was often hostile. Laon's bishops, for example, issued frequent rules prohibiting the monks (canons) from singing their offices with undignified haste, talking in the cathedral, talking to women, carrying weapons, selling goods in the cathedral, or accepting bribes. The need to frequently

its cathedral school and later gained a papal charter. The University of Toulouse, on the other hand, was directly created by papal charter at the end of the Albigensian Crusade and had both the Papacy and the French monarchy as patrons. Its purpose was to teach theology in the heart of the lands most affected by the heresy. Emperor Frederick II created the University of Naples as a matter of prestige, and as an alternative to Bologna's law school as a source of administrators for his empire.

Students and teachers were, almost without exception, male. Most students were minor members of the clergy whose moral character was vouched for by their local bishop or the head of the local monastic order. This did not stop the students, often young men, from gaining a reputation as rowdy, mischievous rogues, fond of drinking and casual sex, who escaped punishment for misdeeds by virtue of their clerical status. While some students remained consistently at a university until they gained their degree, others came and went as their finances and interests allowed. Toulouse, for example, required a student to attend only 15 days of classes per year in order to obtain a certificate of matriculation, with all the privileges that came with it. With diligence, a student might eventually gain mastery in his field (usually Arts, Medicine, Law, or Theology) and become licensed to teach others. If the university had a papal charter, the license was accepted in all of Europe. Degrees granted by universities chartered by a king or emperor were generally recognized only in that ruler's lands.

There were two major models of university structure – the Paris and the Bologna systems. To put it simply, in the Parisian model, the students themselves managed the institution, setting the curriculum, hiring and firing faculty, and determining the requirements for a degree. Students in the Parisian system were organized into colleges – a combination of residence and dining hall, organized geographically, and supervised by the faculty. In the Bologna model, the faculty managed the institution and set the standards. Students in the Bologna system were organized into “nations”, similar to a modern fraternity, but organized geographically, which served as a social club, study group, disciplinary body, sources of housing and meals, and even moneylender during times of distress. The nations had significant influence on the faculty, and through it on the university.

In general, a medieval university offered the following privileges:

- ☛ All of its full-time students and full-time faculty were considered protected by the highest secular authority in the land (usually the monarchy or its equivalent). By definition, both students and faculty were also clergy with the usual privileges of that status. It was a serious crime to falsely claim university privilege.
- ☛ All students and faculty were subject only to ecclesiastical justice and, when within a day's travel of the university, or on university business, subject only to its own justice. The university could withdraw this privilege if it saw fit.
- ☛ All universities had the sole right to determine the standards for graduates without interference from any secular official or bishop.
- ☛ Universities had the sole right to determine the course of their studies, again free from outside interference.
- ☛ Universities had the sole right to strike – to cease all classes and instruction, in any place and for any reason.
- ☛ Universities held a monopoly on instruction in the higher arts of law, medicine, and theology within a reasonable radius of their campus.
- ☛ The Dominicans and Franciscans were actively involved in university education, although they generally educated their own friars outside of “secular” schools. The Dominicans created four *studia* in England, Germany, Lombardy, and Provence to educate promising friars. The Franciscans educated their friars at *studia* in Assisi, Bologna, Oxford, Paris, and Toulouse. The best Dominican and Franciscan students were sent from the *studia* to Paris for a master's degree.

Other Religious Movements

In addition to the major religious orders, there were various popular and heretical movements which affected urban life. Some of the major groups are mentioned here; however, a detailed history of these groups is beyond the scope of this book. Most of the popular religious movements were reactions to fail-

Commerce

Towns were primarily centers for trade and commerce. To drastically oversimplify, a town gathered raw materials from its hinterland, and exported them in bulk; or processed them into finished goods like cloth, and sold the results to various consumers. Over time, towns began to gain reputations for the quality of certain wares, which allowed them to charge a premium for their goods. In order to protect their reputations, local merchants formed guilds which controlled the supply and manufacture of goods, by licensing and regulating manufacturers. Towns and regions began to specialize, improving their own profits while becoming increasingly reliant on others for raw materials and for other types of goods.

The heart of a town was its market place. The market, held weekly in small towns and daily in cities, provided everything from the staples of daily meals to costly spices, from the simplest plain wool cloth to ornate silk brocades. Among storefronts and stalls wandered itinerant hawkers, often with protected rights to sell their wares. By concentrating sales in a single market place, municipal and guild inspectors could more easily monitor quality, quantity, and price. The market place was the site of the public scales and official measures, both vital to setting disputes. Often it was a place where urban criminals were punished and decrees proclaimed.

The market place was, first and foremost, under the control of the town's guilds. As discussed in more detail on p. 81, guilds were effectively monopolists, controlling demand for various raw materials and supplies of finished goods. Each set rules concerning price, quantity, quality, competition, locations for manufacture and sales, and the investigation, trial, and punishment of infractions. Generally, the guilds prohibited foreign merchants from selling in stores; they could rent market stalls, booths, or tables. Guilds set the legal weights and measures, which required foreign merchants to make

and sell goods in conforming sizes or face confiscation or destruction of non-conforming items. They sometimes required language interpreters, at the foreign merchant's expense.

The market place was also under the control of the town government. Towns often established their own laws about product safety, quality, and price which generally overlapped guild rules.

Towns often taxed goods entering and leaving their gates, and charged fees for the use of market stalls and other temporary selling spaces. Unlike the guild, town government often encouraged foreign merchants, regulating inns to make sure that travelers were welcomed and kept safe, while requiring innkeepers to prevent frauds and minimize violence.

MONEY

"Coins are the most incomprehensible things. Their value rises and falls, and one does not know what to do. When one thinks that he has gained, he finds the contrary."

– Gilles Li Muisis, Abbot of Tournai (14th C.)

The urban market, unlike its rural counterpart, was based primarily on cash, not on barter or in-kind payments. Medieval money is a complicated topic. On the one hand, each region had a relatively simple set of silver, and later gold, coins. On the other hand, the value of those coins varied widely due to changes in their metal content, and fluctuations in the supply of circulating coins. To add an additional layer of complexity, some regions kept accounts in a different system of money, which might bear little relation to the physical coins in circulation.

Keeping track of the value of money was a major headache for merchants and administrators, particularly prior to the introduction of Arabic numbers in the 12th century. (Prior accounts and arithmetic operations used Roman numerals.) Many different towns might hold the right to mint coins – each with



A MERCHANT'S ARRIVAL

When a merchant arrived in a new town for the first time, he first encountered the watch at the gates who collected any taxes or tolls on his merchandise. If he wanted to claim an exemption from a fee, he might need to speak to an urban official at the town's hall.

As he entered the gate, he might be surrounded by young boys, each trying to persuade him to stay at a particular inn. The choice was important: not only did he want a safe place to stay that was (relatively) vermin-free, but he also wanted a trustworthy innkeeper, because an innkeeper often served as a local agent and intermediary between his guests and local guilds. Negotiations often began in inns, which became associated with guests from particular regions or trades. Having picked an inn, the merchant would let the young man lead him to it – negotiate a room, and perhaps a place to stable his horse (if any) and warehouse any bulky goods. If he was armed, he might have to leave his weapons at the inn during his stay. If he was arriving by ship or boat, some towns restricted his ability to off-load his goods, requiring him to sell from the ship, or the quay.

From the inn, he might then go to the market to conduct his business. He might rent a market stall to sell his wares from the town government, show his goods to a local guild inspector to prove their quality, and make sure that his goods conformed to the local weights and measures. Generally, all sales had to take place in the marketplace, under the watchful eye of urban and guild officials. He might also have to visit a moneychanger to have enough local currency for transactions.

Some towns restricted how long a foreign (resident of another town) or alien (citizen of another monarch) merchant could stay in town. Typically, he might only be able to stay in one place for 40 days at a time. When he wanted to leave, he might hope to avoid taxes on exporting any unsold goods.

If he arrived alone, he might have difficulty with transactions. Local merchants were often wary of strangers – they might not be able to trust the quality of his goods, nor be able to easily collect damages or a debt. He might seek family members or others from his home to vouch for him as pledges for his debts.

their own metal content; which could change if the town's ruler decided to debase the coins to raise revenues from the mint by getting more coins per raw silver, or if the mint itself became dishonest. Rulers periodically demonetized existing coins, declaring them unusable for transactions, and forced their subjects to return the old coins to the mint for new coins, which might contain less silver. Often, guild and town rules required transactions to be made in the coins minted in the town or, if the town did not have its own mint, in the most commonly circulated regional coins – which created a brisk business for moneychangers.

When manufacturing goods or entering a contract, a merchant had to anticipate the demand for coins in the future. If, for example, a trade fair were about to open, there would be a high demand for local coins (which would raise their relative value), and a surplus of foreign coins as foreign merchants changed their money in order to make transactions in the local currency. The problem would be reversed when the trade fair ended and foreigners sought to change their money back into their preferred coinage.

Merchants also had to consider periodic shortages of coins. In the late 14th and 15th centuries, there was a systemic shortage of silver for coins. More coins were being sent out of Europe to the Baltic, Middle East, and Asia for spices, silk, and luxury goods, than were being minted from newly-mined silver. The shortage of silver may have expanded the use of gold coins, which were first introduced in the mid-13th century. It may have also contributed to debased coinage issued in the late 14th and early 15th century. (A series of new mines opened in the mid-15th century reduced the silver shortage.)

The basic Carolingian money system was in common use. A "pound" (489.6 grams) of silver (livre tournois or l.) was divided into 240 pennies (dernier or d.). At first, the livre was also divided into 20 shillings (sou or s.) as an accounting measure. This created a ratio of 1 to 20 to 240, which was found across western Europe. Only the dernier was a physical coin at first – both the sou and livre were used only for accounting. Over time, various other coins evolved. England issued, at various points, half-pennies, farthings (quarter-pennies), groats (4 pennies), and

TYPICAL COSTS FOR SERVICES AND COMMON GOODS

Item	Date	Location	Cost
Ale, per gallon	1320	London	1 d. (good quality)
Ale, per gallon	1320	London	3/4 d. (ave. quality)
Ale, per gallon	1423	London	1 1/4 d. (good quality)
Ale, per gallon	1423	London	3/4 d. (ave. quality)
Almonds, pound	1359	Paris	14 d.
Arquebus	1485	Grenada	11 reales
Arquebus	1519	Nuremburg	5 florins (elaborate gift)
Bed, for hospital	14 th C.	Florence	10-15 lire
Beef, pound	1395-1405	Florence	1 soldi, 2 denari
Beef, pound	1491-1501	Florence	1 soldi, 3 denari
Boots	1470	Derbyshire	6 d. /pair
Brooch with gems	1444-45	Worcester	5 pounds (gift to noble)
Calf	1365	Paris	9 d.
Candle, tallow	1406	Salisbury	1 1/2 d. per pound
Cloth, wool	1380	Ely	5 s. /yard (for bishop)
Cloth, wool	1384-5	Hereford	2 s. 11 d. /yard (for knight)
Cloth, wool	1384-5	Hereford	2 s. /yard (for yeoman)
Cloth, wool	1384-5	Hereford	1 s. 7 d. /yard (for servant)
Cloth, wool	1390	Exeter	3 d. per narrow yard (12 x 1 yards), coarse material
Copper, ingot	1426	Venice	11 s./pound
Crossbow	1519	Nuremburg	13 1/2 florins (elaborate gift)
Dates, pound	1338	Paris	6 d.
Fish, pound	1395-1405	Florence	4 soldi, 3 denari
Fish, pound	1491-1501	Florence	3 soldi, 10 denari
Fruit, dried	1380	London	1 d. to 4 d /pound (currants, dates, figs, prunes, raisins)
Glass, small pane	1426	Venice	1 1/2 soldi
Gloves, velvet	1429	Venice	3 ducats
Ginger, pound	1338	Paris	15 s.
Hazelnuts, pound	1338	Paris	15 d.
Herring, barrel	1309	Hull	1 s. 2 d.
Horse	1391-2	Exeter	33 s. 4 d.
Lamb	1395-1405	Florence	2 soldi
Lime	1425	Venice	6 soldi, 9 denari/ barrel
Oil, orico	1445	Florence	1 1/2 florins
Oxen (for meat)	1265	Paris	5 s. 3 1/2 d.
Oxen (working)	1265	Paris	10 s.
Peas, field	1270-80	London	3 s. /quarter

Crime & Punishment

*Companions of our band, care-free,
Rob ye for naught except for gold.
Seek only those who're weak, ye see;
Let those go who seem too bold;
And when ye take a purse or so,
Nor backwards ever throw a glance:
Beware the Law where'er ye go,
Which makes you on the Gallows dance.*

– *François Villon, Ballade
en jargon (c. 1460)*

Towns were crowded places with many opportunities for frauds, thefts, and violent crimes. Urban authorities sought the right to hold their own courts which could resolve criminal complaints, administer fines, and punish malefactors. Their courts, however, were limited. Medieval society had a complex web of legal privileges. Clergy, for example, had the right to be tried under ecclesiastical law. Within the clergy, certain orders and universities had the right to discipline their own members separate from the bishop's court. The right of sanctuary allowed criminals to seek protection from the Church against civil law for 40 days (a few sites let criminals remain indefinitely). Often, sheriffs and urban officials could not enter Church property to serve warrants or make arrests, but had to wait on a public street for their quarry to emerge. Royal vassals could demand trial in royal courts. Guilds often held primary jurisdiction over their members for acts which violated guild rules. Major fairs held their own courts during their sessions to resolve merchants' disputes and crimes like assaults and thefts. This division of jurisdiction made it hard for towns to keep order.

Violence was a common feature of urban life. In Antwerp, in the second half of the 14th century, court records show twice as many cases for physical violence as for theft. In early 15th century Brescia, nearly half of the sentences imposed by the city's podestà and criminal court judges were for brawls, wounds, and dire insults. Vendettas, common in Mediterranean cultures, made quarrels more serious, creating a cycle of revenge attacks and counter-attacks that could quickly build into a riot.

To some extent, ongoing low levels of violence were part of the relationship between workers and their employers. A dispute between an employee and his employer was hard to fairly resolve in urban courts, which were rightly regarded as biased in favor of the wealthy. A disgruntled worker might instead gain satisfaction by vandalism or violence. Town records record many instances of nighttime vandalism, creditors being attacked, street brawls between rival factions, gang rapes, and personal vendettas settled with knives and clubs.

What could a town do? To reduce crimes which took place after dark, many towns imposed a strict curfew forbidding most people from traveling on the streets at night without permission. If, for some reason, a person needed to go into the streets, he was expected to carry a lantern or light to demonstrate honest intentions. In Siena, anyone caught outside after dark was fined 20 s. Curfews primarily dissuaded the easily temptable. They did not prevent groups of youths, often university students or sons of wealthy citizens, from congregating after dark in large groups to engage in vandalism, robberies, or even house-breaking and rape. (Student groups were not to be underestimated. In 1408, a group of Parisian students armed with swords, daggers, axes, and polearms, wearing mail and padded leather jackets, invaded another group of students' party and killed their host.)

Homeowners secured their houses and belongings. Ground floor windows were shuttered or protected with iron bars. Doors were barred or chained shut. Important papers and belongings were kept in stout locked chests, often in the owner's bedroom.

Towns regulated weapons. Most forbade foreigners and even many residents from carrying weapons. Foreigners were usually required to deposit their weapons for safekeeping with their host or innkeeper on arrival in town. Residents and foreigners alike were often precluded from carrying weapons to markets and fairs; even knights and noble participants in tournaments had their right to carry arms and arm their followers limited.

In 1099, Genoa forbade anyone to carry weapons without a license, which was available for "defensive" weapons to citizens known to have mortal enemies.

Town: Crime & Punishment

Offense	Date	Location	Amount/Punishment
Neglect of duty to host ambassador	1483	Venice	10 ducat fine (debtor ineligible for public office until paid)
Nuisance	1302	St. Ives	6 d
Nuisance	1354	Beverly	40 d
Nuisance	1421	Coventry	12 d
Pig, unattended	Mid-14C	London	4 d (pig could be killed on sight, owner could purchase carcass for 4 d)
Pig, unattended	Mid-14C	Sandwich	12 d (pig killed and carcass sold to charity)
Pig, unattended	1445	Cambridge	4 d
Practicing medicine without license	1330	Bayons	40 s
Private meeting with foreign ambassador by Senator or Council member	1481	Venice	1,000 ducat fine and 2 years exile
Procuring	1282	Cordes	Forfeit house, or if not a homeowner, fined 20 l.
Procuring	1458	Avignon	200 l.
Rape	1369-70	Rodez	5 l
Rape, attempted	1307	Montaillou	20 l
Rape, of prostitute	1194	Pexiora	1 s.
Rape, of prostitute	1286	Pisa	10 – 40 s.
Rape, of prostitute	1388	Vallassina	10 l.
Robbery, 1 st offense, less than 1 lire	Early 13 th c.	Venice	Whipping
Robbery, 5-10 lire	Early 13 th c.	Venice	Loss of eye
Robbery, 40 lire+	Early 13 th c.	Venice	Hanging
Selling supplies to English	1369-70	Rodez	5 l
Sodomy (any “abnormal” sexual behavior)	14 th c.	Venice	Burning alive
Soliciting a prostitute	1369-70	Rodez	2 l
Traveling at night	15C	Siena	20 s
Traveling at night w/o light	1431	Lyon	60 s / offense
Traveling at night while armed	15C	Troyes	10 s (plus confiscation of weapon)
Using false weights	1335	Canterbury	80 l (plus reimbursement to defrauded customers)
Watch, failing to stop thief	595	Paris	5 s (plus reimburse for stolen goods)
Watch, failing to stop thief	813	Paris	4 s
Weapon possession	1409	Venice	25 lire (or 15 days in prison)

Education

Urban residents were more likely to be literate and numerate than their rural counterparts, but an exact rate can't be determined. Merchants and shopkeepers needed to manage basic accounts and keep records in order to operate their businesses. Secular and ecclesiastical administrators likewise needed to keep records and accounts in order to manage bishoprics, guilds, and town government. Thus, there was a need for basic education, as well as vocational training.

At first, education was a Church monopoly. In 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council directed every cathedral to hire a grammar master for the clergy and indigent scholars, and every metropolitan bishop to hire a theologian. No one could set up a grammar school in London, for example, without the approval of the Bishop of London and the chancellors of St. Paul's cathedral. From the 12th century to the mid-15th century, London had three approved grammar schools which taught basic Latin vocabulary and grammar, and gave basic religious instruction.

In theory, church-sponsored teaching was free – knowledge was a divine gift, not to be sold. But a teacher had to earn a living and could be given a benefice or salary, or charge reasonable fees. Teachers could also accept gifts from those that could afford to donate to them.

When a Church education proved inadequate, or too expensive, lay “primary” schools arose which were focused on literacy in the vernacular and basic arithmetic. Lay schools first arose in Flanders and Italy, and then spread across urban Europe. Urban students tended to split their time between studies and work in shops, so the schools focused on practical problems and taught a rapid script (*scrittura mercantese*), designed for record-keeping and merchant correspondence. In 1440, King Henry VI founded Eton, a primary school in Windsor, with a grant for the education of indigent scholars.

By 1467, approximately 40% of the tradesmen in London had basic literacy in English, and 50% of those were literate in Latin as well. There is less evidence about the literacy among London's women. Women were admitted to some primary schools, but excluded from grammar schools. A woman who wanted to learn Latin generally had to hire a private tutor.

Monasteries had long maintained libraries and lent books to other monasteries. Until 1436, all European books were hand-copied, and were thus rare and expensive. Johannes Gutenberg invented his famous printing press in 1436 (finishing the press in 1440). His combination of press and moveable type spread rapidly, and made printing far less expensive, vastly expanding the number and types of available books. In the mid-15th century, towns began to set aside rooms, and eventually buildings, for their collections of books. These were not public libraries, but the collections were available to wealthy patrons.

MASTER-APPRENTICE SYSTEM

The apprentice system was the most common form of vocational training for young men in Europe. A master was allowed by his guild to employ a limited number of apprentices (in addition to his own spouse and children). The Guild set standards for the fee a master could charge the apprentice's parents, and the minimum length of the apprenticeship before an apprentice could try to qualify as a master. If, upon completing an apprenticeship, the apprentice then became a citizen of the town, the urban government might also set standards for apprentice contracts.

The prospective apprentice's parent paid a master a fee and entered into a written apprenticeship contract. The master agreed to house, feed, and train the apprentice in his trade. The master was responsible for the apprentice's work and behavior. Often the contract forbade the apprentice to gamble, fornicate, or hang about in taverns. The agreement required the apprentice to be appropriately trained, and not used merely as a domestic servant. A master could discipline the apprentice, including beating him, but not so seriously as to permanently damage a limb. If the apprentice left before completing the contract, his family could be fined.

Once accepted, the master had to enter the apprentice on the guild's rolls and pay a fee to the guild. If the guild required that an apprentice be literate, he would be examined by the guild prior to enrollment. Some towns also required the master to enroll the apprentice on its records, and, of course, pay an additional fee. Enrollment was often part of a ceremony to impress the event upon the memory of the youth and on witnesses.

Entertainment

Both towns and rural villages held feasts and celebrations during the medieval year. The difference was scale. A village might hold a fair, festival, or celebratory dinner for a relative handful of residents. Urban celebrations involved hundreds or thousands of participants, often drawing spectators from significant distances. Some feasts were massive urban celebrations, others were held by individual churches or guilds. In Bruges, there were thirteen processions each year, held as part of civic or religious festivals. Venice held sixteen processions per year.

Urban celebrations were, in part, intended to demonstrate and reinforce local ties and relative precedence. Many had a religious element, and were intended to seek salvation or religious protection from the honored saint. Others were, partly, intended to draw money from participants and spectators into the local economy.

CIVIC PROCESSIONS

Many towns had periodic processions to honor the election of new urban officials, or to welcome important dignitaries to the town. Generally, civic processions were more ad hoc and less elaborate than their religious counterparts. Still, they were occasions for the town's leaders to demonstrate their importance and impress guests.

RELIGIOUS PROCESSIONS

Weekly processions occurred in some towns. Each Sunday, the leaders of the cathedral chapter, its subject churches, and the bishop processed from the bishop's residence to the cathedral. At the cathedral, they were met by acolytes with lighted candles

and censers. On major saints' days, the procession might include important relics. The cathedral chapter might also process to a town's church to honor it on its saint's day. In Bergamo, the cathedral clergy processed each Sunday to one of its cloisters of nuns in honor of the Virgin. In Pisa, there was a procession each Friday from the cathedral to its cemetery in honor of Good Friday and the town's dead.

Processions might also be held to invoke divine favor after a natural disaster, a major disease outbreak, bad weather that might affect the harvest, or in times of war. In some towns, the faithful might even punish a patron saint for failing to come to their aid by placing the saint's statue outside the church or conspicuously honoring a rival saint instead.

HISTORICAL COMMEMORATIONS

Some urban feasts celebrated major historical events. Venice, for example, annually celebrated a military expedition against Dalmatia launched on May 9, 1000, Ascension Day. On that date, Doge Sebastiano Ziani sailed against Emperor Frederick I. When the victorious Venetians returned, Pope Alexander III gave Ziani a consecrated ring symbolizing Venice's marriage to the Adriatic. The feast became an elaborate festival in which the Doge, the Bishop of Olivolo, and important Venetian notables sailed out by the Lido in a gilded boat (*bucintoro*) into the open sea for a service of supplication and thanksgiving. The Doge and his court were sprinkled with holy water while psalms were chanted. A ring was thrown into the water to commemorate Venice's symbolic marriage to the sea.

Perugia held an annual feast on December 7 starting in 1371 to mark the start of a popular uprising



hall. With that ceremony, Carnival, with its feasts, dances, and drinking, began in Paris.

The Church intermittently tried to discourage the Feast. In 1207, Innocent III tried to have it discontinued in Polish churches. In 1400, the University of Paris tried to ban it. In 1436, Basle allowed the feast to proceed, but only if it was not irreverent.

Lent and Easter

Lent, a 40-day period between Ash Wednesday and Easter, was a time of fasting, marked by the absence of celebrations. Men stopped cutting their hair. All Christians refrained from eating meat, eggs, and dairy products. Churches often covered images and crosses. Some towns restricted loud or boisterous activities during Lent. Sumptuary laws might encourage even more modest dress during Lent. After the Fourth Lateran Council, Jews were encouraged to remain indoors during the season. Prostitutes were often expected to limit or suspend their activities.

Easter Sunday was a major Church festival. It was one of the few times each year when communion (preceded by confession) was mandatory. In Italy, Easter was also an occasion for communal baptism of the community's infants. After Mass, it was a time for celebration, feasts, and dances as the faithful broke their Lent fast.

Assumption of the Virgin

The Assumption of the Virgin (August 15) was an important festival. In Italy, it was a traditional time for a truce, so that even soldiers could attend ceremonies in their home church. Assaults and violent conduct during the festival were more strictly punished than at other times. Tolls and fees were suspended for visitors. Candles were sold in the market, under the strict supervision of guild leaders who required religious candles to only use beeswax and linen wicks. During the feast, candles were offered by the faithful to the cathedral and other churches. The laity could also buy candles to be blessed for their own use.

Italian city-states required every male head of household to attend the services. Urban officials sometimes checked attendance, and looked for anyone banished from the city who might try to sneak

into the ceremony. Generally, foreigners, women, and children were excluded from the candle offering procession, although they could observe the ceremony.

NEIGHBORHOOD COMPETITIONS

Some events were intended to boost urban unity as a whole. Others were intended to channel neighborhood rivalries. Feasts, festivals, and fairs were often a time for official or unofficial neighborhood competitions. Combats between rock-throwing mobs (*sassaioli*) were common in Perugia and Rome. Milan, Pavia, and Ravenna were known for fighting with wooden weapons (*giuocco del mazzascudo*).

In Siena, there was the *elmora* (a melee with wooden swords and lances), the *battaglia de'sassi* (a melee with thrown stones), the *pugna* (a brawl fought with fists wrapped in cloth), and the *pallone* (a soccer-like game). Sienese officials tried to limit the mayhem with laws. Stone throwing was banned in 1253. The *elmora* was banned by the end of 13C. A group tried to convert the unarmed *pugna* into an urban rebellion in 1325, but were thwarted by alert authorities.

In Venice, there are records of battles between neighborhoods as early as 810. Combatants fought with rocks and sharpened sticks hardened by repeated soaking in boiling oil, protected by shields, helmets, and even armor. In 1369, the Great Council encouraged a set of battles on the first day of the New Year and during the regatta (early September) to help young men learn combat skills. In the 15th century, there are scattered records of battles fought on bridges and in small plazas (*campi*). In 1421, there is a record of a neighborhood battle fought on a bridge, the Ponte dei Servi. In 1493, a bridge battle was staged on the Ponte di Santa Fosca for the duke of Ferrara. In 1505, the Council of Ten tried to ban "wars" at the bridges, and failed.

Races

The Palio was, and is, a horse race held in Siena each year. It was one of many run in northern Italy starting in the 13th century. The name refers to the banner or flag given to the winner in honor of the city's patron saint. Records first mention the Sienese palio in 1238 as part of a festival of the Assumption of the Virgin. Palios often honored saints, rarely other individuals.

wives and daughters. (Oddly, laws requiring that prostitutes wear particular clothing sometimes co-existed with bans on prostitution, a mixed message at best.) Many towns required prostitutes to live outside the walls, or on designated streets. Some towns prohibited prostitutes from attending public church services, walking in public during the week preceding Easter, or even speaking with “respectable” women.

The Church also disapproved of prostitution, both because of the promiscuity involved and the making of money from it. It was willing to accept it, however, as a lesser evil than male homosexuality or the rape of “honest” women. A number of Church leaders tried to redeem prostitutes, helping them marry or earn a living in a trade.

Pimps (*houlier*, Fr.) and procuresses (*marquerelle*, Fr.), on the other hand, were rarely tolerated. The Church viewed making a living from a woman’s prostitution as a sin similar to usury (making money from money). Pimps were blamed for recruiting gullible women from the countryside or small towns with false promises of wealth or love. Some prostitutes found that a male protector was necessary to prevent rape or assault by customers. The procurer, the pimp’s female counterpart, was often a retired prostitute who arranged liaisons between customers and prostitutes, and was believed to offer abortion advice, contraception, and love potions. Some pimps and procurers managed prostitutes under the cover of a business like a school or textile making that could recruit and employ many single young women without suspicion.

Numerous women made their living as prostitutes. At some points and times, there were few other ways for a woman to make a living in a city. Some women became prostitutes when they were widowed, or their family fell into debt. Often they were recruited from different towns, perhaps to avoid scandals involving women from local families. Frequently, towns required prostitutes to practice their trade in brothels, which were monitored by the local officials. Some towns had municipal brothels which were farmed, like other property, to inves-

tors to manage. Some prostitutes lived in their brothels, which were sturdy structures, often walled, to prevent rowdy men from assaulting the residents. Others lived elsewhere and were required, like all workers, to cease their trade at dusk and return to their homes during the dusk-to-dawn curfew.

Some towns tried to protect prostitutes from exploitation by brothel keepers. A few limited the amount of rent and board the keeper could charge. Others prohibited keepers from overcharging for food and beer, or from lending money to the prostitutes. Some forbade prostitutes from spinning or carding wool, which limited their ability to earn an “honest” living, but also prevented the keeper from forcing them to work when not with a customer. (Some German towns, conversely, encouraged prostitutes to spin for their keeper when not otherwise busy.) A few forbade keepers from beating the prostitutes. Bishops, in some towns, had one of their clerics inspect the brothels periodically to make sure that none of the women were being held against their will.

In 1254, Louis IX tried to outlaw prostitution in France. When his ban proved unenforceable, he urged towns to distance brothels from churches, monasteries, and cemeteries, and, in effect, create districts for the trade. After 1350, many towns relaxed their laws. Some founded municipal brothels. In 1400, Venice and Florence even included prostitution among their civic values because the trade provided a safe outlet for unmarried men’s sexual needs. (Florence did, however, create a vice-squad, the *Ufficali di Notte* (Office of the Night) to prosecute male prostitutes and male homosexuals.)

Oddly, perhaps, concubines and courtesans (the educated female companions of male merchants and nobles) were not regarded as prostitutes. The relative fidelity of the relationship between concubine and lover made it more acceptable than a prostitute’s promiscuity. The courtesan’s education (and wealthy clientele) made her more socially acceptable in some areas. In others, during the 15th century, one could be fined for keeping a concubine, but brothels were licensed or permitted by the town.

Some women became prostitutes when they were widowed, or their family fell into debt.

Governance

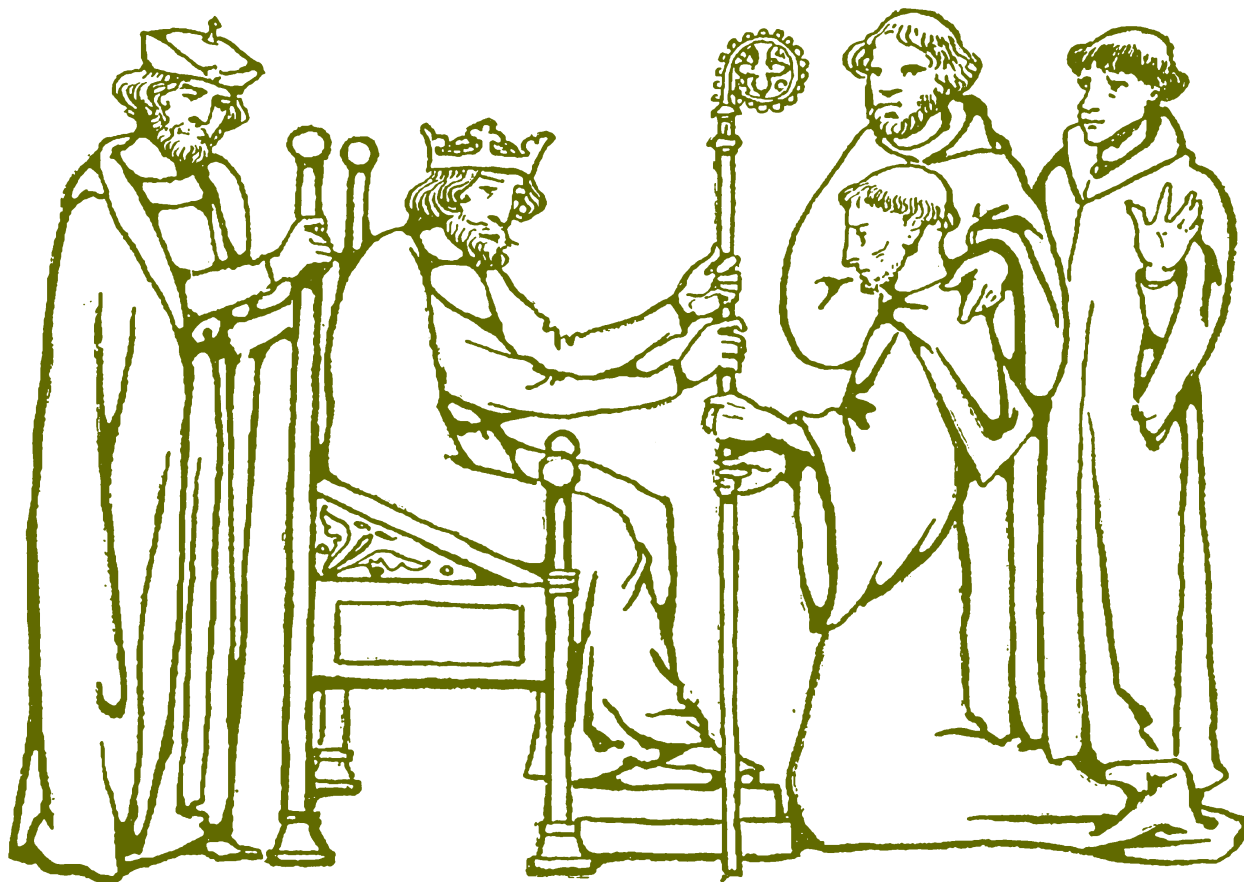
Urban governance came in many forms. Some towns were subject to a major landholder or monarch and governed directly by an appointed official. Some held a charter which allowed them to elect their own officials. A few, such as the northern Italian city-states, were independent and able to select their own rulers. Within these broad categories were many regional variations to accommodate local needs, customs, and the complex interactions between the town and its powerful religious and economic leaders, as well as surrounding landholders and other political powers.

One legacy of the fall of the Roman Empire was a need for strong leadership to unify a town and maintain its defenses. Towns from that era tended to be either subject to a nearby landholder, or to the local bishop. Over time, subject towns struggled for and generally gained some measure of independence through charters. The northern Italian city-states

took a separate path, freeing themselves from feudal and ecclesiastical overlords to become independent communities with control over their rural hinterlands. Even there, however, wars and hard times brought intermittent control by powerful rulers and their families.

SUBJECT TOWNS

The subject town was the simplest form of urban government. The town was controlled, much like a medieval fief, by a powerful landholder, such as a count or duke, or by an ecclesiastical landholder, such as a bishop or abbot. Sometimes, the town was literally divided between both a secular and an ecclesiastical landholder, each the absolute ruler of certain neighborhoods, which may even have been divided by a wall. In either case, the ruler generally controlled the town's taxes, finances, and trade.



the court. A bishop's or duke's court had only a couple dozen members, but employed over three locals per member of the court. The cost, however, was the landholder's interference with the town's administration and finances, and problems controlling members of the royal household who were generally not subject to local courts.

Towns sought charters because the interests of a subject town and its ruler were often quite different. The landholder generally wanted to maximize his revenue from the town. The town's merchants wanted to increase local trade (which might mean decreasing taxes and tariffs to compete with rivals) and needed a body of commercial law with dependable, predictable results. If the ruler's administrator consulted with prominent local merchants and guild leaders, peace could be maintained. However, local residents often became restless and demanded self-government. Rulers generally resisted ceding their power, which sometimes led to violent demonstrations and riots. While the ringleaders of such unrest were often severely punished, their successors might be more successful in negotiating a charter.

CHARTERED TOWNS

Many chartered towns started as subject towns, but a few were granted a charter at their creation. In France, these planned communities were called *Villeneuve* or *Villefranche* and were often created to help a landholder settle and control a contested rural area.

A charter was a written grant of right from a landholder to a town as a corporate landholder. Generally, the landholder granted a charter in return for a large sum of cash, and often periodic payments thereafter. When a town held land in this manner, the payment was sometimes called a fee farm rent or the king's fee. Charter terms varied widely depending on the parties' needs and negotiating power, regional conditions, and local traditions.

A well-written charter enabled a town to grow or prosper. A poorly-written one crippled its growth, especially if it denied the town the ability to protect travelers from bandits and tolls, or limited its access to key taxes or fees.

Generally English and French charters included:

- ☛ Terms establishing the form of the town government, including the method of choosing its executive and legislative councils.
- ☛ Legal protection for urban merchants against feudal justice.
- ☛ An urban justice system that abolished trial by duel and by ordeal. Townspeople often also had the right to defend themselves against criminal charges by oath, often with the aid of compurgators (oath helpers).
- ☛ Urban real estate being held as "free" land without feudal duties in return for rent paid in money, not feudal labor.
- ☛ Exemption of urban merchants from various customary feudal duties and fees.
- ☛ Protection of property from arbitrary seizures. A debt collection system was created.
- ☛ Granting the right to collect tolls, fees, and taxes to the urban government.
- ☛ The peace of the market (*paix du marché*), which protected travelers to and from the town's market from arrest or violence. In England, the peace was often symbolized by a market cross raised in the market place.

Charters could be revoked or limited by the granting landholder or his successors, especially if the town failed to meet its obligations or rebelled against the grantor of its rights. If the landholder died or was conquered by another noble, his or her successor could also change the charter's terms or demand a fee for renewing the charter.

INDEPENDENT CITY-STATES

A few towns became independent landholders in their own right. Most of these were found in northern Italy where, for a combination of reasons, powerful, wealthy towns were able to escape the control of local landholders, while nominally acknowledging duties to distant rulers like the Holy Roman Emperor or the Papacy. Some cities in the Holy Roman Empire like Basel, Cologne, Mainz, Ratisbon, Speyer, Strasbourg, and Worms became free cities (*freie Städte*), with limited duties to the Emperor. (There were also imperial cities, also independent of a local landholder, with slightly different duties to the Emperor.)

Guilds

Guilds were one of the iconic features of medieval towns. They evolved to solve typical commercial problems – guaranteeing a minimum standard for safety and quality of goods sold in the town’s market and those produced for export; creating a collective voice for manufacturers in town government and in negotiations with other towns; providing a system for debt collection and enforcement of contracts, particularly those involving other towns; guaranteeing the good conduct of merchant-members while traveling to other towns; providing some security for members’ widows and orphans; and providing burial services and someone to remember the dead in prayers.

In its most common form, a guild was an organization of manufacturers in a specific trade which protected their interests by controlling manufactur-

altar candles or perform other religious duties. By the 9th or 10th century, “guild” had become associated with merchant and artisan groups, often with fraternal, social, and charitable functions. Whether the social groups evolved into economic ones, or vice-versa, is debated among historians.

A typical town might have dozens of guilds. Padua had 26 guilds in 1277. There were over 40 in 13th century Genoa. Rome, on the other hand, was not a major commercial or manufacturing center and had a mere 14 in the early 15th century. Generally, there was a guild for each major trade in the city. Construction workers like masons, carpenters, and stonecutters each had a guild. Non-construction wood-workers often had a separate guild. Food producers like bakers, brewers, and butchers had their



ing standards and the ability to sell that good within the town. However, “guild” was a broad term. It could also refer to many kinds of associations and clubs whose members held communal feasts, religious ceremonies, and had oaths between the members.

The word “guild” or “gild” is old. In the 5th century, it referred to Frankish soldiers’ sacrificial feasts. In Carolingian France, gilds could be drinking groups, mutual aid groups, and/or organizations to maintain

own guilds. Textile manufacturers had at least one guild. Merchants might have a guild; specialists in spices yet another. Lawyers and notaries might belong to one guild; doctors and apothecaries to another. In some areas, guild membership was exclusive; in others, a merchant or vendor might be a member of multiple guilds.

Where a town had multiple guilds, they tended to compete for prestige and political power. Competition

HOLDING GUILD OFFICE

Guilds appointed various officials to handle administrative and inspection duties. This was not always a popular task. Guild charters frequently allowed the guild to fine members who avoided appointment to guild offices. This suggests that members regarded the task as an onerous distraction from their own businesses and families. Opportunities for patronage and social advancement were limited.

An officer's role included administrative and ceremonial duties. It is unclear whether office holders received any pay for their work, or were compensated for their expenses, or whether officers were expected to pay any expenses and costs from their own pocket. Guilds audited their own records, although office holders, unlike civic officials, were rarely required to have sureties to guarantee their good conduct.

was expressed in numerous ways. In Chartres and other cities, guilds donated stained glass windows to the cathedral, competing over the best artisans for the project. Guilds also used public feasts and festivals as a way to demonstrate their wealth and importance. The most direct demonstration was the guild's participation in parades and processions – each guild member dressed in his finest livery, showing the guild's wealth and numbers. Some guilds also sponsored musicians and actors for public performances at feasts and festivals.

Each guild was a local monopoly. It controlled the conditions for becoming an apprentice in a trade, the duration of apprenticeship, and the conditions for becoming a master. Guilds regulated work hours and conditions to ensure quality and to reduce competition among their members. As guilds assumed more regulatory duties, they developed statutes and bureaucracies of officials and internal courts. They sponsored group religious activities and provided benefits for injured members, widows, and orphans. Some held funeral Masses for their members. In Florence, guilds even supplied the city's fire brigade.

Guilds helped their members minimize their transaction costs. They helped members find producers and customers by limiting competition with-

in the town and negotiating trade deals with other towns. They reduced negotiation costs by standardizing weights and measures, and guaranteeing minimum standards for members' wares. They also helped reduce enforcement costs by sponsoring urban courts and helping members collect debts from foreign customers and suppliers.

Guilds were also mutual protection societies. They stood together to protect individual members from extortion, violence, and unfair competition. They routinely sent representatives to landholders demanding satisfaction for members robbed in the landholder's domain, and to other towns demanding satisfaction for cheated members. They imposed trade embargoes on those who wronged their members.

Guilds tried to control labor costs. Generally, conservative leaders discouraged innovations that might give some guild members unfair advantage over others. They also tried to increase revenues by increasing the quality of the town's goods, and thus the price they could demand.

THE MEDIEVAL BUSINESS CYCLE

Towns, by their nature, were trade centers. Often, a new town had few industries. As they became successful, they attracted more workers, who drove up the cost of living, rents, food prices, and thereby wages. This led to social unrest. Merchants responded by moving their trade, when possible, to smaller towns, where wage costs were lower and there was less unrest. Of course, the new town would quickly itself fall victim to the same cycle of increased immigration and inflation. Moreover, the old town risked a decrease in population, stagnation of its industries, and a declining standard of living. Left to itself, this problem sometimes resulted in lower wages, making the town again attractive to merchants and artisans.

WORK DAYS AND WORK WEEKS

The average work week was Monday through Saturday, sunrise to sunset, with the possibility of leaving work early on Saturday night. Workers did not work on the 40 to 50 Christian holy days scattered through the year. Many jobs were seasonal. Agricultural trades were based around the annual cycle from sowing grain to harvest. Textile trades were based around sheep sheering and transhumance (the annual migration of flocks to high-altitude pas-

EXAMPLES OF GUILDS

Town	Year	Guilds
Bologna	14-15th century	Major: <i>Notai</i> (lawyers), <i>Cambiatori</i> (bankers), <i>Drappieri</i> (cloth merchants), & <i>Arte Serica</i> (silk makers). Unknown number of minor guilds.
Dublin	15th century	Bakers, Butchers, Carpenters, Glovers & Skinners, Shoemakers, Smiths, Tanners, Weavers
Exeter	Mid-15th century	Major: Tailors; Weavers, Tuckers (fullers) and Shearmen Minor: Bakers, Cordwainers, Skinners, Smiths
Florence	15th century	Major: <i>Arte dei Giudici e notai</i> (judges and lawyers), <i>Arte della Lana</i> (wool), <i>Arte di Por Santa Maria</i> (silk), <i>Arte di Calimala</i> (cloth trade), <i>Arte del Cambio</i> (bankers), <i>Arte dei medici, speciali e merciai</i> (doctors, apothecaries, & shopkeepers), <i>Arte dei vaccai e pellicciai</i> (animal skins and furs) Minor (<i>Arti Medie</i>): fourteen including butchers, shoemakers, smiths, stone-masons, & second-hand dealers
Imola	13th century	Judges, Notaries, & Doctors; Butchers; Peasants; Shoemakers; Masons & Carpenters; Hemp Dressers; Merchants; Skinworkers; Smiths & Artisans
London	1351	Butchers, Cordwainers, Drapers, Fishmongers, Goldsmiths, Grocers, Ironmongers, Mercers, Pepperers, Saddlers, Skinners, Tailors, Vintners, Woolmongers
London	1500	Armorers, Barbers, Brewers, Butchers, Carpenters, Cooks, Cordwainers, Drapers, Dyers, Fishmongers, Fullers, Goldsmiths, Grocers, Haberdashers, Ironmongers, Leathersellers, Mercers, Musicians, Parish Clerks, Pewterers, Saddlers, Skinners, Tallow chandlers, Vintners, Wax chandlers, Woolmongers
Paris	14th century	Water Merchants, Bakers, Butchers, Criers, Goldsmiths & Jewelers
Pisa	12th century	Major: order of merchants (<i>ordo mercatorum</i>); order of the sea (<i>ordo maris</i>) Minor: tanners; iron workers; butchers; furriers
Pisa	13th century	Wool-worker's guild becomes major guild. Guilds of vintners, shoemakers, & notaries recognized as minor guilds.
Pistoia	15th century	Judges & Notaries; Dealers in Spices & Money Changers; Merchants, Cloth Workers & Porters; Butchers, Leather Workers & Furriers; Iron Workers & Merchants; Stone Masons & Wood Workers; Shoemakers, Painters & Barbers; Vintners, Innkeepers & Food Vendors
Rome	13th century	13 Major including <i>mercatores pannorum</i> (cloth merchants) and <i>bobacterii</i> (agricultural guild). The mercatores were subdivided into 5 lesser guilds including one for wool merchants.
Rostock	Mid-15th century	Major: Bakers, Barbers, Bridlemakers, Butchers, Carpenters, Coopers, Fishermen, Furriers, Haberdashers, Hoopers, Linen Weavers, Masons, Pewterers, Porters, Retailers, Shoemakers, Smiths, Tailors, Tanners, Wool Weavers
Venice	Mid-14th century	52 guilds including: Apothecaries, Bakers, Barbers, Bowyers, Carpenters (house), Carpenters (ship), Cappers, Caulkers, Cobblers, Corn (grain) Chandlers, Comb (textile) Makers, Doublet-makers, Dyers, Fishmongers, Furriers, Glassmakers, Goldsmiths, Hatters, Kilnmen (brick makers), Linen & Fustian Makers, Mercers, Oarmakers, Oil Measurers, Oil Sellers, Painters, Physicians, Ropemakers, Sand Suppliers (for the city's wells), Sawyers, Second-hand Clothing Sellers, Silk Throwers, Skeiners, Spindle Makers, Smiths (ship), Stonemasons, Tailors, Wallers
York	1415	At least 57 guilds including: Bakers, Barbers, Bowers, Butchers, Cordwainers, Drapers, Fishmongers, Glovers, Goldsmiths, Hostlers, Ironmongers, Masons, Mercers, Plasterers, Parchment-makers, Potters, Saddle-makers, Sausagemakers, Shipwrights, Skinners, Smiths, Spicers, Taverners, Tailors, Weavers, Woolpackers

TYPICAL SALARIES AND WAGES

Office	Date	Location	Amount
Alderman	1400-1450	London	None, but office carried some minor privileges
Ambassador	1460	Venice	Not more than 1/2 ducat per day
Architect	1253	Meaux	10 l./yr. & 10 s./day when on site
Architect	1261	St-Gilles	2 s. tournois/d, 100 s. on Whitsunday for clothing, meals
Bailiff	1388	London	13 s./4 d./yr.
Bailiff	1444	London	23 s./4 d./yr. and clothing worth 5 s.
Beadle	14-15 th C	Winchester	1 farthing/day
Blacksmith	1490	Florence	16 lire/mo. & expenses
Branch manager (for merchant house)	1363	Florence	150 florins/yr.
Builder, master	1428	Venice	36 soldi/day
Captain, papal guard	1462	Rome	500 florin
Carpenter, master	1426	Venice	25-28 soldi/day
Carpenter, skilled	1426	Venice	20 soldi/day
Carpenter, apprentice	1426	Venice	6-7 soldi/day
Carpenter	1444	London	3 d./day, 4 d./day if not fed
Carter	1388	London	10 s./yr.
Carter	1444	London	20 s./yr. and clothing worth 4 s.
Castellan	1382	Chios	400-500 Genose pounds
Chamberlain	1419	London	10 pounds
Chamberlain's serjeants	1419	London	2 pounds
Common pleader	1419	London	10 pounds
Executioner	1323	Carcassone	20 s. per head
Foreman	1489	Florence	60 fl./year
Foreman	1490	Florence	20-22 soldi
Gaolkeeper	1130	London	5 d./day
Laborer	1294-5	Autun	7 d.
Laborer	1324	Florence	3-3 ½ soldi
Laborer	1344	Florence	4-4 ½ soldi
Laborer	1415	Florence	6-8 ½ soldi
Laborer	1444	London	2 d./day, 3 d./day if not fed
Laborer	1477	Florence	8-11 soldi
Laborer	1489	Florence	8-10 soldi
Laborer	1497	Florence	10 soldi
Laborer	1499	Florence	9-10 soldi
Mason	1294-5	Autun	20-22 d.
Mason	1352	Florence	17-20 soldi

Society

Thus far, *Town* has discussed urban life through its structures. In this chapter, the focus turns to the roles and rituals of the townspeople themselves. Townspeople were divided in many ways: by guild, by parish, by neighborhood. At the most basic level, however, a town's inhabitants were divided by their legal rights as foreigner, resident, or citizen.

Foreigners were those who visited the town from outside, regardless of whether they traveled for a day from a nearby farming village or for a month from a distant foreign land. Foreigners had very few legal rights except those they might have as a landholder's vassal, as a member of the clergy, or as a visitor from a town that had negotiated a trade treaty with the host town. Urban residents suspected foreigners of all manner of misdeeds, frauds, and crimes; it was hard to trust someone who had no references or local contacts.

Most townspeople were mere residents. Residency had its privileges, including the ability to transform a serf into a free person. A serf was a farmer with limited rights: he or she was effectively a landholder's property and was required to work for the landholder, for free, for a number of days each year. Serfs were not slaves; they could not be sold to another landholder unless the underlying land was also transferred, and they had other customary rights. A serf could buy his or her freedom or go to a town. Under English law, a serf's unchallenged residence in a town for a year-and-a-day precluded the serf's former landholder from claiming him or her. Similar customs applied in France and the Holy Roman Empire. In order to invoke this privilege, the serf needed to register his

residence with town authorities. If the serf came from a neighboring landholder, the town might refuse to register him, and report his presence under agreements between the town and its neighbors.

Citizenship entailed more privileges and rights. The most important right was the ability to trade in the market without paying taxes or tolls imposed on non-

citizens. It was also a prerequisite for holding most municipal and many guild offices. One could become a citizen by being born to citizens, by purchasing the right, or by receiving it as part of becoming a master of a prominent guild. Prospective citizens usually had to be sponsored by existing citizens, to reside in the town for at least a year, and to own a minimum amount of property. Milan required five years continuous residence, plus ownership of 500 florins worth of fixed goods for a new citizen. Siena demanded a fee, and that the new citizen build or own a house within the town worth at least 100 livre. Once gained, citizenship could be lost if the townspeople were convicted of various serious crimes.

In an age before identity documents, townspeople recognized each other's status by clothing, language, and behavior. Urban life was surprisingly intimate. Townspeople frequently crossed paths on the streets, in churches and shops, in the market, or at public wells. They knew each other by name, reputation, guild, and family. Births, marriages, and deaths were neighborhood events. Strangers and new immigrants stood out, a subject of gossip and scrutiny.

It was difficult for a townspeople to escape their neighbors' eyes and ears. Streets were narrow. Residences abutted each other. Windows were left



In 1198, Pope Innocent III ordered convents to install foundling wheels, revolving stone compartments, which allowed mothers to anonymously donate unwanted infants to the church. Foundlings might be given to other couples for adoption or raised as monks or nuns.

THREATS

By eight o'clock there was such a crowd at the baker's door as one could never have believed without seeing it. Poor creatures! Trying to get bread for their poor husbands away in the fields or for their children dying of hunger at home – neither for their money nor for all their crowding could they get any after that time; then you would hear said wailing and weeping all over Paris, sad lamentations and little children crying "I am dying of hunger!" In the year 1420, you might see all over Paris here ten there twenty or thirty children, boys and girls, dying of hunger and cold on the rubbish heaps.

– Anon. *Journal d'un Bourgeois de Paris* (c. 1420)

Towns thrived on peace and stability. They could not exist without an agricultural surplus to feed their residents, laborers to make goods, and peaceful trade routes to their markets. Unfortunately, peace and stability were rare things in the 11th to 15th centuries. Towns had to react to natural disasters, fires, and conflicts which could cause dramatic changes to their resources and markets.

Disease

Disease and malnutrition were endemic in the Middle Ages, especially in towns. Between the two, the urban death rate generally exceeded its birth rate, leading towns to need a constant influx of new immigrants just to maintain their size. There were a variety of common diseases, which were more-or-less taken as given by the population. Extraordinary diseases or serious outbreaks could cause significant panic and urban disruptions. The problem was compounded by medieval medical theory, which did not understand how germs spread, and offered few successful remedies for illness.

For the most part, town water systems provided some protection against diseases like cholera, dysentery, and typhoid. Medieval doctors did not under-

stand how these diseases occurred, but urban rulers tried to separate drinking water from water used to dispose of human and animal wastes.

Influenza (the common flu), malaria (*ague* in England), measles, smallpox, and typhus were common seasonal diseases. Urban residents lived in close quarters, which allowed influenza, measles, smallpox, and typhus to spread easily. Fortunately, survivors of measles and smallpox thereafter were immune to future outbreaks. Doctors did not understand the link between mosquitoes and malaria, but did understand that marshy air was unhealthy. Unfortunately, towns needed rivers for water and trade, and urban residents needed to leave their windows open for ventilation. Wealthy urban residents tried to avoid such diseases by spending summers on rural lands.

Scurvy was a problem for towns distant from the Mediterranean and trade routes for citrus fruits. During the winter, food that provided vitamin C was scarce, leading to mild scurvy and its muscle pains. Urban residents were also at risk of vitamin A deficiencies when they could not get fresh milk.

Leprosy

Although leprosy is perhaps the least contagious of communicable diseases, it was greatly feared. "Leprosy" covered a variety of disfiguring diseases, any of which could cause the sufferer to be expelled from the community and sent to live apart. He or she could only interact with the rest of the population in very limited ways, and depended greatly on charity.

In 1320, a leper named Guillaume Agasse confessed to a papal inquisition that he and a group of 40 other lepers had met at Toulouse and agreed to poison all the people in their region of France. Agasse was imprisoned for the remainder of his life. As the news of the confession and alleged plot spread, lepers were arrested and executed. Forty-nine were killed in Uzerche. In 1321, the French crown claimed jurisdiction over the lepers. They could be arrested and tortured to determine whether they were involved in the plot. Those who confessed were either imprisoned in leprosaries or executed by burning at the stake. Their property was to be confiscated and sold to benefit the crown. When local authorities objected to the royal claim, the monarchy relented and recognized the rights of local landholders to investigate claims

and confiscate the property of those who confessed. Others lepers were killed by mobs who had heard and believed in the improbable and unlikely plot.

The Black Plague

The Plague, or Black Death, was a critical turning point in urban history. The Plague started in Asia and traveled along various trade routes until it reached Europe in 1347. Within a few years, the disease had spread across all but the most isolated areas in Europe, killing millions. After the first outbreaks, Plague returned periodically. The impact was enormous – between a quarter and two-thirds of Europe’s population died from the Plague in the mid to late 14th century. The deaths had drastic effects on medieval demographics, religion, art, society, and politics.

Urban areas were especially vulnerable to Plague, which could be carried by infected travelers. Many imposed quarantines – 40 days in isolation for any person or place suspected of plague exposure. (The incubation period for Plague is 1 to 6 days, but local governments took no chances.) Arriving ships, and even high-ranking visitors, were routinely quarantined during an outbreak. Towns limited or prohibited public gatherings to limit the disease’s spread. Once Plague reached a town, it was highly infectious, spreading both by air, and by the bite of infected fleas.

The Plague caused massive social disruptions. Every family lost at least some of its members. The survivors had to provide for widows and orphans, transfer the property of the deceased, and find successors to undertake military and commercial obligations. Surprisingly, European society was able to function despite the massive losses. Fiefs, towns, and royal courts continued to function. Buildings, farms, and even whole villages were abandoned, but the survivors concentrated in new locations and rebuilt as the society recovered.

Survivors demanded higher wages for their work, leading to, for example, the English Ordinances of Labourers (1349) and Statute of Labourers (1351), which made it illegal for workers to demand higher wages than those paid before the Plague. (They also made it illegal to give alms to able-bodied beggars). A few workers were fined each year under the statutes in hopes of deterring others from demanding high-

er wages. However, the effort was doomed to failure. The decreased supply of workers, and increased demand for the survivor’s work, inevitably drove prices higher.

Towns found that, with the decline in population and trade, they could not pay their pre-Plague taxes. Many asked for, and received, temporary reductions. Towns also had increased risk of fire from abandoned buildings, which were destroyed if no owner could be found. Town buildings and walls were frequently neglected for a time because the town could not afford the labor to maintain them.

Famine

Towns were obsessively concerned about maintaining adequate supplies of cheap grain. Florence, for example, imported grain from Sicily, North Africa, Greece, and (via Genoa) the Black Sea region. For the most part, town precautions worked. Tales of urban starvation during a famine are far less common than those of rural starvation, even after several successive bad harvests in the same region.

Towns could encourage rural suppliers by offering shelter to their rural neighbors (and their grain stores) during wars and unrest and by cancelling the *gabelle* (import tax). Remittances on taxes were often for a short period (typically 4 to 15 days) to encourage farmers to quickly bring their goods to the urban market.

When those measures failed, however, the result was starvation and sometimes riots. Famine was one of the least common reasons for urban rebellion, and towns were quick to try to restore order with distributions of grain from their reserves. If that failed, however, the government was likely to fall. In 1353, the people of Gaeta rioted following prolonged food shortages, killing twelve merchants. In 1368, four successive governments fell in Siena after a famine, despite the execution of more than 400 “troublemakers” by urban leaders

Rural Uprisings

A rural tax rebellion had similar effects to a famine – the supply of food was interrupted, combined with trade disruptions that could make it hard to bring alternative foods into town. There were sporadic rural uprisings throughout the Middle Ages. For the most part, these were relatively small in scale and

Timeline

410	Rome sacked by Visigoths	1087	St. Paul's in London destroyed by fire
455	Rome sacked by Vandals	1091	Major storm flattens 600 homes and a bridge in London
627	King Dagobert founds the St-Denis fair near Paris	1092	Fire in London
669	Muslims raid Sicily, capture Syracuse	1095	First Crusade begins
741	Fire damages York's cathedral	1096	Jewish communities in Holy Roman Empire attacked by crusaders; bishop of Speyer successfully protects its Jewish community with his militia
763	Fire destroys York	1098	Cistercian order founded
847	Fire in Rome	1102	Fire in Venice
858	Normans burn Chartres, France	1110	Fire in London; medical school founded at Salerno
859	Normans devastate Noyon, France	1112	Uprising in Laon over suppression of commune by crown and bishop; bishop killed, fire damages cathedral, town virtually abandoned; Uprising's leaders arrested and executed in 1114-15; commune granted by crown in 1128
861	Normans devastate Noyon, France and Pisa, Italy	1117	Louis IV of France sieges Amiens with aid of local merchants; Earthquake in Tuscany, Italy
866-67	Vikings capture York	1119	Amiens commune controls city for French monarchy; University of Bologna founded; Templar order founded
885-85	Norman siege Paris over winter	1123	First Lateran Council
896	Earthquake in Rome	1128	Fire in Sens, France
897	Earthquake in Rome	1130	Henry I allows London to choose its own sheriff (Privilege is withdrawn and re-granted in later years)
911	Norman attack on Chartres, France driven back	1131	Fire in Bologna destroys cathedral
925	Norman attack on Noyon, France driven back	1132	Fire in London
938	Large amount of silver, lead, and copper ore discovered at Rammelsberg in the Harz Mountains of Germany	1135	Fire in London
962	Fire damages London	1137	Fire in Amiens, France; Construction begun on St-Denis near Paris (first Gothic cathedral); Fire in York
969	Châlons-sur-Marne, France, captured by king	1138	Vesuvius erupts
982	Fire in London	1140	King Roger II of Sicily enacts first known requirement that doctors be examined and licensed by their peers
994	Vikings attack London	1144	First accusation of Jewish ritual murder of boy made in Norwich
1004	Muslims raid Pisa	1146	Earthquake in Rome; first mention of Paris butcher's guild
1008	Jews in Rouen, France, massacred	1147	Second Crusade begins
1011	Muslims raid Pisa	1159	Fire in Milan destroys one-third of city
1017	Truce of God movement to encourage inter-Christian peace begins	1162	Milan burned by Frederick I Barbarossa
1020	Fire at Chartres	1163	Council of Tours orders confiscation of heretics' goods
1022	King Robert of France orders 13 Cathars burned at Orleans		
1026	Jews in Rouen, France, massacred		
1050	Flood in Ferrara, Italy		
1066	Norman Invasion of England		
1069	Failed commune revolt in Le Mans (one of the 1st in France); revolt in York leads to devastating fire		
1073	Townsppeople of Worms, Germany, expel bishop and welcome Emperor Henry IV into town		
1075	Danes plunder York		
1077	Fire in London		
1084	Robert Guiscard captures Rome from Holy Roman Emperor; Normans sack the city		

Appendix I: Paris

I am in Paris, in that royal city where the abundance of natural gifts not only captivates those who dwell therein, but invites and attracts those who are afar. Just as the moon surpasses the stars in brightness, so this city, the seat of royalty, raises its proud head above all others. It is situated in the midst of a delightful valley surrounded by a crown of hills which adorn it in emulation of Ceres and Bacchus. The Seine, that superb river which comes from the east, here flows level with its banks and with its two branches forms an island which is the head, the heart, and marrow of the entire city. The two suburbs extend to the right and left, the smaller of which would be the envy of many cities. Each of the faubourgs is joined with the island by a bridge: the Grand pont facing the north in the direction of the English Channel, and the Petit pont which looks towards the Loire. The former, large, rich, and bustling with trade is the scene of busy activity; innumerable boats filled with merchandise and riches surround it. The Petit pont belongs to the logicis (students of logic) who cross or walk upon it while debating. In the île, alongside the palace of the kings ... stands the hall of philosophy, where study reigns as sole sovereign, a citadel of light and of immortality. That île is the eternal home of the seven sisters, the liberal arts, it is there also that decrees and laws resound from a trumpet of most noble eloquence; there, finally, bubbles the fountain of religious learning ...

– Guy of Bazoches (c.1180)

Paris is one of the largest and clearest examples of a subject town. It was the home of the French monarchy, and was the largest European town never

to have its own government or charter. By using the chapters of this book as an outline for a discussion of Paris, one sees more clearly the problems of an urban government divided between the monarchy, the bishop, and the university; and of a city used as a revenue source, with a limited voice for the merchants and artisans who generated that revenue.

AGRICULTURE

Paris was built along the Seine river, about 280 miles from the Atlantic. The Seine's current was moderate, providing steady power for water mills and allowing for boat traffic from the English Channel to the east and from Flanders and Burgundy to the north and west. It was also close to the Loire, which provided river access to central France. The Seine provided fresh fish, often sold near the Grand-Pont or Pierre-à-Poissons (a street near Châtlet). Fresh sea-fish caught in the English Channel was shipped by cart overnight to Paris using relays of horses. The provost of Paris prohibited these relays, the *chasse-marée*, from being stopped or hindered on their journey. Brined, salted, and smoked fish was shipped at a more leisurely pace.

There were several islands in the Seine near Paris. The largest, the Île de la Cité, was the original site for Roman Paris. Several smaller islands upriver from the Île were used for cow pastures, and sometimes for judicial duels and executions.

Paris was surrounded by good agricultural land, ensuring a bountiful food supply during most years. It drew its grain primarily from the north and northwest, in an area of about 625 square miles in an arc from Poissy in the west to Meaux in the east. Some



members of the University's faculty. Similarly, the Dominicans became important faculty members at the University starting in the mid-13th century.

COMMERCE

The Right (northern) Bank of the Seine was, and is, the heart of Paris' commerce and manufacturing. In 1292, Paris had over 130 regulated professions – 18 dealing with food and firewood; 5 in building and construction; 22 in metallurgy; 22 in cloth and leather; 36 in clothing and accessories; 10 in house furniture; 3 in medicine; and 15 in banking and other professions. Merchants purchased a license (*métier*) from the crown and were subject to guild and royal inspectors. The watermen's guild was the most politically powerful guild, followed by the butcher's guild from which several *prévôtes* (*provosts*) were drawn.

In the late 14th and early 15th centuries, northern France was frequently a target of rival English and French armies fighting the Hundred Years War. Paris' trades declined both because of the disruptions to trade routes, and due to internal chaos in Paris as the monarchy and its rivals struggled to control the city. The city's weaving industry declined in the 15th century because their uncarded cloth could not compete with carded rivals in Flanders and other nearby towns. Its dyer and silk-making industry declined in the 15th century when the French court, and its courtiers, increasingly spent time in palaces along the Loire instead of in Paris. Many workers moved to towns closer to Loire palaces.

Paris had three major markets, on the *Île*, at Place de Grève, and at Les Halles. Place de Grève was primarily the city's river port and a place where day laborers looked for work. Les Halles, a major produce market, became a covered marketplace starting in 1183.

Paris was the home of the Templars' major bank, the Temple, which made it a major center for European banking until the Order's demise. Philip II Auguste and other monarchs kept the royal treasury at the Temple until Philip IV destroyed the Order in 1254. (The Templars' treasure was then confiscated by the monarchy.) Paris was also home to the two Lendit Fairs in nearby St-Denis, and the Saint-Germain Fair (see p.45).

CRIME PREVENTION

Philip II Auguste organized the city's watch. His administrator, the *prévôt-balli*, controlled a group of guards, often derisively referred to by the public as *ribauds* or *ribauz*. An unimpressed public nicknamed the *prévot de Paris* the *roi de ribauds*. The *prévôt* was assisted by commissaries-*enquêtes* (magistrates), sergeants, and a watch (*le guet*). The *prévôt* also had his own bodyguard (*la douzaine*).

The watch was organized by guilds. Each guild was expected to provide a certain number of personnel for three-week tours of duty. There was also a royal watch. Both watches were commanded by the *chevalier du guet*. The captain could refuse any person he deemed unfit for duty and impose a fine. When this led to abuses under the English control of Paris, an ordinance required the captain to accept any healthy male over 20 years old who was well known in his neighborhood or village.

There was also a militia organized by neighborhoods (*quartiers*). Neighborhoods elected a *Quartenier*, who commanded its militia and portion of the watch. The *Quartenier* was assisted by *dizainiers*, who commanded groups of ten men. *Cinquantiniers* were captains of groups of fifty men.

Crime, by most accounts, was rampant. By the 15th century, Paris was the home of the Beggar King and his band of organized criminals (see p. 58). François Villon, a clerk, wrote a series of poems about one group of Parisian bandits, who he called *Coquillards* (Brothers of the Cockle-Shell), in the jargon of that group. Villon particularly warned the Brothers to be wary of the Archers, presumably the *prévôte's* guards.

During times of particular unrest, the *prévôt* ordered Parisians to keep lit lamps in their front windows at night and to keep vessels of water nearby in case of fire. Chains were set in the streets and bonfires kept at major intersections. Many Parisians ignored the order, barricaded their doors, and kept weapons near their beds.

Criminals were often executed at the Montefaucon gallows. The gallows included sixteen large stone pillars with wooden beams between them. Criminals were hung from chains on the beams, and their bodies left to rot. Fifty to sixty corpses were commonly displayed at once. When a new criminal was hung, the oldest body was thrown into a charnel

Appendix II: Venice

*Rich with gold, but richer still in reputation;
Strong in her wealth yet stronger in her virtue;
Built on Marble, yet more firmly based on civil
concord;
Surrounded by the salt sea, but made safer by her
saltier counsels*

– Petrarch

Venice is an odd example of a medieval town. It was, in many ways, an exception – a city built on islands in a salt-water lagoon; a city wealthier than many monarchs; and an oligarchy which never fell to an invader or local tyrant. Its nature leaves open many questions, such as how its numerous residents were fed and provided with sufficient fresh water. Was its fragmentation into hundreds of small islands a cause for its multiple small institutions instead of a small number of larger ones? How did it avoid much of the factional politics and labor unrest that plagued mainland city-states? Unfortunately, this appendix is limited by its sources and can only outline some of these issues.

AGRICULTURE

Venice is unique – it is a city built on islands entirely surrounded by a salt-water lagoon. At first glance, the site hardly seems promising. The fresh water problem alone (p. 14) was daunting. A lack of a river also meant a lack of water power to power mills; Venetians may have used hand mills to grind their grain into flour, or relied on transporting flour from mainland mills. (Venice did experiment with tidal mills and windmills in the lagoon, but these were not a major source of flour.) The lack of power for fulling mills and limited fresh water, may also partially explain why Venice did not develop a major woolen cloth manufacturing industry.

But the lagoon provided fish and salt for trade and a strong defense against invaders. It was studded with shoals, some shallow enough for wading, others deep enough to allow ships to pass. During war, the channel marking posts were removed, making access by any other than a native difficult. In 1379-80, a Genoese fleet seized Chioggia, a port

at the southern end of the lagoon, which was the closest any medieval invader came to threatening Venice itself.

The location was very favorable for trade. The lagoon was at the mouth of the Adige and Po rivers, which provided trade routes deep into northern Italy. It was near the east alpine passes from Italy to the Holy Roman Empire. It was also at the head of the Adriatic Sea, which allowed Venetian ships to dominate trade along the east coast of Italy and the Dalmatian coast. In fact, Venice regarded the Adriatic as its own. Its Captain of the Gulf (*capitaneus culfi*) led a small group of ships to inspect any vessel in the Adriatic for contraband. Armed vessels (which could describe many merchant ships) could be treated at the Captain's discretion as pirates. During grain shortages, Venice's ships would seize food cargos from any vessel its warships encountered north of the Otranto Strait.

Venice generally obtained its food and fuel from the Italian mainland, along the Dalmatian coast, and from Sicily. In 1224, it created a Grain Office (*offitiales supra granum*) to monitor the city's grain reserves. (The office would later evolve into a government treasury.) There were a few gardens in the town itself and on the lagoon islands. Chioggia, a port on the south end of the lagoon, provided salt. When Venice held significant territory on the mainland (*terrafirma*), it could obtain food and fuel from those colonies, although it also had to defend them from its mainland rivals.

ARCHITECTURE

Venetian architecture is, of course, influenced by its sandy soil. Venice's early buildings were modest two-story wooden structures roofed with straw thatch. Most had two front doors, one facing land, the other a canal. The *campi*, the fields behind the houses, were used as gardens, boat storage, and for keeping animals. They later evolved into market squares. After a series of disastrous fires, particularly one in 1106, brick and stone structures began to replace wooden ones. Stone, however, is heavy. A stone building had to be supported by wooden piles driven into the mud, which made construction more expensive.

nominate 40 electors, each of whom must receive votes of three of the four councilors and not more than one of which could come from a single family. By 1268, the system had become far more complex: In a 10 step system, the Great Council chose a group of electors by lot, who chose another group of electors, which was reduced to a smaller number by lot, which then chose another group of electors, and so on, until the last group nominated the doge for approval by the Assembly. The entire complex system was designed to limit the influence of family factions in the doge's selection.

In 1312, the Great Council created the Council of Ten as a temporary response to a coup attempt. By 1334, it was a permanent body. Members of the Ten were elected for a single year term by the Great Council. Councilors could not be reelected until another year had passed, during which any abuses would be investigated. Two members of the same family could not sit at the same time. The Council had three heads, the Capi dei Diecti, who were sequestered during their month long term. Finally, the Council was, at first, powerless to act without the Doge and his six councilors. It met daily; its members were unpaid, but venality or corruption was punishable by death.

The Ten had significant power to suppress unrest and conspiracies. It could punish anyone for suspicious speech or meetings. It limited who could carry weapons. It regulated drinking and gambling. Its agents watched over inns, taverns, and other places where conspirators might gather. Its members were chosen from the Senate by the Great Council; they had to be over age 40, and had to come from different families.

The balance of power between the Ten, the Forty, and the Doge varied. In 1355, the Ten and the Forty ordered the execution of Doge Marin Falier, who was accused of conspiring against Venice. In 1456, the Ten ordered the deposition of another Doge, which was seen as overstepping its role. Its authority was cut back, for a time.

Like other towns, Venice distinguished between citizens and residents. It was not easy to become a

citizen (*cittadini*) if one was not the legitimate child of a citizen. A foreigner needed to live in Venice or its dominions as a law-abiding taxpayer for 25 years. Citizenship *de extra*, which allowed one full protection outside the Republic, was even harder to obtain, usually it was given for singular skill or merit. Citizenship brought commercial privileges and the right to be treated as a Venetian under law and not as a foreigner. Only citizens could be members of Venice's councils and could hold many public offices. Citizens were given a monopoly of office in the *Scuole Grandi*, the largest, wealthiest, and most prestigious confraternities in the city.

Venice also had to manage several major trade colonies, particularly in the wake of its success in the Fourth Crusade. The details of its colonial administration are beyond the scope of this book. In general, it appointed doges for major colonies who reported back to the Council of Ten and the Doge.

The Council had significant power ... it could punish anyone for suspicious speech or meetings.

GUILDS

Venetian guilds were numerous and relatively weak. The Justices (*Giustizieri*), who were appointed by the Great Council to oversee the guilds, held the statutes of 52 guilds between 1218-1330; Florence had only 21 guilds during that time, Bologna only 13. The three Justices enforced standard weights and measures and decided market disputes. Guild leaders (*gastaldo*) were elected by the guilds, subject to the Justices' approval. Some historians suggest that having the Justices supported Venice's stability by providing a neutral body to resolve guild disputes.

The guilds did not have a direct role in government, although their leaders were often part of Venice's merchant aristocracy. The guilds had a ceremonial role when a new doge was crowned; each guild made a presentation of its finest wares to the new doge.

Merchants and artisans were generally members of both a guild (*arte*) and an associated religious confraternity (*scuole*). The Scuole performed religious and charitable services for its members and their fam-

Appendix III: York

'This here ye mair chamberleyns & gudemen that I fro' noweforthe shall be trustye and true to the Kyng our Sou'eyne lord to this Citie of York And ye same Citie & shall saue and maynteyne to oure saide sou'eyne ye Kyng and his heyres and successors And all the ffrauncheys & fredoms of ye saide Citie maynteyn & upholde at my power & Counyng wt my bodye & my gudes als ofte tyme as yt hathe myster of helpe so helpe me god and holy dome.

'And by this buke Ye shall be obeynyng to ye mair & shirriff of this Citie yt er or shall be for ye tyme beyng & justified after ye lawe accustomez & ordynaunces of yis same Citie. And no man knowe yt usez byyng or sellyng in ony crafte or occupacon as Maistr & not franchises but ye shall make it knowyn to ye mayer Chamberleyns or the Common Clerk for the tyme beyng. Nor ne gudes of Anie Straunger ne of man unfraunchest ye shall not avowe for youre owne by ye whilk the Kyng or the Mayor & Shirraff myght lose ye Tolles customez chargez or ony oyer maner of Dewtez yt longys unto theyme. The counseyle and privatez of this sade Citie ye shall kepe. And all thees poyntez & articlez afore Rehersyd ye shall hold enenst yowe and for nothings lett. But ye shall so do. So helpe you God and Holy dome & be this buke.'

— Oath of Citizenship, York 14th century.

York was the second-largest city in England and a major center for wool trading during most of the middle ages. It provides a good example of a large chartered city with an important archbishopric. It was the administrative capital of England several times in the late 13th and in the 14th centuries; Edward I first moved his court there in 1298, so that it would be closer to him during his campaigns in Scotland. In 1396, Richard II made the city into a county in its own right and allowed it to elect its sheriff.

York was founded by the Romans in 71 CE. They departed in the 5th century, leaving it primarily in the care of its archbishop. By the 8th century, York had become a prosperous trade center. In 866-67, it was captured by Vikings who held it until 1055. In 1068, William I captured it, and built a castle there. The town tried to rebel against William three times over the next

year. In the aftermath of the third attempt, the Normans burned and destroyed many buildings in reprisal, creating a famine in 1070-71.

Over the next three centuries, York became a major center for wool trade between northern England and Flanders. In 1379, two-thirds of English wool was exported through York. When York hosted the royal court, it became an even stronger center for trade, briefly rivaling London. By 1500, York's trade had been surpassed by other towns like Bristol and Norwich, but it remained a significant economic center.

AGRICULTURE

York lies at the junction of the Ouse and Foss rivers in the center of a large plain. The Ouse, a tidal river, was navigable by small ships up to York itself. At the start of the 14th century, it had numerous bakers, brewers, butchers, fishmongers, and other vendors supplying its inhabitants. During the 11th and 12th centuries, shad and graylings disappeared from the Ouse. Both species were sensitive to pollution, suggesting rising levels of unhealthy urban effluent.

York, like Paris, prohibited townspeople from allowing their pigs to wander the streets. A law of 1301 allowed anyone who caught a pig loose in the streets to kill it and have his choice of the meat.

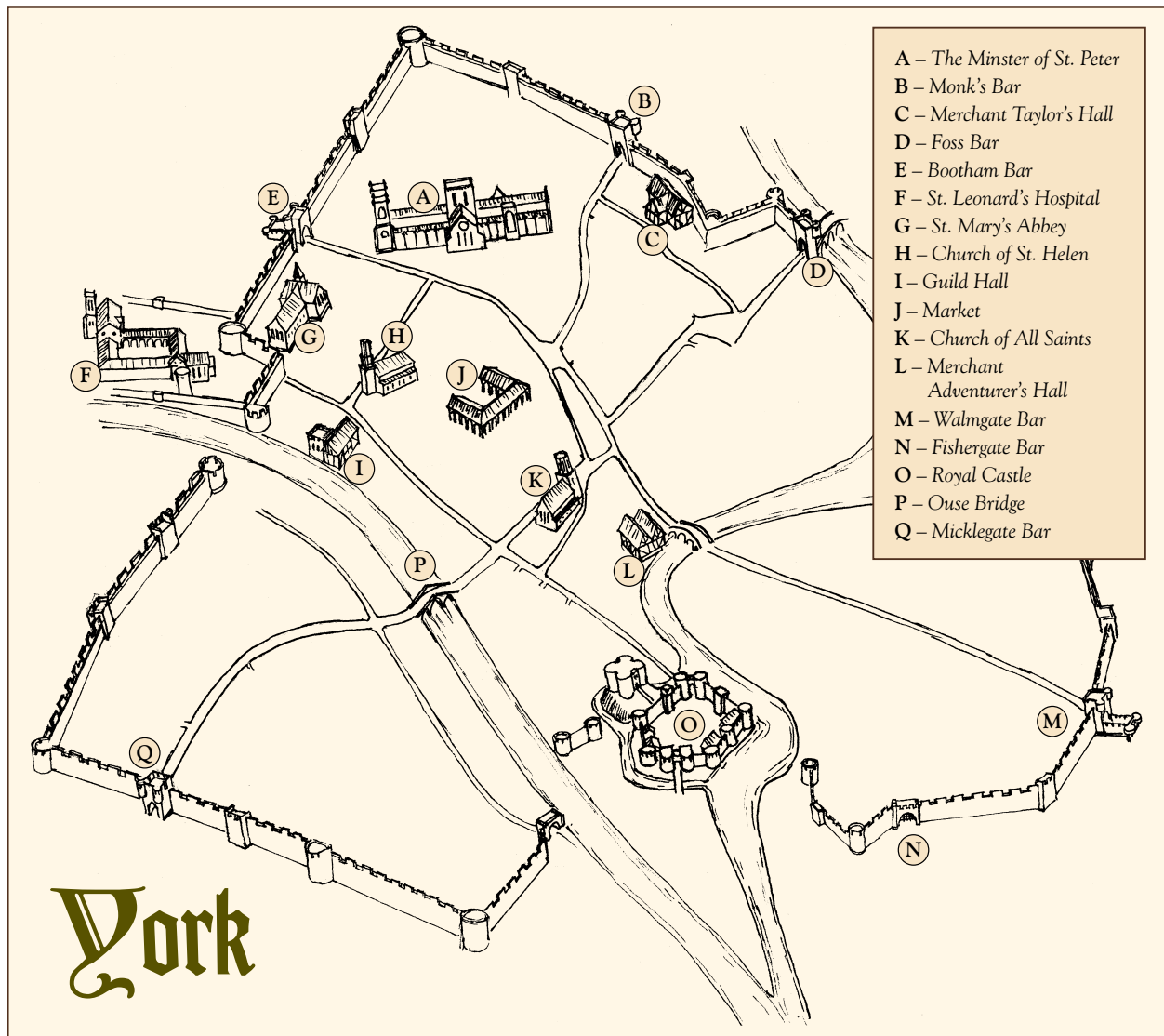
The city consumed a fair amount of meat, but it was illegal to graze cattle within 6 miles of the city center. Instead, merchants in the shambles (the butcher's neighborhood) sold hay to fatten up cattle before slaughter.

York's wealth derived from its location near areas favorable for sheep herding, although sheep were rarely found in the city itself. Instead raw wool came to York to be shipped overseas, or processed into cloth for export.

ARCHITECTURE

Many of York's buildings were made from wood or half-timber construction. A few, such as its cathedral and some prominent churches were made from stone imported from limestone quarries a few miles west of the city.

York was best known for its cathedral, the Minster of St. Peter, which was first built in the mid-7th cen-



ture. The first cathedral was damaged by a fire in 741, rebuilt, and again destroyed by a fire in 1069. It was rebuilt, then damaged by fire in 1127 and repaired. Major reconstruction began in 1220. The resulting church, completed in 1472 was the largest cathedral in England for its time and the second-largest Gothic cathedral by volume in Europe.

The Benedictine abbey of St. Mary's was founded in 1055 as a church dedicated to St. Olave. William I refounded it as St. Mary's in 1088. The church may have been built over an Anglo-Saxon village, Earlsburh. The abbey was rebuilt from 1271-1294. It covered 13 acres and was one of the largest, and wealthiest in England. Within its walled enclosure, the Abbey had full legal rights, subject only to the monarchy and the papacy.

The Church of All Saints, one of over 40 parish churches in York, was said to be the site where St. Cuthbert was consecrated Bishop of Lindisfarne. It was one of the wealthiest parishes in York, and the burial site of several mayors and Lord Mayors.

The Church of St. Helen was built on the site of a Roman temple to Diana, and was the parish church of the stained-glass-window makers who worked on the Minster.

St. Leonard's Hospital, another of York's prominent institutions, was founded in 937 and rebuilt in 1089, and again in the mid-12th century.

York's fortifications were another important part of its architecture. York's first walls were built by the Romans. Later walls were built in the 12-14th centuries, finally enclosing an area of 263 acres. (They did not

(Petercon) provoked ongoing disputes with all of the regions' farmers. In 1371, the Franciscans argued with the city's butchers over disposal of their wastes in the Ouse upstream of the friary. And, of course, there were disputes over the right of the church to grant sanctuary to criminals and debtors. The church of St John of Addle had a large brass ring on its door which someone seeking sanctuary had to grab and hold until allowed into the church.

COMMERCE

York was, for many centuries, the most important trade center after London. It was a major center for the wool trade; its merchants traded their wares in the Baltic and Flanders. In 1326, it was one of nine towns with a wool staple; wool for export could only be bought and sold at a staple town. By royal charter granted by Henry III and confirmed by Edward II in 1312, York's citizens were immune to tolls and stallage fees in England. However, by 1450, York's fortunes had begun to decline, in part due to hostility between England and the Hanse, which made trade more difficult. It also faced more competition from other English ports.

York had two mints. The Archbishop's Mint predated the Conquest. In 1279, Edward I created a royal mint in York's castle. In 1344, the royal mint was allowed to make both gold and silver coins.

Until the mid-15th century, York's fairs were all associated with its churches. The archbishop had a right to hold a Lammas fair from Vespers on the Vigil of St-Peter-ad-Vincula (St. Peter in Chains) (July 31) to the Morrow of the Feast, and had jurisdiction over the city during the fair. The archbishop held a merchant's court (Pie Powder Court) during the Lammas Fair; its jurors were generally merchants using the fair. During a ceremony at the start of the Fair, the city's sheriffs turned their rods of office over to the Archbishop's officers, who became Sheriffs of the Fair. The Clerk of the Ouse Bridge Jail gave the keys to another officer named by the Archbishop for the fair. The Bishop then swore in his jurors and announced the opening of the Pie Powder Court.

In 1449, Henry VI granted York its first municipal fair, to be held for five days starting on Whit Monday. This fair became known as the Whitsun Cattle Fair.

In England, the monarchy exercised significant control over local markets. It appointed a Clerk of the Markets in each major town to collect tolls and stall fees,

ensure that weights and measures were fair, and enforce the Assize of Bread and Beer. York's market clerk was appointed by the town and had to strictly enforce royal standards. York had several permanent markets. Its two major market places were "Thursday Market" and Pavement. *Marke Skyre* was held in Pavement three days a week for the sale of grain and food. Thursday Market was held in that market place two days a week to sell cloth and other goods. There were two markets for fish: one for freshwater fish held at King's Staith at the foot of Ouse Bridge and one for saltwater fish held on Foss Bridge. Poultry was sold on the Ouse Bridge.

THE STAPLE

Under the 1326 Staple Law, wool for export had to be bought and sold only at a "staple" town; of which York was one. In 1353, the law was amended so that wool could only be sold *for export* at a staple town; York was one of fifteen such towns.

Wool for sale had to be weighed and sealed by the mayor of the Staple. Each staple town also had its own court, which resolved disputes about credits, debts, contracts, and even crimes arising from wool transactions. Thus, York had an official registry for merchant debts. A Staple creditor and debtor could enroll a debt for a fee (often 1/2 d. per l. of debt up to 100 l., 1/4 d. per l. for larger debts). The debtor of a registered debt had a very hard time escaping payment for a default. After 1362, even non-merchants could register debts on the official register in York and a few other Staple towns. There was a separate set of registered debts under the Statute Merchant, which required the seal of the debtor, mayor, and city clerk, and cost 1 d. per l. in general, and 1/2 d. per l. at fairs. Creditors were supposed to cancel debts on payment, but often did not do so, leading to disputes over whether a registered debt had been paid.

CRIME PREVENTION

There is not much surviving information about the structure of York's watch or what specific problems it faced with criminals. It is likely that the parishes and wards policed minor infractions. Serious matters would be referred to the royal sheriff. The wards and parishes probably managed disputes over street repairs, encroaching buildings, clogged drainage ditches, and waste disposal.

In England, homicides were investigated by the royal coroner. He was required to view every corpse if

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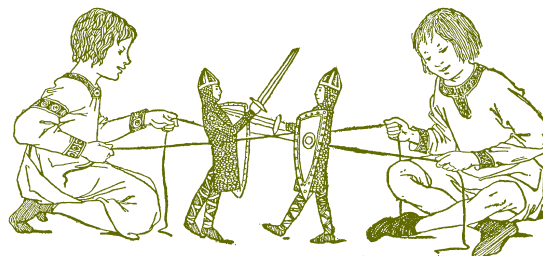
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