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Guilds in early modern Sicily.

Causes and consequences of their weakness

PhD Thesis in Economic History

London School of Economics

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2001

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Abstract

The thesis investigates the character and actions of craft guilds in early modern Sicily. Sicilian craft guilds emerged only in few towns and compared to most other European regions were less numerous relative to the total population; they also never had a firm political role in urban administration.

The thesis investigates the causes and consequences of this weakness in two directions. First, it examines the operation of the guild system through the actions and interests of individual members, focusing in particular on the craftsmen's incentives to participate in guild activities or alternatively 'free ride'. Second, it analyses the institutional and economic framework within which Sicilian guilds emerged and survived for around four centuries, and discusses the consequences of their weakness. The literature on early modern guilds mostly assumes that they were economically conservative and hindered technological change; the question therefore arises whether technological and manufacturing growth was less constrained in early modern Sicily than elsewhere.

The thesis argues that the basic features of the Sicilian guild system were similar to those of craft corporations elsewhere in Europe, and that they were devised primarily to promote skills training through formal apprenticeship rules. It therefore concludes that differences in guild development across societies were largely a function of the institutional context within which guilds were embedded, and in particular of the political support or opposition offered by local and central authorities. In Sicily, the Spanish state was unwilling to support the institutional and legal independence of craft guilds, and local urban elites similarly opposed the rise of strong crafts. Lacking legal backing to enforce membership and apprenticeship rules, Sicilian craft guilds were unable to supply specialised labour in support of a thriving manufacturing base. The lack of a strong craft base was reinforced by Sicily's specialisation in agriculture, and led to the long-term failure of domestic manufactures.

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Currency and measurements

The monetary system was unified by the Angevin dynasty in the thirteenth century and remained unchanged until the reform of the Bourbons in 1818.¹ The basic currency in medieval and early modern Sicily was the gold *onza*, which was however a money of account that was never coined.

1 onza (oz.) = 30 tari

1 tari (t.) = 20 grani

1 grano (gr.) = 6 piccoli or denari

1 scudo = 12 tari; 5 scudi = 1 onza

1 ducato = 10 tari

1 carlino = 10 grani = ½ tari

1 fiorino di Sicilia = 6 tari

All the tables in the text are expressed in tari and tenths of tari for ease of comparison.

The most widespread measure of weight was the *cantaro*, equivalent to 79.35 kg; it was divided in 100 *rotoli*. The *libbra* used for measuring silk was 0.317 kg. Cloth was measured in *canne*; 1 *canna* = 2.06 m. Coral was measured in *palmi*; 1 *palm* = 0.258 m.

The *salma* was the main measure for agricultural products; 1 *salma* = 222-225 kg. The *salma* in eastern Sicily was 20 per cent bigger than in the west; all measures have been converted to the west Sicilian *salma*.

¹ C. Trasselli, *Appunti di metrologia e numismatica siciliana per la scuola di Paleografia dell'Archivio di Stato di Palermo* (Palermo, 1969).

Chronology

- 1392-95 Martin of Montblanc and his son Martino conquer Sicily. Martin becomes king of Catalonia and Aragon; Martino is left in charge of Sicily.
- 3 October 1398 Parliament in Syracuse .
- 25 July 1409 Martino I dies. His father Martin inherits the kingdom of Sicily.
- 31 May 1410 Martin of Montblanc dies without heirs.
- 25 June 1412 Compromise of Caspe: nine representatives of the reigns of Aragon, Valencia and Catalonia elect Ferdinand of Trasmara king of the three Spanish reigns and Sicily.
- 2 April 1416 Ferdinand dies and his son Alfonso V of Aragon inherits his reigns
- 1421 Alfonso travels to Palermo to prepare his expedition to Naples in aid of queen Joanne.
- 1443 Alfonso conquers Naples and recognises the supreme authority of pope Eugenio IV.
- 22 April 1444 The pope authorises the creation of the University of Catania.
- 27 June 1458 Alfonso dies in Naples. His brother John II becomes king of Sicily and his illegitimate son Ferrante inherits Naples.
- 25 February 1460 John II recognises the indivisibility of the kingdom of Sicily and Sardinia and the Aragon crown.
- 19 October 1469 Ferdinand of Aragon marries Isabelle of Castile.
- 1478 The Sicilian parliament refuses new taxes ordered by viceroy Giovanni Cardona.
- 1479 John II dies and Ferdinand II succeeds his father. War with France for the control of Naples. Naples remains within the Spanish crown.
- 6 October 1487 The Tribunal of the Inquisition is introduced to Sicily by Domenico La Pegna.
- 1492 Ferdinand II conquers the reign of Granada and a month later decrees the expulsion of the Jews from his lands.

- 23 January 1516 Ferdinand dies, the last of the Aragonese-Castilian dynasty of Trastámara. His son Charles of Habsburg succeeds him.
- 23 October 1520 Charles of Habsburg is proclaimed emperor in Aachen.
- 20 August 1535 Charles V of Spain lands in Trapani and begins the construction of new city walls throughout Sicily against the Turkish threat.
- 16 January 1556 Charles V abdicates in favour of his son Philip II; he leaves the imperial title to his brother Ferdinand, and dies on 25 September 1558.
- 7 October 1571 The fleet of John of Austria defeats the Turks at Lepanto.
- 4 July 1591 The baronial representatives in the Sicilian parliament refuse to authorise new taxes ('donations') if the king does not respect Sicilian privileges. The viceroy wins the vote with the support of the ecclesiastical and demanial branches.
- 13 September 1598 Philip II dies in Escorial and is succeeded by his son Philip III.
- 31 March 1621 Philip III dies. Philip IV, his son, succeeds him.
- 9 November 1630 An extraordinary Parliament rejects Messina's proposal to split Sicily into two vice-reigns, with two capitals in Palermo and Messina. Messina promises one million escudos to Philip IV, if he accepts.
- 22 June 1638 The Sicilian Parliament imposes a tax the testatico, consisting in one day's income. The tax raises two million escudos requested by Philip IV for the war in Italy.
- 25 May 1647 The revolt of Palermo. After a long famine, viceroy de Los Veles hands the town's insignia to the representatives of the urban guilds, in order to calm the turmoil.
- 15 August 1647 Giuseppe d'Alesi takes control of Palermo's administration and forces the viceroy to leave the capital.
- 1647-1648 Attempts to repress the popular government of Palermo are repelled.
- 9 July 1648 Cardinal Trivulzio at the head of Spanish soldiers occupies the military bastions of Palermo.

- 9 June 1660 Following the peace signed between France and Spain, Maria Theresa daughter of Philip IV, marries Louis XIV of France.
- 17 January 1664 Messina unilaterally impose its ancient monopoly over silk production in eastern Sicily after the Council of the reign refuses to confirm it.
- 17 September 1665 Philip IV dies; his son and successor Charles II is only four years old.

Chapter 1

Introduction

More than two centuries of debate on craft guilds have shown that they were the most widespread organisation of production in early modern Europe both in the most economically advanced and in the most backward societies. Craft guilds were associations of masters, whose authority was recognised by local institutions. They organised groups that were formally represented by two or more members, elected by full assembly, and confirmed by the local urban authorities. The representatives together with a few additional members drafted the guild statutes in the presence of a notary. The statutes had to be approved by the urban councils and the central authorities and then promulgated to the assembled members, and they regulated the activities of the organisation. The guild officials acted as intermediaries between the members and the local and central political authorities, and as guarantors of the statutory regulations. They were therefore vested with the authority to collect fines and fees, to check product quality, to adjudicate disputes, and to impose punishments.

The guild provided technical education through the institutionalisation of apprenticeship, gave access to the skilled labour market, and often assistance to members in need. However, whereas most of the social and welfare functions of guilds were also provided by other organisations like confraternities, the transfer of skills through apprenticeship was an exclusive function of the guild.

The close of the Middle Ages saw the guild movement infiltrating urban administration in many parts of Western Europe, particularly in northern Italy, Germany, and France. Italian towns were among the first places where a guild system emerged and developed. According to Donata Degrassi, the appearance of artisans as autonomous and organised groups by the twelfth century represented a remarkable innovation and a break with the past.¹

Though they presented similar basic characteristics, European guilds developed peculiar features according to the specific economic and institutional context within which they arose. Craft guilds took on features that made them

¹ D. Degrassi, *L' economia artigiana nell' Italia medievale* (Rome, 1996), pp.121-23.

deeply ambiguous and difficult to define. On the one hand, the craft guild seems to have been an association based on voluntary participation, which brought together both employers and employees (masters and apprentices) on the basis of reciprocal assistance. On the other hand, the guild tended to realise a monopsony over the labour force and excluded employees from decision-making. These ambiguities account for the fragmented and contradictory character of interpretations of pre-modern guilds.

The long tradition of guild studies has produced a number of different perspectives and interpretations. Scholars have pursued different approaches, often strongly influenced by the way in which guilds were understood in particular historical and political circumstances. Already during the eighteenth century a debate arose concerning the allegedly restrictive features of guilds, which eventually led to the abolition of corporate groups by national states. Later, nineteenth-century studies debated the role of guilds in the context of the 'workers' problem' (*questione operaia*) and the relation between corporate groups and free markets. The previous judgement of Adam Smith in the *Wealth of Nations* (1774) concerning the negative effects of apprenticeship and corporatism was such a historiographical milestone, that it still retains its aura today. During the Second World War, Nazism and Fascism gave a strong positive connotation to the concept of corporatism and based part of their ideology on it. After 1945, the topic was abandoned, both because of the strong negative interpretation by liberal economists and politicians, and because of the connection with Fascism. A first revival occurred during the 1980s with the development of urban studies, in two directions. First, scholars began to reconstruct pre-modern urban society in the light of social network studies. Second, new approaches to labour history and pre-modern economic performance challenged the formerly static picture of craft corporatism.² The study of guilds is now at the core of some of the most lively debates on early modern history and pre-industrial societies.

The classical economic theory of guilds, which remains the most influential and widespread, suggests that the guilds' main purpose was to control production

² A more detailed overview of the historiographical debate is developed in chapter 2.

and defend members against competition. Artisans formed networks of masters who controlled production, maintained high prices, and bargained with the state for political rents. Production regulations imposed dead-weight costs on manufacturing, while the state supported guild privileges in exchange for military personnel, taxes, and political support.³ Consequently, the guild system prevented the development of competitive markets, slowed down innovation, and produced economic and technical stagnation.⁴

More recently a new approach has emerged, based on a positive approach to these organisations, which are described as the most widespread and successful production organisation in Europe. In a recent article, Epstein outlines a clear model of this new interpretation.⁵ In his view, the main purpose of guilds was to provide transferable skills through apprenticeship. In order to further their purpose, masters bargained with the state, offering military and fiscal contributions to obtain institutional support for their regulations. Statutes could enforce the contractual relation between master and apprentice and therefore ensured the transfer of skills. The unintended consequences of this behaviour were technical innovation, the growth of the manufacturing sector and, therefore, economic growth. This second theory also develops the relationship between political and economic aspects of the guild system differently from the classical view. In as much as guilds emerged to establish and enforce training in skills, their relationship with local authorities depended on the need to transform informal rules into formal legislation so as to enforce the contractual relation between master and apprentice. Political bargaining, in this view, was a means to enforce contracts rather than a source of monopolistic rents.

³ S. Ogilvie, *State Corporatism and Proto-Industry. The Württemberg Black Forest, 1580-1797* (Cambridge, 1997), p.5.

⁴ See J. Mokyr, 'Urbanisation, Technological Progress and Economic History', in H. Giersch ed. *Urban Agglomeration and Economic Growth* (Berlin and New York, 1995), pp.3-22. A fuller presentation of the two main theories on guilds is developed in chapter 7.

⁵ S.R. Epstein, 'Craft Guilds, Apprenticeship and Technological Change in Preindustrial Europe', *Journal of Economic History* 58 (1998): 684-713.

1.1 Topic and context

Traditionally, two main factors have been used to explain the lack of formal craft organisation in Sicily. The first is that the guild system emerged to regulate high quality producers and skilled labour, but since Sicilian demand for luxury goods was mainly satisfied by foreign imports, it lacked one of the main push factors for guild development. The second is that the commercial comparative advantage of the island, namely the cultivation and export of agricultural goods, stifled the development of the manufacturing sector.

A long tradition of studies has argued that the medieval and early modern Sicilian economy was based on the exchange of agricultural products, in particular grain, for imported manufactures, mainly textiles. Sicilian manufactures were, according to this view, too weak to withstand foreign competition, which created an unbalanced and externally dependent structure of exchange, and radically curtailed any chance of autochthonous economic development. International trade is assumed to have played a determining role in creating 'colonial dependence' by the region on other countries during the late Middle Ages, a dependence which persisted throughout the early modern period. However, the theory has been challenged by Epstein, who has shown that imports of international manufactures, mainly textiles to late medieval Sicily could not have supplied more than 5 per cent or less of the population. In fact, imported manufactures were too few to supply the Sicilian population, and too expensive and high quality to respond to the needs of the majority.⁶

Other interpretations pointed at the role of the state as the main factor influencing the Sicilian economy. Bresc has argued that when the emperor Frederick II defeated the Muslims, he imposed the monoculture of grain that caused the loss of Sicilian technical expertise in manufacture.⁷ The literature also claimed that the rapid emergence of a powerful state resulted in a lack of

⁶ See S.R. Epstein, *An Island for Itself. Economic Development and Social Change in Late Medieval Sicily* (Cambridge, 1992), ch.1 for a detailed historiography on this topic.

⁷ H. Bresc, *Un monde méditerranéen. Économie et société en Sicile, 1300-1450*, 2 vols. (Rome, 1986), p.16.

entrepreneurship among the local aristocracy and in the lack of resources, which were drained away by an exhausting fiscal policy.

Against these theories, Epstein has brought to light considerable circumstantial evidence to show the existence of cloth manufacture for local consumption in late medieval Sicily, suggesting that the island did not depend on manufactures imported from abroad. The widespread evidence for linen, cotton, and hemp production and the presence of domestically made coloured cloths in private inventories, suggest a local production of cloths and a dyeing industry that provided textiles for the majority of the population.⁸ Despite this, no guild organisation seems to emerge until the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, and no evidence of other forms of production organisation is found on the island.

The recent historiography on guilds has looked to the rise of the modern state as the main push factor for guild emergence. According to Sheilagh Ogilvie, the expanding modern state had a greater impact on society and the economy than the expansion of the market itself. The state wished to count on the guilds' ability to provide a ready supply of military personnel, to collect capital taxes, and to provide political support. In order to do so, the state enforced guild regulations and granted strong privileges.⁹

Since Sicily became part of the Catalan-Aragonese kingdom by the late fourteenth century political conditions should have been optimal for the development of strong craft guilds. In fact, Sicilian guilds had a very limited development. Political institutions in medieval and early modern Sicily kept local producers under royal control, and until the early fifteenth century they did not even allow the recognition of craft masters' authority, forcing local producers to organise informally. However, political conditions became more favourable under Aragonese domination. From the 1420s onwards, the state's growing need to finance warfare and to ensure political consensus led to an improvement in relations between the king and the towns on the royal demesne, which was

⁸ S.R. Epstein, 'The Textile Industry and the Foreign Cloth Trade in Late Medieval Sicily (1300-1500): A Colonial Relationship?', *Journal of Medieval History* 15 (1989): 141-83.

⁹ Ogilvie, *State Corporatism*, p.5.

reflected in the stronger role assigned to the Sicilian parliament. The king demanded broad consensus for his fiscal policy from the towns and political backing from the local aristocracy. In exchange, the king recognised urban and local autonomies, including urban and guild statutes, and supported attempts by the local aristocracy and patriciate to monopolise the main urban offices, leading to the emergence of a complex urban bureaucracy.

Some guilds received formal recognition, but they remained under city council authority and within a framework that was never particularly favourable to guild membership and guild authority. Elsewhere, in towns under feudal control and in the countryside, craft guilds were not formally recognised. Before being fully confirmed, requests for approval had to go through two vetting procedures based in the town council and in the royal *Tribunale del Regio Patrimonio*, which create a combination of local and central constraints for guild formation and development. However, although masters had very limited authority to organise groups and set regulations and could not count on access to public office to enforce authority over guild membership, guilds, once established, slowly but steadily developed.

Between the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the local aristocracy in western Sicily promoted the founding of a number of new villages in order to extend the land under cultivation. Population in the western area of the island continued to grow, compensating losses in the east. The stabilisation of grain prices and the founding of new villages may have improved the standard of living in the west of Sicily, which in turn increased demand for goods produced by guild masters, particularly in the two largest western cities, Palermo and Trapani. Finally, the permanent establishment of the court in Palermo signalled the last step in a process of resource redistribution from the east to the west of the region.

During the early seventeenth century, when Palermo was competing with Messina for the role of Sicilian capital, the Palermo city council supported craft master requests for new guilds; in Trapani also the council approved numerous guild statutes and made it easier to access the town council probably as a way of making membership more attractive.

Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries guilds developed along lines of craft specialisation. However, the significance of this development should not be overstated; Sicilian manufacture remained generally of poor quality and supplied only the domestic market, suggesting that the skills base of Sicilian craftsmen continued to be too narrow to compete on international markets. Although guilds survived until 1821, when a decree by Ferdinand I abolished all the craft statutes and regulations,¹⁰ the manufacturing sector remained uncompetitive and the high levels of agriculture productivity led Sicily to specialise in the more profitable agricultural export trade.

1.2 Why study Sicilian guilds?

Perhaps paradoxically, the study of Sicilian guilds sheds light on the phenomenon of early modern craft corporatism even though Sicilian guilds were unusually weak. This weakness was displayed in two ways. First, Sicilian guild members were relatively few proportionally to the population, relatively to most northern Italian and other European regions. Second, they never had a clear or strong political role. The reason why so few scholars have studied Sicilian guilds systematically is that they were virtually invisible.

Economists and economic historians alike have rarely explored Sicilian guilds; they have concentrated on the Sicilian countryside because of the island's ancient agricultural vocation. For a long time, the town-country dichotomy, which shaped the character of urban studies of northern Italy, also defined the parameters of Sicilian historiography. Towns were mainly seen as the stage for social, political, and economic conflicts, rather than as autonomous political and economic spaces, with complex dynamics of interaction with the central state. During the 1970s, however, urban studies took a new lease on life, in the context of a renewed interest in the origins of Southern Italian economic backwardness. Towns became privileged points of observation for the main economic and political forces at work in the

¹⁰ *Collezione delle leggi e dei decreti Reali del Regno delle Due Sicilie*, 2 vols. (Naples, 1821), no.132, p.272.

medieval and early modern period, and offered a way of situating Sicilian history firmly in a European context. This approach also reconsidered the relationship between town and countryside in a more integrated manner.

However, Sicilian guilds were still not generally considered worthy of study. This is puzzling, for although guilds in Sicily were far weaker than in most other regions, they were organised in the same way as other European guilds, and the relative weakness of the phenomenon is no reason to exclude it as a subject of study. According to Bloch's criteria of comparison, the different features of a phenomenon can only be revealed by observing it under different conditions. A comparative analysis highlights different aspects of the object of study and completes the picture.¹¹

The present thesis takes up this comparative challenge by examining the operation of the Sicilian craft guilds through the activities and interests of individual members. It focuses in particular on incentives for the craftsmen to participate in guild activities. Thus, the study not only looks at how Sicilian guilds actually worked, but will also address the question of why they did not fully perform the functions that guilds adopted in much of the rest of Europe. At the same time, the existence of guilds should not be taken for granted. The thesis will therefore also address questions concerning the necessary conditions for craft guilds to emerge and develop, questions that are rarely considered in the analysis of the most advanced and strongest guilds. The relative 'failure' of Sicilian guilds thus offers the possibility to investigate which pre-conditions were lacking for their full development, and what the consequences of that organisational weakness were.

The literature on early modern guilds mostly assumes that they were economically conservative and hindered technological change; the question therefore also arises whether technological and manufacturing growth was less constrained in early modern Sicily than elsewhere as a result of the relative weakness of craft guilds. According to the two prevailing theories of guilds, craft guild weakness could have two possible consequences. If guild regulations aimed

¹¹ M. Bloch, *Apologie pour l'histoire ou métier d' historien* (Paris, 1993), p.160; M. Bloch, 'Per una storia comparata delle società europee', in M. Bloch, *Lavoro e tecnica nel medioevo* (Bari, 1975), pp.29-71.

to acquire and enforce monopoly rents, as the classical theory suggests, then, in a context of weak guilds, manufacturing should have been able to develop more freely and competitively. However, if guild regulations tended to protect the contractual relationship between masters and apprentices in order to promote skills transfer, as Epstein argues, the lack of strong guilds would result in a lack of training, and the lack of skills transfer would adversely affect the development of manufacturing industry.

The ability of guilds to further technical training through apprenticeship may have also influenced the development of rural proto-industries. According to Epstein, 'rural putting out was a net consumer rather than producer of technological innovation',¹² meaning that proto-industry depended on the skilled labour trained within craft guilds, since trained masters were the main source of advanced technical knowledge. Qualified masters were in fact employed to organise and supervise pre-industrial enterprises and, as the literature suggests, proto-industry received strong support from urban domestic workshops.¹³ Whereas conversely 'little evidence supports the view that proto-industry provided a significant source of industrial skills at any level', as Ogilvie notes in her study of Württemberg.¹⁴

This implies that where manufacturing skills were widespread because of guild development, putting out and domestic industry were also more likely to emerge and grow. Conversely, where guild regulations could not be enforced, and the transmission and improvement of skills through apprenticeship was therefore unlikely to occur, proto-industrial production was unlikely to develop successfully. The study of weak guilds is thus a key to understanding the development of pre-industrial manufactures more broadly.

¹² Epstein, 'Craft Guilds', p.684.

¹³ See P. Jeannin, 'La proto-industrialisation: développement ou impasse?', *Annales ESC* 35 (1980): 52-65; P. Kriedte, 'Proto-Industrialisation Revisited: Demography, Social Structure and Modern Domestic Industry', *Continuity and Change* 8 (1993): 217-52.

¹⁴ Ogilvie, *State Corporatism*, p.27.

1.3 Hypotheses

The empirical evidence discussed in this thesis suggests that the classical theory provides a less satisfactory explanation than Epstein's interpretation. The research deals with a specific case of under-developed guilds in order to explore the causes and consequences of corporate weakness. The study addresses two levels of analysis. A macro level investigates the main conditions for guild development in medieval and early modern societies, the relations with local and central authorities, and the way in which craft guilds coped with changes in market structure and political institutions over time. A micro level of analysis concerns the internal organisation and purposes of craft guilds, and the means to achieve them.

The argument is based on two main hypotheses. First, guilds in Sicily lacked an indispensable condition, namely political support by the state to further their objectives. Limited political backing of the craftsmen's authority and scarce enforcement of guild regulations by central and local institutions, as well as political interference in management, delayed the emergence of craft guilds. The second hypothesis follows from the first, namely that Sicilian guilds could not enforce their rules for apprenticeship and incentives for membership, and were therefore unable to supply specialised labour in support of a thriving manufacturing base. Late medieval Sicily thus lost the chance to establish a viable high value-added manufacturing sector; the region specialised instead in agriculture, mainly cereal production, as its main comparative advantage.

A causal relationship between guild underdevelopment and industrial failure thus emerges from the analysis. This also confirms the view that the main purpose of craft guilds was training in skills, and that in conditions of limited political support guilds could not achieve their goals. Manufacturing production did not take off because apprenticeship was underdeveloped and the level of skills remained limited. Sicilian industrial production was unable to compete on the international market because the supply of skilled labour remained limited.

The absence of guilds as a major cause for Sicilian manufacturing failure offers an alternative explanation to the most widespread theories on the topic. Scholars have explained the lack of a manufacturing industry in Sicily as a consequence of the development of cereal monoculture and the lack of investments by rentier landowners. In other words, Sicilian backwardness in the manufacturing sector is explained in terms of entrepreneurial failure.

This thesis suggests that industrial failure is linked to other factors. Opposition during the Middle Ages by the crown and the urban elites to the development of craft guilds is seen to have constrained the international competitiveness of the Sicilian manufacturing industry. This strengthened incentives for specialisation in agricultural production and led to the growth of a manufacturing sector producing only for the domestic market, creating an irreversible process of 'path dependency'.¹⁵

1.4 Sources and methodology

In addition to the factors set out previously, a further significant reason for the lack of studies of Sicilian guilds relates to the paucity of primary sources. There are no guild archives in Sicily; contemporary chronicles paid little attention to artisan conditions and guild activities; and notarial records are not much more informative. The lack of sources cannot be explained in terms of the limited survival of written documentation alone, however; it is also a clear sign of the relatively marginal role that guilds played in the society.¹⁶ The scarcity of private acts drafted by the notaries and of public ordinances aimed at further transactions, makes it extremely difficult to follow the day-to-day activities both of individual members and of organisations.

¹⁵ Path dependency describes the fact that it is more likely for an economic structure to persist along a given 'path' than to change course, even if the path taken proves to be sub-optimal, due to the costs of changing direction.

¹⁶ There are cases where the apparent absence of artisans is actually connected to the nature of surviving sources, as in Sweden. In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Sweden, the state categorised the population for the purposes of land tax assessment and many people were described as craftsmen and cottagers, even where they were artisans. See C.J. Gadd, *Självtushåll*

The sources are particularly scarce for the first phase of establishment of guilds in the fifteenth century. By the mid-sixteenth century, and particularly in the seventeenth century, the growing conflicts between members and unregulated competitors led guilds to seek increased protection in written documentation; by the eighteenth century, the written sources become far more systematic.

Complete lists of crafts formally approved in towns exist neither in contemporary chronicles, nor in recent historical studies. City councils did document the order according to which different social groups participated in the main religious processions; but these procession orders included social groups not formally recognised as guilds, and they must therefore be treated with caution. Although the statutes frequently mention the presence of account books, none survived for early modern Sicily. Most are likely to have disappeared through natural causes, but in many cases the small size of a guild would not justify keeping written membership lists and formal records of fee payment.

Guild statutes (*capitula*) and petitions to the crown provide our best source of information about the nature and activities of guilds. Every guild had its own regulations, drafted by a notary and confirmed by the city council and the central *Tribunale del Regio Patrimonio*, and which provide general information about the elections of representatives, entry fees, membership fees, length of apprenticeship, and fines.¹⁷ Nevertheless, statutes remain a problematic source for guild studies. Regulations described what was formally allowed and what was forbidden, rather than what was actually done. Like all historical sources giving only the letter of the law, they are therefore deficient in two ways. They often conceal more than they reveal, and they do not show how guild institutions actually worked, nor how they evolved. They tend to over-represent the extent of the guilds' jurisdiction in society. Guild practices were extremely fluid and changeable, and though the statutes could be renewed, abolished, and revalidated according to momentary conditions, they still do not mirror daily activity. It is not surprising that historians

eller arbetsdelning? Svensk lant- och stadshantverk, ca 1400-1860 (Gothenburg, 1991), cited in G. Crossick (ed.), *The Artisan and the European Town, 1500-1900* (Aldershot, 1997), p.6, n.24.

¹⁷ This thesis does not deal with food producers, apart from the confectioners. In fact in Sicily most of these 'guilds' were regulated directly by the city council and they did not have the same autonomy (statutes, consuls) as craft guilds examined in this study.

of guilds have, in recent years, turned to alternative, historically more sensitive sources.¹⁸

Despite the problematic nature of this kind of material, statutes represent the most important source of information in this study. The thesis examines most known published and unpublished craft guild statutes in Sicily for the period between the late fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, and compares the regulations of different guilds in the same towns and across the island.¹⁹ The aim of this analysis is to understand the main purposes of the guild system and the ways by which the organisation enforced membership and participation.

A distinction between rules that remained unchanged over a long period of time, and frequently modified regulations, emerges from the analysis. The regulations that remained constant in time were the ones disciplining apprenticeship, elections of representatives, social behaviour, and in general all those rules concerning the general organisation of the guild. Other regulations, such as labour and production controls and norms relating to the length of apprenticeship, the masterpiece, and the terms of exclusion from the organisation, were more closely linked to changes in economic or political constraints, and were more flexible over time. The first group of regulations confirms that the major organising features of the guild system aimed to regulate and back the transmission of skills; the group of more flexible rules tended to provide incentives and barriers for participation.

Other sets of documents, such as notarial contracts between master and apprentice, allow an investigation of the gap between rule and actual practice. Notarial records represent among the most important sources for medieval and early modern history, particularly in European countries characterised by the use of Roman law, like Italy and France, where notaries were the only professional figures to enjoy public trust. In these countries, notaries registered all official transactions, both private and public, ranging from wedding contracts to wills, inventories, provisions, commercial transactions, contract of apprenticeship, and

¹⁸ See S. Kaplan, *The Bakers of Paris and the Bread Question, 1700-1775* (Durham and London, 1996), Introduction.

¹⁹ Some of the guild statutes that have been used in this thesis are published in various collections of documents and articles, whilst others are found in the local archives. Full reference about the statutes is reported in the bibliography.

so on. Such a wide competence made the notary a particularly valuable source of information, both for contemporary clients and for modern historians. The notary records thus provide additional support for the main statutory source. However, in Trapani, for example, formal contracts decreased because of the gradual success of guild standards, which were well known by the urban authorities and which intervened in case of dispute.

The use of public documentation, by which guild regulations were approved, help to complete the picture. Local libraries and *archivi comunali* often reserve a section for the town council records. These include collected summaries of the general assemblies, the acts approved by the council, the bans imposed, and pronouncements about citizens' provisions, when provide material for the study of the guilds' political role, and the relation between masters and their local institutions. However, these sources can also be misleading about the importance that guild members had in the political arena. The use of these sources thus remains subsidiary to the reading of the statutes, and has no pretension to completeness.

Most evidence comes from Palermo, which has preserved a good body of documentation, though there are other reasons why the research has mainly focused on this town. As the capital, Palermo tended to present a model followed by guilds in other towns, both in the style of their statutes and in their request for additional privileges. Palermo moreover was the biggest and most lively market in the island, and offered the strongest example of guild success.

By contrast, the eastern coast suffered more natural and man-made disasters, which often irreparably damaged or destroyed the records of its past. It seems likely that for a long time Messina had a similar number of guilds as Palermo, but information about them is almost non-existent, since Messina's archive was taken to Spain after the city's revolt against the Spanish government in 1674. A more complete study of Sicily from a regional perspective still remains hard to realise.

In the last twenty years, a renewed interest in guilds among local social and art historians has also significantly expanded the body of primary and secondary material, through publication of numerous new documents, and through detailed analysis of art objects and luxury products produced by skilled craftsmen. Local

studies have also investigated relations between guild production and unregulated producers on a day-to-day basis, and have provided indirect information about the level of craft skills and changes in the patterns of supply and demand for luxury goods. Social historians have focused on individual participation in guild organisations. These studies represent particularly valuable secondary sources for the study of this topic.

The thesis is divided into two parts and is developed through seven chapters. The first part, consisting of three chapters, includes a general presentation of the guild phenomenon and studies, whilst the second part examines the craft guild system in early modern Sicily.

Chapter 2 introduces the historiographical debate relating to guilds and highlights its complexity and fragmentation. Guild studies address different aspects of the phenomenon: guild formation, sociological factors, political ideology, religious functions and so on, with no clear organising framework. The chapter surveys scholars' attempts to organise what is known about guilds in terms of more homogenous approaches, which tend to classify guilds according to their different functions between the late Middle Ages and the early modern period. A clear distinction between social, political, and economic approaches emerges, though a causal relation between the different aspects of the phenomenon is found missing.

A detailed overview of the economic debate shows that these studies have made serious attempts to understand the consequences of corporatism on society, and its impact on pre-industrial economies. Two opposing interpretations summarise the variety of scholarly voices, distinguishing between those who stress the negative effects of corporatism and those who remain 'sympathetic to the corporate groups'.²⁰ However, the economic debate has also directed attention towards other debates relating to proto-industry, the determinants of technological progress, and Italy's seventeenth-century crisis. The second part of chapter 2 surveys local studies of Sicilian guilds. This section addresses the potential

²⁰ As Ogilvie sarcastically characterises the most recent current of studies (Ogilvie, *State Corporatism*, p.12).

contribution that a study of Sicilian guilds can make to more general theories, and conversely attempts to frame Sicilian events within a European context.

Chapter 3 outlines the economic and political conditions of early modern Sicily and the factors affecting the development of autochthonous craft guilds. Sixteenth and early seventeenth century Sicily had an expanding economy, and the seventeenth century witnessed no major crisis at a time when other European regions were suffering severe downturns. The island possessed a strong comparative advantage in the production and export of agricultural goods, but it lacked an international competitive manufacturing sector (the only exception being the silk industry of Messina). As mentioned previously, the explanations for Sicilian backwardness often focus on economic inefficiency and fiscal pressure by the Spanish state, but the chapter suggests that the lack of development of a strong manufacturing sector relates more to institutional than to economic or fiscal factors.

The second part of the thesis focuses on the economic aspects of Sicilian guilds and shows how guild peculiarities are conditioned by local political and economic constraints. The various factors under analysis are both internal to the organisation and institutional conditions defining individual decision-making (including mutual trust), the costs and benefits of craft arrangements, and institutional constraints on labour markets.

Chapter 4 applies a top-down approach to guild development from their first emergence in the fifteenth century, to the so-called phenomenon of fragmentation common to most European guilds in the seventeenth century, which led to the proliferation of crafts. The analysis of the general features of Sicilian guilds shows them to be analogous to European guilds, but the focus is on the causes and the effects of their weakness. In this chapter a more descriptive approach is used to frame the terminology and the characteristics of these organisations. A survey of the distribution of guilds throughout the island shows the limited impact of the phenomenon on the region.

Chapter 5 adopts a micro-economic perspective. Having established in chapter 4 that guilds in Sicily were organised no differently from other European guilds, chapter 5 analyses their internal structure. It analyses labour relations as

the core of the two main theories of guild formation, the presence of women in these organisations, the fees for first entry and membership and their effects on living standards.

In chapter 6, analysis of fines against craft infractions shows that the crafts were most concerned with enforcing apprenticeship rules, and that they were unable to enforce entry restrictions or control production. The chapter emphasises that guild jurisdiction was strongly affected by the institutional context and that institutional support was vital to the guilds' long term survival.

These three chapters represent the heart of the empirical analysis and the foundation of the final analysis. The empirical data offers a picture of the guild phenomenon in a context where certain general preconditions, which classical studies of guilds have often considered as having a dominant role, are absent. Chapter 7 summarises this evidence and provides an interpretation based on prevailing theories of guild formation. The chapter concludes with a theoretical discussion of how guilds stimulated innovation and specialisation through the transmission of skills.

Chapter 2

The historiographical debate

The historiographical debate on guilds is characterised by fragmentation rather than homogeneity. Corporatism is a historical phenomenon and by definition it is intertwined by a variety of regional, political and institutional conditions sensitive to change through space and time. The multiplicity of factors that affect the study of this phenomenon across societies give rise to a certain ambiguity in its definition. The present chapter attempts to frame the debates in order to offer an interpretation of the most significant approaches to the history of craft guilds, although it has no claim to exhaustiveness or completeness.

In the first section of this chapter studies on the topic are presented in a chronological sequence, even though the two main interpretations (pro and contra craft guilds) developed essentially in parallel. In the sections that follow, the studies are grouped according to specific themes. Rather than offer a comprehensive overview, the aim is to guide the reader through the complexity of the literature, and to distinguish the implications of the different approaches. The number of functions exercised by the guild system was such that virtually all aspects of the master's life were affected by the guild organisation. The present study focuses mainly on the economic functions of the craft guilds, but also draws on social and historical research, in an attempt to narrow the gap between economic and socio-historical approaches.

2.1 From guild abolition to modern studies: two centuries of debate

The interest of social and economic historians in European guilds was already established by the time guilds were abolished in the nineteenth century. From the outset historians took radically opposed positions, and these interpretations have developed in parallel up until the present day. The debate developed on the basis

of two contrasting interpretations: the political economists generally regarded guilds as imposing irrational limits to free enterprise and free trade, and the social historians highlighted the guild's positive social functions.¹

Debate in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century concentrated on the rules that affected artisans' lives within the craft guilds. Scholars enumerated the formal regulations concerning apprentices, journeymen, and masters, and described relations between guilds and the Church, and between guilds and central government. These studies provided the empirical basis for the vexed question of abolition, which drew on the argument developed during the second half of the eighteenth century that guilds promoted monopolies and privileges and hindered the ability to exercise crafts freely by means of compulsory apprenticeship. As will be discussed in greater detail in the following section, guilds were seen as delaying economic progress because they were economically inefficient.

Economists in Italy and in other European countries mainly supported the abolition of corporate groups, although they were divided in their views and explanations of corporatism.² These debates led national governments to abolish guilds and corporate groups in every European country between the second half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century. Political propaganda established the popular view of guilds as pressure groups that caused negative effects on urban economies, and after abolition, and throughout the nineteenth century, historical interest shifted from economic factors to the guilds' effects on worker conditions and on the need for institutional reform.³

¹ A. Black, *Guilds and Civil Society in European Political Thought from the Twelfth Century to the Present* (Cambridge, 1984), p.10; G. Unwin, *The Guilds and Companies of London* (London, 1925), pp.4-5.

² In Italy, it was the members of the so-called 'scuola economico-giuridica' who constituted the stronger opposition to guilds. See M. Berengo, 'Presentazione al lettore italiano', in B. Geremek (ed.) *Salariati e artigiani nella Parigi medievale* (Italian transl. Florence, 1975), pp.3-21. See C. Mozzarelli, *Economia e corporazioni. Il governo degli interessi nella storia d'Italia dal medioevo all'età contemporanea* (Milan, 1988). In the interpretation of the Risorgimento, craft masters represented the first class of people who opposed feudal lordship. Berengo, 'Presentazione', pp.5-6. See G.M. Monti, *Le corporazioni nell'evo antico e nell'alto medioevo* (Bari, 1934), pp.VII-XII and 327-38; F. Carli, 'Nuovi studi sul problema della continuità storica delle corporazioni', *Archivio di studi corporativi* 7 (1936): 327-65; P.S. Leicht, *Corporazioni romane e arti medievali* (Turin, 1937), pp.13-40.

³ G. Scherma, *Delle maestranze in Sicilia. Contributo allo studio della questione operaia* (Palermo, 1896).

At the beginning of the twentieth century and particularly between the two world wars, however, Fascist and Nazi theories rediscovered and glorified the role of the guilds as synonymous with 'urban growth and social insurance', and presented craft guilds as precursors of the state corporatism which they promoted. This produced a backlash after World War II, when the central role of corporatism in Fascist ideology led to sharply declining interest in medieval and early modern guilds.

The recovery of interest in pre-modern guilds is recent, sparked by the work of Michael Sonenscher and Steven Kaplan on eighteenth-century French guilds.⁴ Sonenscher in particular outlined the structure and internal mechanisms of artisan production in new ways that gave due weight to non-monetary transactions and forms of power. The complexity of variables, which Sonenscher considered, located guilds in their broader political, legal and social context and emphasised how the corporations and confraternities of eighteenth-century France offered masters and journeymen the means to further their collective interests.⁵ Attention was focused on non-monetary transactions, which 'endowed the world of urban manufacture with its specific texture, substance and culture'.⁶

The new rash of guild studies that appeared in the 1980s was characterised by sociological and anthropological methods. 'Network analysis' became the keyword for this kind of research, in which individuals are analysed according to their formal and informal relationships, and the attention shifts from the study of groups as such to the analysis of individual interaction within a group. This approach which shed light on factors of social aggregation and group identity, had its roots in Jean-Claude Perrot's work on eighteenth-century Caen.⁷ Perrot

⁴ M. Sonenscher, 'Work and Wages in Paris in the Eighteenth Century', in M. Berg, P. Hudson, and M. Sonenscher *Manufacture in Town and Country Before the Factory* (Cambridge, 1983); M. Sonenscher, *The Hatters of Eighteenth-Century France* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1987); M. Sonenscher, *Work and Wages, Natural Law, Politics and Eighteenth-Century French Trade* (Cambridge, 1989). S. Kaplan, *Provisioning Paris: Merchants and Millers in the Grain and Flour Trade During the Eighteenth Century in France* (Ithaca, 1984); S. Kaplan, 'Les corporations, les "faux ouvriers" et le faubourg Saint-Antoine au XVIIIe siècle'. *Annales ESC* 43 (1988): 353-78; S. Kaplan, *The Bakers of Paris and the Bread Question, 1700-1775* (Durham and London, 1996).

⁵ See Sonenscher, *Hatters*, Introduction.

⁶ Sonenscher, 'Work and Wages', p.148.

⁷ J.-C. Perrot, *Genèse d'une ville moderne. Caen au XVIIIe siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1975), cited in S. Cerutti, *Mestieri e privilegi. Nascita delle corporazioni a Torino secoli XVII-XVIII* (Turin, 1992), p.ix.

suggested that it is possible to understand artisan social classification and stratification through the sources that reported contemporary actors' perspective on their own society. In the same period, Natalie Zemon Davis in a study of sixteenth-century Lyon,⁸ and Edoardo Grendi, in a study of Genoa,⁹ analysed group stratification using variables of age and sex. The aim was to identify a specific taxonomy of these social groups within the urban social context. The use of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century terminology, and categories of sex and age, allowed Grendi to examine social groups from within and in their own terms, and to identify configurations of relationships among groups and individuals. The analysis thereby produced a new physiognomy of groups, which had not been considered before.

The study by Simona Cerutti of the tailors of Turin represents the most complete example of a social approach applied to guild studies. Cerutti's demonstration of how the guild became a political instrument of the cloth and silk-merchants to maintain their influence over the local magistracy developed social, political, and economic arguments simultaneously and holistically.¹⁰ This approach was especially successful for the study of eighteenth-century guilds, when craft guilds were at the peak of their development in most of Europe.

In the 1990s, Italian scholars added to the general debate with a special issue of the journal *Quaderni Storici* devoted to the theme of labour conflicts.¹¹ Conflict was understood to play a crucial role in the establishment of new groups and the creation of new alliances. It was argued that conflicts over the defence of

⁸ N. Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, 1975).

⁹ E. Grendi, 'Ideologia della carità e società indisciplinata: la costruzione del sistema assistenziale genovese (1470-1670)', in G. Politi, M. Rosa, and F. Della Peruta *Timore e carità. I poveri nell'Italia moderna* (Cremona, 1982), pp.59-75.

¹⁰ S. Cerutti, 'Group Strategies and Trade Strategies: The Turin Tailors Guild in the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries', in S. Woolf (ed.) *Domestic Strategies: Work and Family in France and Italy in 1600-1800* (Cambridge, 1991), pp.102-47. More recent studies by S. Cerutti focus on the social identity of the artisans and their individual, corporate and judicial status in Turin.

¹¹ *Quaderni Storici* 80 (1992). Most of the papers in this special issue of the journal responded to the themes outlined in the work of W. Sewell, *Work and Revolution in France* (Cambridge, 1980).

privileges and control of local markets could also shape powerful hierarchies between groups, and that legal conflict was a source of social identity formation.¹²

This perspective was further developed at a meeting held in Rome in September 1997.¹³ Participants stressed how conflicts between guilds could promote solidarity, and how conflict often strengthened the ties between crafts and created co-operation in towns, which functioned as centres of re-distribution and consumption of manufactured goods. Guilds functioned as systems both of production and of distribution, open to technical and organisational innovation, often establishing relationships (both positive and not) with rural proto-industry.

Nevertheless, in many of these studies the exploration of the emergence of craft guilds remains inadequate, for the presence of guilds is taken for granted and the process of corporatisation is analysed *a posteriori*. Moreover, the aim of recent socio-historical studies has been to trace the relationship among individuals within guilds, connecting the rise and fall of the guild system to its function in society. This functionalist approach has, in a sense, taken the need for corporate membership for granted and has failed to question why corporate groups emerged in the first place, and what held them together over long period of time.

In a recent overview of the historiography of guilds, Prak has distinguished between what he calls the 'instrumental' and the 'functional' approach in contemporary studies.¹⁴ The aim is to distinguish between works that explore the origins and economic functions of corporate groups (instrumental approach), and the studies that investigate the role of guilds in relation with other social and economic groups (functionalist approach). However, the distinction seems less clear on the ground, in fact historical studies of guilds have typically adopted a functionalist approach, in which social, political and economic factors are analysed simultaneously and in which the objectives of the guilds are inferred

¹² E. Merlo, 'La lavorazione delle pelli a Milano fra Sei e Settecento. Conflitti, strategie, dinamiche', *Quaderni storici* 80 (1992): 369.

¹³ Published as A. Guenzi, P. Massa, and F. Piola Caselli, eds., *Guilds, Markets and Work Regulations in Italy Sixteenth-Nineteenth Centuries* (Ashgate, 1998).

¹⁴ M. Prak, 'Individual, Corporate and Judicial Status in European Cities (Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Period)', M. Boone and M. Prak (eds.) *Statuts individuels, status corporatifs et status judiciaires dans les villes européennes moyen âges et tempes modernes* (Louven and Apeldoorn, 1996).

from their stated behaviour. Only recently have scholars begun to apply interdisciplinary approaches to investigate the group strategies and individual incentives which lay at the basis of guild formation. Since the 1970s, studies have challenged the dominant image of guilds as groups of independent masters, and have built up a picture of guilds as having a more sophisticated degree of inter-craft coordination. These systems were not static, but were part of a market economy that changed and remoulded itself under evolving circumstances.

In the studies by Anthony Black and Steven Kaplan, which privilege the relationship between guilds and the urban government, a causal link between guilds and political institutions emerge far more strongly. Black considers the emergence of guilds in the Italian Communes and analyses the relation with municipal governments,¹⁵ whereas Kaplan examines the relation between guilds and the central state in France.¹⁶

Black's study of guilds and the idea of 'civil society' represents, as the author says, 'a history of the idea of the corporate organisation of labour'. The author mainly develops a study of the relation between guilds and theories of government and state both in 'everyday ethos and in social philosophy'.¹⁷ In Black's view, guilds and civil society represent a specific feature of western Europe 'because the moral infrastructures of our society can be sought in the perfect synthesis between self-governing labour organisations and civil freedom'.¹⁸ Black introduces the important link between guild structure and urban society, implying a strong correlation between the existence of craft guilds and a city-state type of government.

Political functionalists claimed that 'guilds like other corporations that constituted the social structure, derived not from the unktion of nature but from the action of the state'.¹⁹ According to this perspective, the government played an important role in artisan lives:

¹⁵ Black, *Guilds and Civil Society*.

¹⁶ See most recently Kaplan, *Bakers of Paris*.

¹⁷ Black, *Guilds and Civil Society*, p.xi.

¹⁸ Idem. See also below, section 2.2.2.

¹⁹ Kaplan, *Bakers of Paris*, p.157.

The government wanted the corporations to remain in honest and able hands for the sake of good order and right principle. But its attitude was not wholly disinterested. A healthy corporate system was a precious fiscal resource for the government as well as a credit to society, as the minister of Louis XIV had vividly demonstrated. If the government failed to supervise corporate administration, the guilds might not be in a position to contribute when called upon.²⁰

By the 1980s and 1990s, the debate on guilds had thus moved toward the analysis of the factors supporting the guilds' emergence, and focused on social and political issues that were seen as determining guild functions. The literature of the last two decades seems also to have established a clear division between social, political and economic historians. Social historians have focused mainly on the analysis of individual actions, and have paid little or no attention to the acquisition of privileges and economic benefits. By contrast, economic historians have placed greater emphasis on the rent-seeking behaviour of guilds and on their dialectical relationship with the rising modern state. Most recently, however, a new consensus has begun to emerge around the role of the state. The currently most widely accepted interpretation analyses craft guild survival as a function of the dialectic relationship between the state and the guilds to promote a process of *do ut des*. In this relationship, guilds could provide military personnel and fiscal revenues, and the state confirmed a strong privilege policy, providing economic benefits.²¹ According to this approach any other function that the guild system could exercise was secondary to the relationship between guilds and the rise of the modern state. The relation also supports an economic interpretation that emphasises the opportunistic behaviour of masters as organised rent-seekers, and pushes to the side those other, positive features that recent historical and social studies had brought to light.

²⁰ Ibidem, p.158.

²¹ S. Ogilvie, *State Corporatism and Proto-Industry. The Württemberg Black Forest, 1580-1797* (Cambridge, 1997).

This brief overview shows the diversity and sometimes contradictory character of guild studies. These ambiguities are sometimes present in the work of individual scholars. For example, Mokyr, who believes that guilds were privileged groups of power that guaranteed the permanence of property rights and stifled innovation, has also claimed that craft guilds were dynamic organisations that stimulated manufacture until the fifteenth century.²² Hickson and Thompson claimed that state supported guilds for their ability to extract capital taxes and military personnel, but also argued that guilds reduced asymmetries of information in medieval and early modern markets, which suffered from imperfect and incomplete information, because guild regulations over labour and commodities reduced uncertainties faced by consumers and producers when carrying out an exchange.²³

2.2 Guilds and economic history

Since the end of the nineteenth century, economic historians have tried to answer a variety of related questions to do with the role guilds played in the functioning of the market economy. Did the various means by which guilds sought to secure their members' interests delay or stimulate economic growth? Did guilds hinder or promote the flow of trade? Did guilds attempt to expand or restrict the market for manufactured goods? Did the guilds have any general policies regarding innovation?²⁴

The interpretation of entry-restrictive guilds as, among other things, socially inefficient cartels, was established during the early twentieth century and has

²² J. Mokyr, 'Urbanisation, Technological Progress and Economic Growth', in H. Giersch (ed.) *Urban Agglomeration and Economic Growth* (Berlin and New York, 1995), p.15.

²³ C. Hickson and E.A. Thompson, 'A New Theory of Guilds and Economic Development', *Explorations in Economic History* 28 (1991): 127-68. See also K. Persson, *Pre-Industrial Economic Growth. Social Organisation and Technological Progress in Europe* (Oxford and New York, 1988), p.53. This view follows North's definition of institutions. 'The major role of institutions in a society is to reduce uncertainty by establishing a stable (but not necessarily efficient) structure to human interaction'. (D.C. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (Cambridge, 1990), p.6).

²⁴ S. Thrupp, 'The Gilds', in *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, vol.3, *Economic Organisation and Policies in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1963), pp.230-31.

remained the standard view until the present day.²⁵ According to Mickwitz, the guild acted both as buyer of raw materials and as a seller of manufactured products,²⁶ and enforced quality standards, particularly outside its community where its products were little known. In addition, the guilds raised prices above their competitive levels by restricting entry to the occupation and by limiting production. Mickwitz's arguments were expanded by others.²⁷

Carlo Cipolla and Domenico Sella for example have remarked how the crafts' tight regulatory regime played a significant role in preventing competition in manufacture.²⁸

One of the fundamental aims of all guilds was to regulate and reduce competition among their own members. With regard to the supply of labour, a guild aimed at exercising strict control over the admission of new members and their entry into the labour market. On the other hand, when competition among employers was in question, the corporate body always served to control and strictly regulate competition among its members as far as demand for labour was concerned.²⁹

Hickson and Thompson argue that the guild worked as a political and administrative unit in close relation with the state. Guild masters collected capital tax and imposed apprenticeship for abnormally long periods of time, so as to provide the city with an ever-ready supply of military manpower; in exchange guilds obtained protection for their members from expropriation by opportunistic urban elites.³⁰

²⁵ As in the works of H. Pirenne, *Histoire de Belgique* (Brussels, 1908), vol.2, p.25; G. Mickwitz, *Die Kartellfunktionen der Zünfte und ihre Bedeutung bei der Entstehung des Zunftwesens* (Helsinki, 1936). See also Black, *Guilds and Civil Society*.

²⁶ Mickwitz, *Die Kartellfunktionen*, p.36.

²⁷ H. Kellenbenz, 'The Organisation of Industrial Production', in *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, vol.5, *Economic Organisation of Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1977), p.462.

²⁸ D. Sella, *Crisis and Continuity. The Economy of the Spanish Lombardy in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 1979). The debate on the seventeenth-century crisis is also based on this argument (see section 2.2.2).

²⁹ C.M. Cipolla, *Before the Industrial Revolution. European Society and Economy, 1000-1700* (London, 1981), pp.95-96.

³⁰ Hickson and Thompson, 'New Theory', pp.127-68.

Recently Sheilagh Ogilvie has revived the classical theory concerning corporate groups.³¹ In an empirical study of the weavers of Württemberg, she has stressed the political implications of the guild system and the complex bargaining process with the state, which imposed deadweight costs on production. The permanence of guild regulations and guild control over production and the labour market was supported by their strong political privileges. Without exception,

the major reason practitioners of an economic activity form a guild is to secure advantages for themselves, mainly through exercising monopoly and monopsony powers ... Guilds seek to restrict entry so as to limit competition, reduce output in order to charge higher prices to customers, collude in order to pay lower prices to suppliers and customers, and organise political action in order to widen and enforce these powers. Insofar as they succeed in these aims, guilds secure monopoly profits for themselves, but cause larger losses to others, the net effect being a dead weight cost to the economy as a whole and possible harm to economic growth through reducing output and flexibility. Moreover, monopoly rents create incentives for socio-political competition to gain control of these rents (rent-seeking).³²

Political support in this view allowed guilds to develop a 'legal community', which applied sets of regulations to their members, the craftsmen.³³ Mokyr follows a similar line of argument when he states that guild regulations have aspired to maintain a technical 'status quo' to stifle competition and innovation.³⁴ Mokyr therefore reinforces the classical theory by making explicit the argument of guild conservatism and its opposition to technological innovation, which had an important role in the revisionists' approach. In Mokyr's view, 'before the French Revolution craft guilds held new techniques back, by banning inventions when these could threaten established interests';³⁵ 'the guild masters agreed within the organisation the conventions of the technological status quo. This cut off the flow

³¹ Ogilvie, *State Corporatism*.

³² *Ibidem*, pp.463-64.

³³ *Ibidem*, p.5.

³⁴ Mokyr, 'Urbanisation', p.15.

³⁵ J. Mokyr, *The Lever of Riches. Technological Creativity and Economic Progress* (New York and Oxford, 1990), p.258.

of fresh ideas and the advantage of the exchange of knowledge, which often stimulated technological change'.³⁶

According to Mokyr, guild regulations were concerned with three elements of production, which he calls the “three p’s”: prices, procedures, and participation. Control over these three elements prevented the development of pre-modern technology.

The regulation of price was inimical to technological progress because process innovation by definition reduces costs, and the way through which the inventor makes his profits is by underselling his competitors. Cartels regulating prices may still allow some technological progress because innovators can realise increased profits through lowering costs. To prevent this, procedures stipulated precisely how a product was supposed to be made and such technical codes would of course ossify production methods altogether. Enforcing these procedures, however, was far more difficult than enforcing pre-set prices. Finally, and in the long run perhaps the most effective brake on innovation, was participation by limiting and controlling the number of entrants into crafts, and by enforcing them to spend many years of apprenticeship and journeymanhood, guild members infused them with the conventions of the technological status quo and essentially cut off the flow of fresh ideas and the cross-fertilisation between branches of knowledge that so often is the taproot of technological change.³⁷

Mokyr goes on to claim that the ability to impose regulations limited free practice of a craft, and the defence and protection of members in turn supported conservative behaviour. These two factors negatively affected the process of innovation and economic growth. In sum, pre-modern craft guilds imposed product regulations, aimed to control the labour and product markets, and bargained with the state over economic and political rents. Political privileges were used to guarantee compulsory membership and the endurance of a monopolistic regime.

³⁶ Mokyr, ‘Urbanisation’, p.15.

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

In recent years, however, a new revisionist literature has emerged to challenge traditional views. Persson began by raising 'elementary objections' to the classical interpretation. He noted that the medieval and early modern urban economy was not composed of one but of many guilds that negotiated with each other under the guidance of city authorities. In such negotiations, the outcome cannot be grasped by the cartel metaphor, which implicitly assumes a duality of a cartel and a 'non-cartelised' sector. By contrast, Persson suggested that guilds provided stable incomes and social security in highly unstable markets, in which agents normally held market power.³⁸

In this view, the guild system was interpreted as an intermediary between the interests of consumers, represented by the city authorities, and of producers, organised in guilds. By monitoring prices and quality standards, and negotiating with the city authorities, the guild spread the risk of fluctuations in demand equally among the guildsmen, and protected consumers against price volatility. Persson went on to argue that the guild structure arose in order 'to provide an institutionalisation of the bargaining process' which was necessary with poorly developed economies. Through the guild system, 'collusion was institutionalised into co-operation, based on a balance of rights and obligations more easily manageable for the city authorities'.³⁹

Similarly, Gustaffson analysed craft guilds with reference to their 'ability to reduce uncertainty and their effects of asymmetrically distributed information between producers and consumers in early modern markets'.⁴⁰ The maintenance of quality standards guaranteed the consumer a quality product, while simultaneously stimulating sales. Although Persson's and Gustaffson's approaches seem to be applicable only to small-scale production for the local market, they represent a real challenge to the dominant historiographical orientation.

³⁸ Persson, *Pre-Industrial Economic Growth*, pp.52-53.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p.53.

⁴⁰ B. Gustaffson, 'Introduction', in B. Gustaffson (ed.) *Power and Economic Institutions: Reinterpretations in Economic History* (Aldershot and Brookfield, 1991), p.47.

The previously mentioned studies by Michael Sonenscher of Parisian and French guilds also questioned the actual incidence of the regulatory regime on society, and argued that it was limited in time and highly variable. Following his work, a growing number of studies described pre-industrial societies as more developed and more dynamic than had been previously argued. In a study of Lille and Leiden, Robert Du Plessis and Martha Howell confirmed the incompleteness of the traditional historiographical picture, which presented merchants as the only entrepreneurs and the artisan economy as dependent on merchant initiative. In contrast, they stressed how craft guilds underpinned 'small commodity production' even in the most economically advanced towns, providing a variety of sophisticated goods to consumers.⁴¹ Meanwhile, Mackenney and other scholars showed how complex metropolitan economies like that of Venice extended their industrial base by expanding their guild system throughout the sixteenth century.⁴²

In 1991, Hickson and Thompson objected that whereas cartels must fix minimum prices and maximum quality, pre-industrial guilds and urban regulations were invariably concerned with establishing maximum prices and minimum quality, which actually encouraged competition through improved quality and reduced input costs.⁴³ The costs guilds created were outweighed by the benefits they generated by overcoming imperfections in the capital markets and in quality enforcement.⁴⁴

Most recently, Epstein has reconsidered all the preceding perspectives in a new theoretical framework. He has suggested that craft guilds emerged in the Middle Ages in order to provide transferable skills through apprenticeship, and that they provided the main source of training in manufacturing skills in the pre-

⁴¹ R. Du Plessis and M. Howell, 'Reconsidering the Early Modern Urban Economy: The Case of Leiden and Lille', *Past and Present* 94 (1982): 49-84.

⁴² R. Mackenney, *Tradesmen and Traders: the World of the Guilds in Venice and Europe, c.1250-c.1650* (London and Sydney, 1987), p.80.

⁴³ Hickson and Thompson, 'New Theory', p.128. See also E.E. Hirshler, 'Medieval Economic Competition', *Journal of Economic History* 14 (1954): 52-58.

⁴⁴ Hickson and Thompson, 'New Theory', pp.128-30. However, it has been noted that although guilds actually reduced information asymmetries and promoted quality standards, which improved the marketing of goods, similar results in small markets could be obtained as effectively through informal arrangements and that therefore 'the comparative advantage of guilds in these respects is not immediately apparent'. See S.R. Epstein, 'Craft Guilds, Apprenticeship, and Technological Change in Preindustrial Europe', *Journal of Economic History* 58 (1998): 686-87.

industrial economy.⁴⁵ The basis of this theory locates the main purpose of guilds not in the search for rents, as in the previous theory, but rather in training for skills enhancement.

In his analysis, Epstein differentiates between two aspects of guild behaviour, which are often confused:

the technological spillovers of craft activities, which were largely unintentional, unavoidable, and economically beneficial; and the crafts' oligopolistic controls over output, which were deliberate and had essentially negative effects, but were neither universal, nor permanent, nor easily enforced.⁴⁶

This theoretical model marks a turning point in the historiographical debate by suggesting that we look at a different purpose in guild behaviour, which is not limited to exogenous factors such as competition for the control of the labour market and acquisition of privileges, but focuses instead on the endogenous transmission of skills.

In this model, craft guilds are analysed in terms of the individual incentives to participate in and support group strategies. The relationship between master and apprentice is viewed as a *conditio sine qua non* for the guild's existence and survival for more than a half millennium. As master and apprentice are linked by the need of both parties to invest in skilled labour, Epstein argues that the primary function of the craft association must therefore have been to enforce contractual norms that reduced opportunism by masters and apprentices.⁴⁷ A master had to be sure that after his investment in training, he could rely on a cheap skilled labour force for some years in order to repay his training costs; the apprentice had to be sure that he would be fully and competently trained in a craft. The masters provided training in order to increase the productivity of the workshop; the apprentice could not learn the skills anywhere else. Both needed to protect themselves against opportunistic behaviour by their counterpart, namely the

⁴⁵ Epstein, 'Craft Guilds', p.684.

⁴⁶ Ibidem, p.685.

⁴⁷ Ibidem, p.687.

departure of an apprentice before he had repaid his training costs, or the firing of an apprentice before he had fully learned his trade.⁴⁸ According to this model, craft guilds contributed to technological innovation and stimulated technical diffusion. Consequently, the regions where guilds developed were provided with technological benefits, particularly where central authorities were unwilling to support the crafts' restrictive regulations.⁴⁹ This argument also implies that guilds did not arise naturally or spontaneously, and that their presence cannot be taken for granted. Although the basic structure of the craft system remained unchanged for more than half a millennium, the presence and the long-term success of guilds was linked to local political and economic conditions. Epstein's greatest contribution is the combination of a social theoretical framework and economic theory.

2.2.1 *Guilds and proto-industrialisation*

The aim of this section is not to offer a complete analysis of the debate on proto-industry, but rather to focus on those specific aspects of proto-industry theory related to debates on guilds. According to Mendels, 'industry was pushed out of its urban environment and into the countryside because of restrictions imposed by the guilds on the labour supply – as well as on the freedom to produce and sell in general'.⁵⁰ Kriedte, Medick and Schlumbohm confirmed that 'guilds limited the artisans' as they led control of quality and competition and prevented innovation by being hostile to new techniques and limited access to the market.⁵¹ Finally,

⁴⁸ It should be noted that although apprenticeship contracts could exist without guilds, craft regulations became more necessary as the size of a town's labour market expanded because it was harder for individual masters and apprentices to monitor labour conditions. Therefore guilds provided a central enforcement mechanism.

⁴⁹ See the case study of England in Epstein, 'Craft Guilds', p.698.

⁵⁰ F. Mendels, *Industrialisation and Population Pressure in Eighteenth-Century Flanders* (New York, 1981), p.16; Ogilvie, *State Corporatism*, pp.72-73.

⁵¹ P. Kriedte, H. Medick and J. Schlumbohm, *Industrialisation Before Industrialisation: Rural Industry in the Genesis of Capitalism* (Cambridge, 1981), p.22.

Mokyr has described urban industry before proto-industrialisation as 'stifled by guilds' and replaced by rural production.⁵²

In this view, the increasing penetration of merchant capital into rural production led to a greater dependency of producers on merchants and putters-out. In the putting-out system, the merchants handed over ('put out') the raw materials to rural producers who processed the raw materials in return for a piece rate. Merchants encouraged the production of low and medium quality cloths in response to increasing demand.⁵³ 'The urban crafts, unaccustomed to competition from rural industries, were unable to resist it and collapsed'.⁵⁴

Despite these emphatic statements, however, the causal connection between the emergence of rural industry and the breakdown of the guilds has not been empirically established. Ogilvie states that this perspective is based on the experience of England and the Low Countries in the early nineteenth century, but the Württemberg evidence, which is at the basis of her study, does not support it. As Ogilvie notes, 'the worsted industry of the Württemberg Black Forest (...) arose and survived for more than two centuries in a society characterised by "state corporatism": a symbiotic cooperation between the state and privileged corporate groups'.⁵⁵ In fact proto-industry arose in most European countries at a time when guilds were strong, and proto-industries continued to be influenced by the urban institutions for a very long time.⁵⁶

Thus two opposing views emerge. On the one hand, scholars assumed the existence of strong competition between the two modes of manufacture, guilds versus proto-industry;⁵⁷ on the other hand, recent empirical studies suggest that

⁵² J. Mokyr, 'Growing-Up and the Industrial Revolution in Europe', *Exploration in Economic History* 31 (1976): 374.

⁵³ S.C. Ogilvie and M. Cerman, 'The Theories of Proto-Industrialisation', in S.C. Ogilvie and M. Cerman (eds.) *European Proto-Industrialisation* (Cambridge, 1996), p.4.

⁵⁴ Kriedte, Medick, and Schlumbohm, *Industrialisation*, p.7.

⁵⁵ Ogilvie, *State Corporatism*, p.398.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p.413. See also the urban character of the Scottish proto-industry in I.D. Whyte, 'Proto-Industrialisation in Scotland', in P. Hudson (ed.) *Regions and Industries: A Perspective of the Industrial Revolution in Britain* (Cambridge, 1989), p.234.

⁵⁷ P. Malanima, *La decadenza di un'economia cittadina. L'industria di Firenze nei secoli XVI e XVIII* (Bologna, 1982).

craft guild and proto-industrial production interacted positively with each other in the pre-industrial market economy.⁵⁸

The latter approach suggests that artisans and masters could become entrepreneurs by employing other masters and competing with merchants or acceding to mercantile status.⁵⁹ Even Ogilvie notes that ‘guild honour mattered to rural masters ... and guild account-books record rural masters paying mastership fees, registering apprentices, paying guild dues, attending guild gatherings and participating in guild lobbying’.⁶⁰ Recent debates relating to the rise of the modern factory and proto-industrialisation also claim that both systems prevailed upon craft-based production because guilds were technologically more dynamic and enjoyed greater economies of scale.

Epstein suggests, by contrast, that craft-based industry was more likely to have had greater technological dynamism thanks to the presence of institutionalised apprenticeship. ‘For centuries, alternative arrangements were out-competed, restricted to low-skilled production manufactures like protoindustry, or forced to inhabit institutional niches like centralised manufactories’.⁶¹ It is generally accepted that rural manufacture was technologically inert;⁶² indeed it often recruited specialised masters trained in the towns, indicating that rural workers in the putting-out system were consumers of technological innovation, rather than producers and providers of skills.⁶³

The two theories about guilds and proto-industry make competing verifiable predictions. If guilds were the enemies of proto-industrialisation, the weak development of guilds in early modern Sicily should have provided a precondition for a vibrant proto-industrial base. If, by contrast, proto-industry was structurally

⁵⁸ R.C. Davies, *Shipbuilders of the Venetian Arsenal: Workers and Workplace in the Pre-Industrial City* (Baltimore, 1991).

⁵⁹ See M. Della Valentina, ‘Da artigiani a mercanti: carriere e conflitti nell’arte della seta a Venezia fra 1600 e 1700’, paper presented at *Corporazioni e gruppi professionali nell’Italia moderna*, Rome 26-27 September 1997 (Rome, 1997).

⁶⁰ Ogilvie, *State Corporatism*, p.76.

⁶¹ Epstein, ‘Craft Guilds’, p.706.

⁶² ‘Little evidence supports the view that proto-industry provided a significant source of industrial skills at any level’. Ogilvie, *State Corporatism*, p.27.

⁶³ Epstein, ‘Craft Guilds’, p.684.

dependent on strong craft production, we would expect to find Sicilian proto-industry just as limited as its guilds.

2.2.2 State and guilds in the 'seventeenth-century crisis': the Italian case

The theory of a general economic and political crisis in the seventeenth century has been accepted in European historiography since the famous 1960s debate in the journal *Past and Present*.⁶⁴ The debate was cast at two levels of analysis: one concerned the organisation of the modern nation state as guarantor of corporate privileges, and the other concerned the emergence of the capitalist mode of production, which is not the object of this discussion.

The classical literature on early modern guilds has emphasised the privileged position they acquired due to the support of the emerging nation-states. Scholars claimed that only the growth of a central state power could support the acquisition of privileges by corporate groups. Support for corporate and privileged groups guaranteed the growing political and economic power of the European national state.⁶⁵ An emerging central state backed the monopoly privileges of corporate groups, which increased their control over the production system and promoted the technological status quo. Ogilvie's statement in particular is very clear and explains the connection between the emergence of the state and support for corporate groups.

Most of the states of early modern Europe grew much faster than the economies that sustained them, creating a mutual military menace so serious that they were willing to issue almost any institutional privilege to corporate groups, in order to obtain the resources and the cooperation needed for survival. The resulting military entanglements and ruinous indebtedness kept most European states in thrall to these groups and institutions until the late eighteenth century, if not beyond.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ T.H. Aston (ed.) *Crisis in Europe, 1560-1660* (London, 1965).

⁶⁵ Ogilvie, *State Corporatism*, pp.442-43. See also F. Chabod, *Lo stato e la vita religiosa a Milano nell' epoca di Carlo V* (Turin 1971), pp.143-46.

⁶⁶ Ogilvie, *State Corporatism*, p.475.

Further, according to the classical theory, strong corporate groups were responsible for the decline of some European economies such as that of Italy. Hobsbawm has suggested a strong correlation between the expansion of the Spanish Empire in early modern Europe and economic decline, which was most noticeable in regions controlled by Spain like Italy and Castile.⁶⁷ Carlo Maria Cipolla⁶⁸ and Walt Rostow⁶⁹ also viewed the Italian case as paradigmatic, and they were followed by numerous studies that explained the decline in terms of the negative impact of Spanish domination on Italian territories.

Writing about Italian decline in the seventeenth century, Cipolla stated that

the main reason behind the ousting of Italian textiles on the international market... [despite the often superior quality of Italian products] was always and fundamentally the same: British, French, and Dutch products were sold at lower prices. ... Italian industry, which had its hands tied by the complicated regulations of the old town guilds, persisted in the production by traditional methods of articles excellent in quality and out of date in fashion.⁷⁰

He concluded that the excessive costs of Italian production were themselves due to three main factors. First, 'the excessive powers of the obsolete guilds and of the old corporate legislation [which] compelled Italian industry to adhere to antiquated and out-of-date methods in business and production';⁷¹ second, taxation which in Italy was too high and poorly designed; finally, the cost of labour which in Italy was greater than in competing countries. Fiscal pressure led to state support for corporate groups, which in turn imposed high quality standards and high labour costs. The ability of industrially and more developed countries, such as England and Holland, to produce lighter and more colourful

⁶⁷ E.F. Hobsbawm, 'The Seventeenth Century in the Development of Capitalism', *Science and Society* 24 (1960): 97-112.

⁶⁸ C. M. Cipolla, 'The Decline of Italy', *Economic History Review* 2nd ser., 5 (1952): 180-88.

⁶⁹ W. Rostow, *The Process of Economic Growth* (Oxford, 1953).

⁷⁰ Cipolla, 'Decline of Italy', p.182.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, pp.184-85.

cloths at lower costs pushed Italian production out of European markets. This view has persisted to the present as the principal interpretation of the seventeenth-century Italian manufacturing crisis.

Yet again, however, the conclusions about a stifling central state supporting corporate groups, and their negative impact on urban societies, have been recently challenged. Sella has argued that the seventeenth-century crisis in Lombardy was precipitated mainly by a 'city-state system' based on the lack of institutional uniformity.⁷² Black has highlighted that only the policy of freedom in the administration of the communes could support the emergence of independent associations of workers.⁷³ A recent study by Donata Degrassi shows that privileged and corporate groups arose in context of fragmented institutional powers. She argues that only political competition could stimulate the interplay of local powers with central institutions, which supported group membership in exchange for political backing. The Italian communes could offer the necessary and sufficient conditions to support guild membership and masters' authority.⁷⁴ Corporate groups developed with uncertain and temporary privileges and they could not actually control the labour market. This argument seems to suggest that a condition of political instability could increase the bargaining power of corporate groups that offered consensus in exchange for privileges and rents. By contrast, the firm establishment of a central government could offer far less opportunities for corporate groups to emerge and acquire a privileged position. However, guilds emerged and succeeded not only in particular municipal contexts as the city-states, but also in more centralised states, as in France.

Alternative explanations for Italian manufacturing decline during the seventeenth century have shifted attention from corporate groups to local institutions, merchant companies, and urban elites. A new wave of historical studies has emphasised the autonomous role of the state and pressure of merchants in maintaining quality standards, and has highlighted the guilds' lack of

⁷² Sella, *Crisis and Continuity*, pp.29-31.

⁷³ Black, *Guilds and Civil Society*, p.10.

⁷⁴ D. Degrassi, *L'economia artigiana nell'Italia medievale* (Rome, 1996), p.122.

independence in the administration of local labour markets.⁷⁵ Moreover, guilds responded positively to the need for innovation.⁷⁶ Finally, scholars have begun to revise the very idea of a general crisis in Italian manufacture, suggesting that a reduction of activity occurred only during the last quarter of the seventeenth century, and only in a few sectors.⁷⁷

To sum up, there is still considerable controversy relating to the role of the state in the development of corporate groups, and to their effects on urban economies. Discussions about the optimal institutional context for the emergence and success of craft guilds have led to the development of more careful investigations of institutional contexts, guilds and their effects on the urban economies. Attention has focused on two orders of questions. On the one hand, the point is not to determine whether guilds were rent-seeking organisations, since masters obviously attempted to acquire privileges when and if they could; rather, the question is whether guilds could exist and survive over the long term without acquiring such political rents. On the other hand, it is necessary to investigate which institutional context was best suited for the guilds' establishment and success without stifling the market economy.

It seems that guilds developed in accordance with the kind of backing they received from local and central governments. The relationship between guilds and institutions took three main shapes. First, politically unstable institutions backed guilds unconditionally and enforced restrictive regulations in exchange for political consensus and other benefits. Second, political authorities could decide to support the development of craft groups without encouraging monopolistic and restrictive behaviour. Third, under some circumstance the political elites remained hostile to guild formation, with the result that craft guilds struggled to retain their members and failed to accomplish their primary purposes.

⁷⁵ F. Trivellato, 'Salaires et justice dans les corporations vénitiennes au XVII^e siècle. Le cas des manufactures de verre', *Annales ESC* 59 (1999): 245.

⁷⁶ *Idem*, p.267.

⁷⁷ *Idem*, p.260.

2.3 Sicilian guild studies: an overview

The debate relating to Sicilian guilds, as that relating to guilds elsewhere in Europe, developed most forcefully at the end of the nineteenth century.⁷⁸ Interest in Sicilian guilds has focused on their origins, their social and religious functions and, from the 1930s, their artistic production. Between 1896 and 1897 an interesting discussion concerning the origins of the guilds was carried out by Giovanni Scherma and Giuseppe Beccaria. Scherma identified the first evidence for a guild system in the Arab period, specifically in the ninth century. He supported his thesis with evidence relating to the existence of workshops and artisans, the presence of roads and squares named after silversmiths or other artisan activities, the names of silversmiths on royal diplomas, and the existence in the main towns of groups of foreigners who used to live and work in the same area. These groups, known as *Logge* or *Nazioni*, were organised according to regulations that closely resembled those of the medieval guilds, particularly those concerning craft supervision. Scherma also argued that in 1322 the Palermo city council had to deal with a group of cloth merchants in order to establish the measure to be used in market exchange. He stressed the importance of the fact that in the fourteenth century king Frederick III established that artisans had to pay *gabelle* and taxes according to the craft they exercised. Finally, he cited a specific order of 1385, which established the sequence by which crafts proceeded toward the cathedral of Palermo on August 15 of every year.

Beccaria noted, however, that Scherma's evidence only pointed to the existence of crafts, not to their organisation in guilds.⁷⁹ The cloth merchants' ability to conduct a struggle with the town council and the simple fact of paying

⁷⁸ See in particular G. Pollaci Nuccio, 'Delle maestranze in Sicilia. Capitoli delli cochi e pastizzari, Capitoli dei barbieri del 1642', *Nuove effemeridi siciliane* ser.3, 5 (1877): 257-76; F. Lioni, *Statuti inediti delle antiche maestranze delle città di Sicilia*, Documenti per servire alla storia di Sicilia (now DSSS), ser.2/3 (1883); V. Cusumano, 'Contributo alla storia delle maestranze in Sicilia', *Giornale degli economisti* 3 (1890); S. Savagnone, *Le maestranze in Sicilia* (Palermo, 1892); G. Scherma, *Delle maestranze in Sicilia* (Palermo, 1896); G. Beccaria, 'Le maestranze siciliane e la questione delle origini. Note critiche a proposito di una nuova pubblicazione', *ASS* 22 (1897), special issue; F. Marletta, 'La costituzione e le prime vicende delle maestranze di Catania', *ASSOr* 1 (1904): 354-8 and 2 (1905): 88-103.

⁷⁹ Beccaria, 'Maestranze siciliane'. See also BCPa, G. Beccaria, *Statuti ossia capitoli di corporazioni artigiane nel secolo XV in Sicilia*, in ms. 5Qq E 190.

taxes did not make crafts into guilds, which were a sophisticated organisation. In fact, he noted, even in modern times artisans paid certain taxes according to the group they belonged to, but this fact did not make them guilds. Moreover, Frederick III's legislation concerned rules about hygiene and cleanliness in craft activities, not craft guilds. Finally, Beccaria considered Palermo's *Ordo cereorum*, the alleged list of crafts drawn up in 1385. He noted that the sudden appearance of 48 different craft groups in the 1380s was rather suspect, considering that no other craft guilds were documented before the early fifteenth century. Had they really existed, Beccaria reckoned, more and better documentation should have survived; it was hard to believe that the poor evidence for such a large number of guilds was due simply to chance documentary survival. He suggested instead that the *Ordo cerorum* was actually a list of urban occupational and status groups drawn up by the town council.

The debate thus clearly established the distinction between artisans and guilds, and marked a turning point in the investigation of corporate origins. Craft guilds were organisations able to impart rules and regulations, constrain their members, and defend their local rights. Subsequently, however, De Stefano and Leone claimed that Sicilian artisans were not specialised and that they worked in order to satisfy domestic, largely aristocratic, consumption. De Stefano also noted that craft guilds were poorly developed and claimed that they were unable to evolve institutionally because of strong aristocratic opposition.⁸⁰

More recently, Oddo has supplied that Sicilian artisans increased their influence in town administrations by providing ad hoc services such as skilled labour, overnight defence of the city walls, and judicial functions for petty civil trials. Oddo recalled the hypothesis of La Colla,⁸¹ who had highlighted the guilds' social and military roles, and who, following the general trend in guild studies,⁸²

⁸⁰ F. De Stefano, *Storia della Sicilia dall' XI al XIX secolo* (Bari, 1977), pp.49-50, 77-79, 89-91. S. Leone, 'Lineamenti di una storia delle corporazioni in Sicilia nei secoli XIV-XVII', *ASSr* 2 (1956): 91 n.43, 93.

⁸¹ Lioni, *Statuti inediti*, p.50.

⁸² 'Les corps s'étant cristallisés autour des privilèges antisociaux, se maintenaient pour défendre l'égoïsme des privilégiés; ils conféraient un poids institutionnel aux intérêts bien protégés de ceux qui avaient acquis des droits particuliers, de quelque nature qu'ils fussent'. (D.D. Bien, 'Les offices, les corps et le crédit d'État: l'utilisation des privilèges sous l'ancien régime', *Annales* 43 (1988): 390).

had described the ability of these corporate groups to obtain specific privileges as a 'feudalism of the people'.⁸³ Oddo interpreted the emergence and development of craft guilds as reflecting the rise of a new 'middle class' in open opposition to the urban aristocracy.⁸⁴ The literature has therefore confirmed a widespread inability of Sicilian guilds to form strong social and political organisations, capable of bargaining successfully with local authorities and with the central power.⁸⁵ Yet the specific reasons for this weakness and its consequences remained confused and unexplored.

Finally, attention must be paid to a quite separate field of research, which has brought to light significant new documentation, namely art history, which has focused especially on silversmiths, goldsmiths, leather-workers, sculptors, painters, and pottery-makers, for the purpose of understanding luxury production.⁸⁶ The perspective and methodology used by art historians has been quite different from that of economic and social historians, for they have aimed to define a stylistic continuity and originality in Sicilian artistic production, and they have focused on artistic output as expressing the circulation of ideas and individual originality rather than as a manifestation of craft organisation. Art historians have been concerned with objects, rather than with the individuals and their social relations; however, art historians have uncovered numerous archival sources and unpublished manuscripts, which have helped interpret trademarks and identify individual artisans. They have shed light on the degree of artisanal specialisation and on craft mobility throughout the region, and have generally produced the best secondary source material on the topic of pre-industrial craft guilds.

⁸³ Lioni defined guilds as 'natural daughters of the feudal system ... A feudalism of the people'. (Lioni, *Statuti inediti*, pp.XXX).

⁸⁴ F.L. Oddo, *Le maestranze di Palermo (secc.XII-XIX). Aspetti e momenti di vita sociale* (Palermo, 1991), p.19.

⁸⁵ A.M. Precopi Lombardo, *L'artigianato trapanese dal XIV al XIX secolo* (Palermo, 1987), p.19.

⁸⁶ See G. Di Marzo, *I Gagini e la scultura in Sicilia nei secoli XV e XVI* (Palermo, 1880-83); see also G. Di Marzo, *Delle belle arti in Sicilia* (Palermo, 1858). More recent works are M. Accascina, *Oreficeria in Sicilia, dal XII al XIX secolo* (Palermo, 1974); M. Accascina, *I marchi delle argenterie e oreficerie siciliane* (Palermo, 1976); G. Bresc Bautier, *Artistes, patriciens et confreries. Production et consommation de l'oeuvre d'art à Palerme et en Sicile occidentale, 1348-1460* (Rome, 1979).

Chapter 3

Economic and political developments in early modern Sicily

Interpretations of the economic history of medieval and early modern Sicily focus mainly on the island's backwardness and industrial failure. Explanations point to economic inefficiency and to fiscal and political pressure exercised by the Spanish state. Medieval and early modern Sicily specialised in grain exports and had a comparative advantage in agriculture, although the causes and particularly the consequences of this agricultural specialisation are under debate. Traditional historiography points to political pressure, or exogenous factors, to explain the dominance of the agricultural sector, which is supposed to define a poorly developed and stagnant economy.

In his important study of medieval Sicily, Bresc refers to the final defeat of the Muslims in the mid-thirteenth century to explain the end of technical expertise in manufacturing in the island, and the enforcement of the grain monoculture by Frederick II. Furthermore, recalling Croce, Bresc locates the establishment of Sicily's role as grain supplier in the Mediterranean during the war of the Vespers of 1282 against the Angevins and in the establishment of the Aragonese reign that followed.¹ Alternatively, in his work on the transition to capitalism, Aymard has suggested that Sicilian industrial failure was a consequence of the strong commercial pressure that the most developed metropolises of Venice, Milan, Genoa, and Florence exercised through the exports of high quality and luxury goods, and which prevented the South's manufacture to develop.²

The historical literature thus portrays southern Italy, and Sicily in particular, as classic instances of pre-modern economic underdevelopment. Sicily's agricultural economy depended on the commercially advanced North; as Bresc put it, the island's exchange of grain and agricultural goods for capital intensive, high value manufactures and luxury goods was a clear example of 'unequal

¹ H. Bresc, *Un monde méditerranéen. Economie et société en Sicile, 1300-1450*, vol. I (Rome, 1986), pp.576, 917.

² M. Aymard, 'La transizione dal feudalesimo al capitalismo', in R. Romano and C. Vivanti (eds.) *Storia d' Italia: Annali*, I (Turin, 1988), pp.1143, 1145, 1147, 1158, 1169-70.

exchange'.³ The industrial and commercial superiority of the North was reflected in the more rapid development of city-states in the North and in economic dependency in the South.⁴

These explanations of Sicilian backwardness are based on two main assumptions. First, scholars assume a dependence of the South on manufacture imports from the North. Second, they believe that agriculture must have been less productive than manufacturing industry, and therefore incapable of providing the region with profitable revenues. Regarding the significance of imports from north-central Italy, however, Epstein has proved that no more than 2 to 5 per cent of the Sicilian population could actually buy imported luxury goods, and that the remaining 95 per cent were not involved in this trade.⁵ Regarding agriculture, it is clear that in Sicily it was highly productive and dynamic.⁶

This thesis aims to show that Sicily specialised in agriculture for two main reasons. First, the island's agriculture was highly productive, as shown by data relating to exports, and to more general indicators such as the rate of population growth and evidence for standards of living. Consequently, the economy – which had expanded strongly during the sixteenth century as elsewhere in western Europe – simply stabilised during the seventeenth century, but did not collapse as happened in other European regions. The second reason why Sicily developed a comparative advantage in agriculture is the poor development of autochthonous craft guilds, which held back the emergence of a strong export-led manufacture. The late development of corporate groups hindered the transmission of skills and growth in the manufacturing sector, and gave agriculture an additional comparative advantage.

³ *Ibidem*, p.167.

⁴ The origins of the southern question (*questione meridionale*) and theories at the basis of the question are discussed in detail in S.R. Epstein, *An Island for Itself. Economic Development and Social Change in Late Medieval Sicily* (Cambridge, 1992), ch.1. See also P. Jones, 'Economia e società nell'Italia medievale: la leggenda della borghesia', in Romano and Vivanti (eds.) *Storia d'Italia*, pp.185-372.

⁵ S.R. Epstein, 'The Textile Industry and the Foreign Cloth Trade in Late Medieval Sicily (1300-1500): a "colonial relationship"?' *Journal of Medieval History* 15 (1989): 141-83.

⁶ Epstein, *Island for itself*, ch.4.

This chapter aims to show the dynamic character of the economy of sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Sicily. The first part of the chapter discusses the positive trend of the Sicilian economy over two centuries and the existence of an integrated labour market. The second part of the chapter analyses the transition to Aragonese dominion, considers how institutional changes affected Sicilian development in the early modern period, and looks at the emergence of corporate groups under the control of local and central authorities.

3.1 Economic factors: pattern of trade, population growth and the labour market

Regional integration and specialisation spurred economic growth in Sicily from the later Middle ages. The Sicilian economy expanded and became increasingly export-oriented after the Black Death, thanks in part to the process of political centralisation realised by the Aragonese and later by the Spanish state. Institutional innovations lowered domestic transport costs, reduced imbalances between demand and supply, enforced contracts more efficiently, and stimulated labour mobility.⁷

By the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century, Sicily had completely recovered from the demographic crisis of the second half of the fourteenth century. Although the first two decades of the sixteenth century were characterised by great political and economic instability, by the 1530s widespread and general improvements could be observed. Ground rents doubled between the 1540s and 1560s (from 0.18-0.20 hl wheat/ha to 0.28-0.30 hl wheat/ha), with sharper rises in the coastal areas where export costs were lower, and slower, steady increases inland. Between 1561 and mid-1570s rents quadrupled, and continued to increase more slowly until 1581. Afterwards, average ground rents declined but stabilised at about two-and-a-half times the original values (0.45-0.48hl/ha).⁸ Prices and ground rents rose faster than monetary inflation, and

⁷ Epstein, *Island for itself*, pp.96-97.

⁸ In spite of such a remarkable increase, Sicily had very low ground rents compared to other countries in Europe. In southern France average ground rent was about 1.5 hl/ha, while in the region around Paris and in Saxony it was 2.5 hl/ha. In 1600, it increased to 3 hl/ha in Languedoc

contract terms became ever shorter, owing to strong competition for the best lands among agricultural entrepreneurs (*gabelotti*) and tenants.⁹

Agricultural expansion continued up to the first half of the seventeenth century, and stimulated a slow but constant increase of the population in the cereal-growing western half of the island; elsewhere there was agricultural intensification, with a growth in vineyard, olives and silk production. Sicily, traditionally one of the main Mediterranean grain suppliers, responded positively to increase domestic and international demand for food by expanding its exports, particularly to Naples, Rome, Florence, and Genoa.¹⁰ By the late fifteenth century average exports had reached 100,000 *salme* per annum, about twice those of the first half of the century. By 1521-30 an average of 150,000 *salme* were exported abroad per year, out of more than 250,000 *salme* sold within and outside the region (*intra e fuori regno*). However, as the Sicilian population was also growing at a fast rate, the proportion of exports to total output declined over time.¹¹

At the turn of the sixteenth century, numerous initiatives for industrial manufacturing emerged, particularly in Palermo, where there arose a cloth industry,¹² an ironworks,¹³ and a hat and dyeing industry.¹⁴ In Messina, the production of silk cloth developed in parallel with the expansion of the town's control over the rural villages (*casali*) and over southern Calabria.¹⁵ A Jewish

and 5 hl/ha in the region around Paris. O. Cancila, *Impresa, redditi e mercato nella Sicilia moderna* (Palermo, 2nd ed. 1993), p.45. Data in E. Le Roy Ladurie, 'Les masses profondes: la paysannerie', *Histoire économique et sociale de la France*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1977), vol.1, p.637.

⁹ Cancila, *Impresa, redditi e mercato*, pp.38-39.

¹⁰ Data for the grain trade in the early modern period are in O. Cancila, *Baroni e popolo nella Sicilia del grano* (Palermo, 1983), pp.33-35; Cancila, *Impresa, redditi e mercato*, pp.257-58, 260; H.G. Koenigsberger, *The Practice of Empire* (Ithaca and New York, 1969), pp.79-80; M. Aymard, 'L'approvisionnement des villes de la Méditerranée occidentale (XVIe-XVIIIe siècles)', *Flaran* 5 (1983): 179; Epstein, *Island for Itself*, pp.270-91.

¹¹ O. Cancila, *L'economia della Sicilia. Aspetti storici* (Vicenza, 1992), p.25. Cancila, *Impresa, redditi e mercato*, p.248-49.

¹² See A. Baviera Albanese, *In Sicilia nel secolo XVI: verso una rivoluzione industriale?* (Palermo, 1974), pp.77-78; C. Trasselli, *Da Ferdinando il Cattolico a Carlo V. L'esperienza siciliana, 1475-1525*, 2 vols. (Cosenza, 1982).

¹³ A Piedmontese master promoted the ironworks in Palermo (G. Giarrizzo, 'La Sicilia dal Cinquecento all'Unità d'Italia', in G. Galasso (ed.) *La Sicilia dal Vespro all'Unità*, vol.16 (Turin, 1989), p.231 n.5).

¹⁴ For the hat industry and dye works see ACPa, *Provviste*, 118, cc.151, 172v (1512-13).

¹⁵ C. Gallo, 'Il setificio in Sicilia', *Nuova raccolta di opuscoli siciliani* (Palermo, 1878): 225; G. Platania, 'Sulle vicende della sericoltura in Sicilia', *ASSOr* 20 (1924): 242-75; F. Marletta, 'L'arte della seta a Catania nei secoli XV-XVII', *ASSOr* 22 (1926): 46-91; A. Petino, 'L'arte e il consolato della seta a Catania nei secoli XIV-XIX', *ASSOr* 38-39 (1942-43): 15-78; C. Trasselli, 'Ricerche sulla seta siciliana (sec.XIV-XVII)', *Economia e storia* 12 (1965): 213-71.

master, Charonecto Gerardino from Catanzaro (Calabria) was invited by the councilors of Faro in 1486 *ab introducendum magisterium*, to introduce the craft of weaving silk cloth, particularly velvet.¹⁶

Eastern Sicily therefore participated in the European boom in silk production.¹⁷ According to Epstein, in Sicily 'silk manufacture developed successfully in the late fifteenth century when foreign competition was not yet fully established and foreign markets were expanding fast'.¹⁸ 'The silk industry faced new and more rapidly expanding international markets in which, in contrast to the luxury wool industry, neither technical nor commercial know-how were yet in the hands of established competitors'.¹⁹ Nonetheless, Messinese silk production and exports remained limited until the first decades of the sixteenth century.²⁰ The first guild gathering silk weavers, spinners, and dyers arose no earlier than 1520 and followed the statutes of Catanzaro approved by Charles V a year before. The industry slowly expanded during the second half of the sixteenth century, and silk remained the only significant industrial export of early modern Sicily.²¹

Messina was far more important as an exporter of raw silk, which it gathered both from its immediate hinterland and from neighbouring southern Calabria. In 1591, Messina paid a tax of 583,333 *scudi* to obtain a trade and excise monopoly on all the silk produced in the territory between Termini and Syracuse.²² In addition, it was promised the residence of the viceroy's court for eighteen months every three years. The privilege came at the end of a period of very rapid growth in silk exports, which by the early seventeenth century had become the most important good traded from Sicily.²³ According to Aymard, there were three phases in the export trend: a first phase of fast growth that reached its peak between 1626 and 1631; a second phase up to 1670 characterised

¹⁶ Trasselli, 'Ricerche sulla seta', p.225.

¹⁷ A. Manikowski, 'Il secolo della seta. Conseguenze del boom della seta nel Seicento e le trasformazioni sociali e politiche in Europa', in S. Cavaciocchi (ed.) *La seta in Europa secc. XIII-XIX* (Florence, 1993), pp.839-53.

¹⁸ Epstein, *Island for Itself*, p.196 n.123.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p.206.

²⁰ Trasselli, 'Ricerche sulla seta', p.224.

²¹ *Ibidem*, pp.234-35. See the numerous contracts for looms.

²² A tax of 25 grana 'per ogni libra di seta così cruda come operata, o bianca in sapone, che si esce da questa città di Messina tanto per fori quanto per infraregno' (S. Laudani, *La Sicilia della seta* (Rome, 1996), p.85).

²³ Cancila, *Impresa, redditi e mercato*, p.252.

by slowly declining volumes; and finally, a third phase characterised by steady recovery up to 1728 (after the crisis following Messina's revolt in 1674) which however failed to boost exports to the levels achieved before 1640.²⁴

To sum up, starting in the fifteenth century, the island specialised to two main agricultural sectors: the eastern half produced silk and other labour-intensive agricultural goods such as olives, fruit and wine, while the western half produced mainly grain. By the seventeenth century, the two areas became politically more competitive and Messina suggested splitting the island into two autonomous regions: the Sicilian Parliament, however refused. This led Messina to rise in rebellion against the Spanish domination in a bid for independence backed by the French. Nevertheless, Messina failed, and the ensuing punishment virtually froze all local economic activities for about a decade. Seventeenth-century Palermo, on the other hand, reinforced its position as the regional capital, thanks also the fact that the viceroy established his court there permanently during the 1630s. The decision stimulated demand for luxury goods produced locally, and led to an increase in the number of artisans and guilds in Palermo itself and in Trapani, the second largest city on the western coast. By contrast, the number and membership of craft guilds contracted in the east of the island, which began to regularly buy manufactures from the western half.²⁵

Rates of population growth provide a rough index for identifying long-term economic expansion. The Sicilian population maintained a generally positive trend throughout the early modern period. Between 1440 and 1460 the population started to increase very rapidly and that expansion lasted until the late sixteenth century.²⁶ During the sixteenth century, the population doubled, although the

²⁴ M. Aymard, 'Commerce et production de la soie sicilienne aux XVIe-XVIIe siècle', *Mélanges de archéologie et d'histoire* 77 (1965): 625.

²⁵ O. Cancila, *Aspetti di un mercato siciliano, Trapani nei secoli XVII-XIX* (Caltanissetta and Rome, 1972), p.23.

²⁶ Census for fiscal reports have been collected for 1402, 1408, 1434, 1441-42, 1442-43, 1464 and 1478 in order to distribute the payment of the donations throughout the population. Unlike the *Riveli* (census starting from 1501) which are based on nominal lists, the documents are not very clear. Demographic studies have been developed by J. Beloch, *Bevolkungsgeschichte Italiens* (Berlin, 1937), C. Trasselli, 'Ricerche sulla popolazione della Sicilia nel secolo XV', *Atti*

western part maintained its traditionally lower density compared to the rest of the island, with under 20 inhabitants per square kilometre compared to the eastern half which had 32.6 inhabitants per square kilometre.²⁷ About twenty Sicilian towns had between 8,000 and 20,000 inhabitants. In Catania, the second largest city in the eastern area, the population doubled, and in Messina population grew threefold, from 31,000 inhabitants in 1505 to 100,000 in 1605. Palermo grew from 25,000 to 100,000 between 1505 and 1605, by which time it comprised ten per cent of the total population. Sicily therefore presented one of the highest rates of urbanisation in Europe, even by comparison with northern Italy, where urbanisation was a high 25-40 per cent.²⁸

Demographic growth was also magnified by the very high rates of permanent immigration beginning in the late fifteenth century. Aymard has distinguished two flows of immigrants.²⁹ The first of these comprised people who came from the north, from places such as Genoa and Lombardy, Spain, Germany, and the Netherlands, and who resided in the island permanently with their families. They occupied important roles in the economy of the region and in the local urban administrations and contributed to the establishment of economic and bureaucratic elites. Italian merchants played an important role in Sicilian history and economy; Venetian and Florentine merchants used to connect Sicily with England and Flanders from the main ports of Palermo and Messina. For centuries, Ragusa, modern Dubrovnik, maintained a large colony of merchants in Sicily, who benefited from political neutrality as vassals of the Turkish Sultan and under papal protection, and who acted as intermediaries with the Islamic world.³⁰ Albanians and Greeks left their lands because of the Turkish advances towards the Balkans and moved to the island creating new settlements, some of which survive

dell'accademia di scienze, lettere e arti di Palermo, 4th ser., 15 (1956): 213-71. Bresc, *Un monde méditerranéen*, and the latest and most detailed is the one by Epstein, *Island for Itself*, p.61.

²⁷ M. Aymard, 'La Sicilia: profili demografici', in G. Giarrizzo (ed.) *Storia della Sicilia* (Naples, 1978), p.229.

²⁸ J. De Vries, 'Pattern of Urbanization in Pre-Industrial Europe, 1500-1800, in H. Shmal (ed.) *Patterns of European Urbanization Since 1500* (London, 1981). S.R. Epstein, 'Nuevas aproximaciones a la historia urbana de Italia: el renacimiento temprano', *Hispania* 58/2, 199 (1998): 424-25.

²⁹ Aymard, 'Sicilia: profili demografici', p.226.

³⁰ D. Mack Smith, *A History of Sicily. Medieval Sicily, 800-1713* (London, 1968), p.104.

today as separate ethnic communities, like Palazzo Adriani, Piana (still called Piana dei Greci) and Mezzoiuso.

A second flow of immigration occurred during the early sixteenth century and introduced numerous artisans and skilled labourers into the region from Spain and central-northern Italy; examples include the Lombard stonecutters, or silver- and goldsmiths. In Palermo, the number of foreign artisans requests for citizenship also increased.³¹

Internal migration was also strong and tended to flow toward the main urban centres. Numerous wage-labourers came from the Madonie mountains to Palermo, and from the Nebrodi and Peloritani mountains to the northeast; however, western rural settlements and urban industries also attracted people from central and southwestern Sicily and from Calabria.³² This permanent and seasonal labour mobility increased the integration of the regional labour market. Thus the shoemaking industry in the Palermo monastery of San Martino alle Scale employed labourers coming from different parts of the island, such as Noto, Scicli, Salemi, Tusa, and Petralia.³³

During the second half of the sixteenth century, many of the older towns underwent successive reductions in 'territorial self-sufficiency'.³⁴ This initially took the form of physical reductions of the rural hinterland, a process that was initiated by enfiefments (*infeudazioni*) of common land, and was later intensified by the concessions of licences that sanctioned the emergence of new territorial and jurisdictional units. Feudal licences came with judicial rights and the rights to found new villages, which gave feudatories almost limitless jurisdictional powers over their new territories.

³¹ Towns that in the 1530s attempted to enforce urban privileges so as to attract immigrants, in the second half of the century registered numerous applications for citizenship and requests for legal guarantees from foreigners. See ACPa, Atti Bandi Provviste, 151, cc.83v-92v, cc.102 and 125rv (1546-47); 152, cc.92rv, 95, 105v, 115v-16r, 119, 120 (1547-48); 153, cc.96v (1548-49). Silversmiths and goldsmiths arrived in Palermo from Naples, Genoa, Rome, Milan, Venice, Valenza, Aragon.

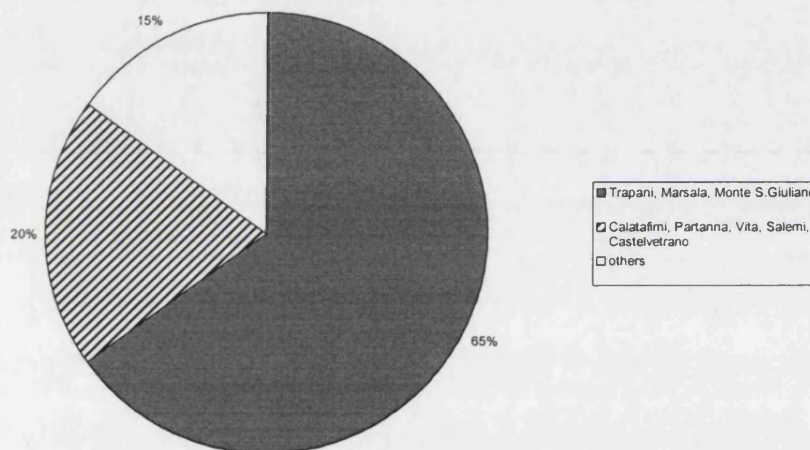
³² Epstein, *Island for Itself*, p.219.

³³ O. Cancila, 'Esperienze precapitalistiche in un monastero siciliano, 1581-82', *Critica storica* 10 (1973): 315, and O. Cancila, *Impresa, redditi e mercato*, p.146. Smaller towns attracted labourers mainly from the surrounding areas. A consistent number of people moved to Trapani, particularly from Monte San Giuliano (modern Erice), Marsala, and Partanna. See Cancila, *Aspetti di un mercato siciliano*, p.15.

³⁴ T. Davies, 'Changes in the Structure of the Wheat Trade in Seventeenth-Century Sicily and the Building of New Villages', *Journal of European Economic History* 12 (1983): 371-405.

The phenomenon of new settlements was related to the need to bring under cultivation empty tracts of land in central and western Sicily that were particularly suited to cereal production.³⁵ Between 1583 and 1748, the number of settlements on the island increased from 195 to 326; of the 131 new villages, 90 were founded in the first half of the seventeenth century.³⁶ These formed more than 50 per cent of the new settlements that appeared in the three centuries before the formal abolition of feudalism in Sicily in 1812. The following chart on the settlement of Paceco shows the percentage of new inhabitants coming from the closest areas; the largest section represents people coming from the neighbouring demanial towns (Fig.3.1).

Fig.3.1 Origins of immigrants in Paceco, 1608-23



*Source: Benigno, *Una casa, una terra*, p.60.

³⁵ There is a huge bibliography on this topic. See L. Genuardi, *Terre comuni ed usi civici in Sicilia* (Palermo, 1907); M. Aymard, 'Un bourg de Sicile entre XVIe et XVIIe siècle: Ganci', in *Conjoncture economique, structures sociales. Hommage a Ernest Labrousse* (Paris, 1974), pp.359-61; M. Aymard, 'Sicilia: sviluppo demografico e sue differenziazioni geografiche, 1500-1800', in E. Sori (ed.) *Demografia storica* (Bologna, 1975); D. Ligresti, *Sicilia moderna. Le città e gli uomini* (Naples, 1984); F. Benigno, *Una casa una terra. Ricerche su Paceco: paese nuovo della Sicilia del sei e settecento* (Catania, 1985); G. Longhitano, *Studi di storia della popolazione siciliana. Riveli, numerazioni, censimenti (1568-1861)* (Catania, 1988); F.F. Gallo, *Dal feudo al borgo. Il primo decennio di vita di Floridia attraverso l'analisi del "rivelo di beni, anime e facoltà" del 1636* (Floridia, 1997).

³⁶ Benigno, *Una casa, una terra*, p.18.

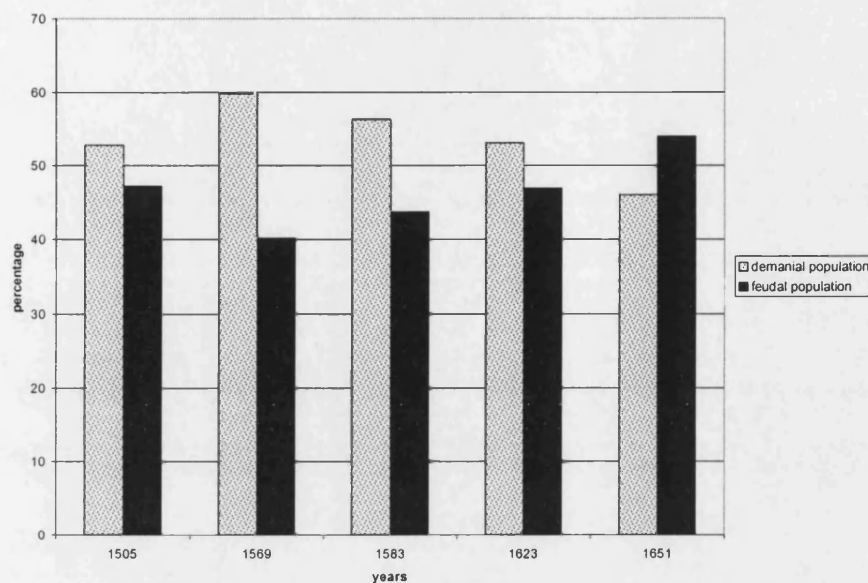
Settlers were attracted by the favourable conditions offered by landlords, such as concessions for building areas and land in long-term leasehold (emphyteusis) at relatively low rates, as well as fiscal and judicial protection. Most of the first inhabitants of the new settlements came from the main demanial towns, spurring a steady rate of migration from the last quarter of the sixteenth century onwards. These new settlements therefore competed with the main urban centres for population and resources. New, small and dispersed markets were established around the towns in order to supply growing inland demand more effectively.³⁷ Newly cultivated lands included both grain production and vineyards and olives, increasing demand for labour and raising average living standards.

During the sixteenth century, inhabitants of the royal towns represented more than fifty per cent of the Sicilian population; in 1505, they were about 52.8 per cent, and in 1569, they were about 59.8 per cent. From the 1570s, the relative size of the demanial population steadily declined, falling to about 56.3 per cent in 1583, and 53.1 per cent by 1623. By 1651, the royal demesne included only 46 per cent of the total population (Fig.3.2).³⁸

³⁷ Gallo, *Dal feudo al borgo*, p.33 n.35.

³⁸ The figures cited in this paragraph are from F. Renda, 'Le città demaniali nella storia siciliana', in F. Benigno and C. Torrisi (eds.) *Città e feudo nella Sicilia moderna* (Catania, 1995), p.40. See also the studies about population by F. Maggiore Perni, *La popolazione di Sicilia e di Palermo dal XI al XVIII secolo* (Palermo, 1892); Longhitano, *Studi di storia della popolazione*, tables pp.147-175.

Fig 3.2 The distribution of population in demanial and feudal lands

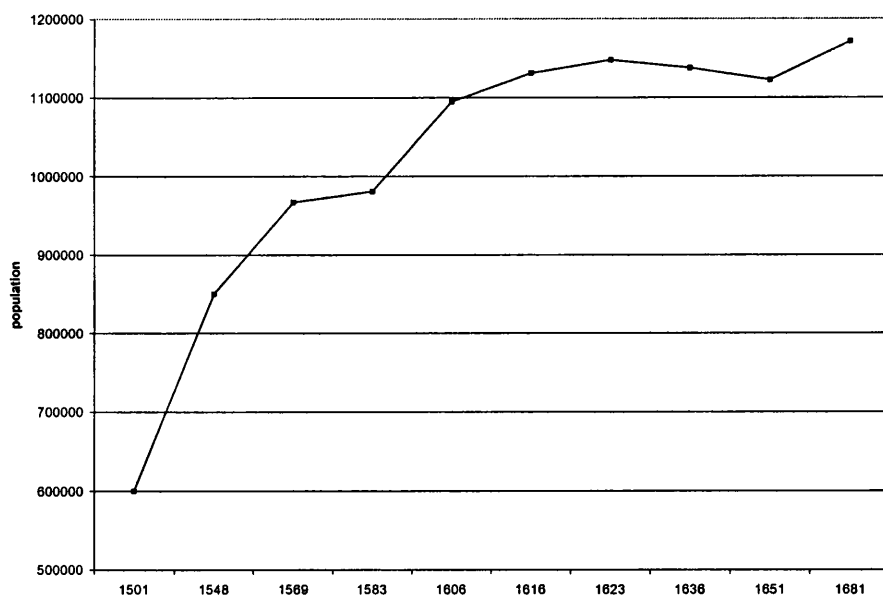


*Data: Renda 'Le città demaniali', p.40.

Nonetheless, sixteen out of the largest eighteen towns with a population of 10,000 people or more remained in the royal demesne, despite the fact that the shift in population toward the new settlements meant that excises levied in the demesne (*gabelle*), especially on foodstuffs, weighed more heavily on a reduced number of consumers. Demanial towns responded to these threats by promoting a number of fiscal initiatives, such as debt reduction, easier access to citizenship, and concessions of monopoly.³⁹ During the same period, however, the population of Sicily as a whole steadily increased, from 600,000 in 1501, to 900,000 in 1569, and 1,147,000 by 1623. Despite a slowdown from the 1580s onwards, Sicily did not suffer major population losses during the seventeenth century (as occurred elsewhere in Italy and Europe) because any loss of population in the eastern area was compensated by gains on the western coast (Fig.3.3).

³⁹ See Davies, 'Changes in the Structure', p.204, and for Syracuse in 1629 and 1637, Gallo, *Dal feudo al borgo*, p.32, n.32.

Fig.3.3 The population of Sicily, 1501-1681

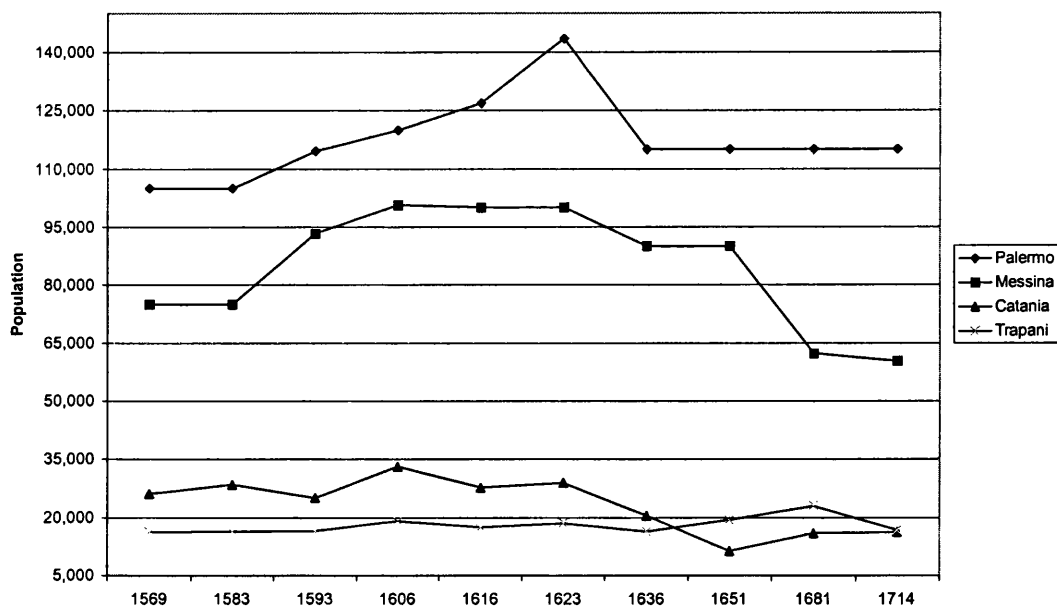


*Sources: Longhitano, *Studi di storia della popolazione*.

Sicilian larger towns also confirm the positive trend of population. Palermo showed a constant growth of the population until the plague in 1623, when after a considerable decline the rate stabilised around 110,000 people. Messina showed a fast growing rate of population in the second half of the sixteenth century; the city then stabilised until the revolt in 1674, which froze Messina's economic and social life and also affected population growth. Population in Catania and Trapani remained flat; however, while Catania declined in the mid-seventeenth century following the effects of Messina's downturn, Trapani grew to surpass 20,000 along the lines of Palermo's growth and of development in the western half of the island (Fig.3.4).⁴⁰

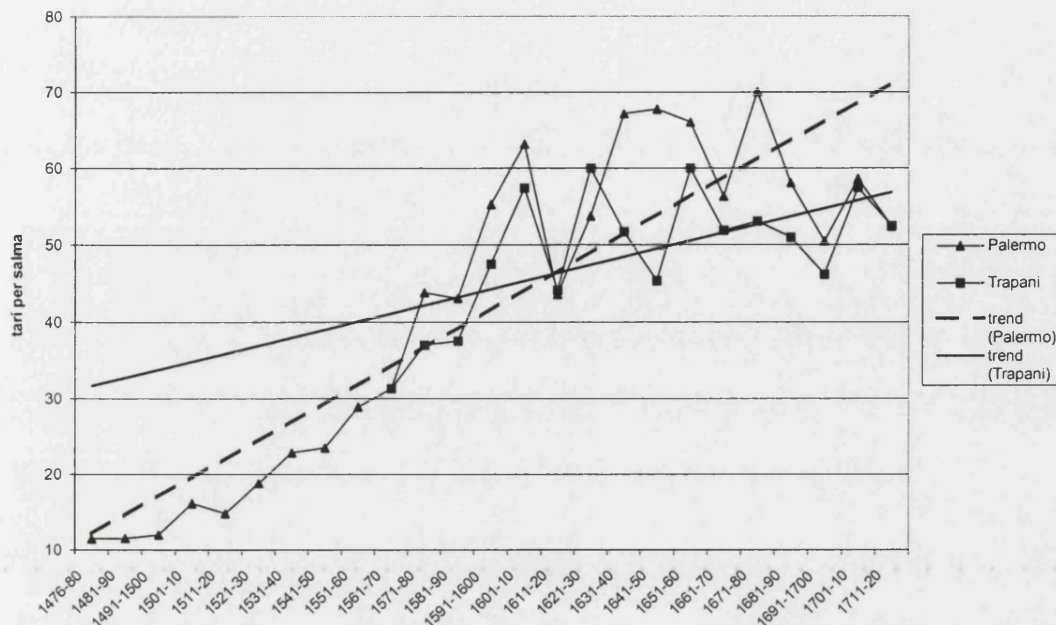
⁴⁰ The competition between Messina and Palermo to become the regional capital had a negative effect on the development of Messina.

Fig.3.4 Population of Palermo, Messina, Catania and Trapani, 1569-1714



* Source: Longhitano, *Studi di storia della popolazione*.

As Sicily was a major grain exporter throughout the early modern period, grain prices provide an important insight into the economy of the island. On the Palermo market, grain prices rose fast during the sixteenth century, but increased at a slower rate in the seventeenth century, very much in harmony with trends in population (Fig.3.5). Between 1500 and 1600, the price of wheat increased six-fold, but thereafter the price remained by and large stable.

Fig.3.5 Average grain prices (*mete*), 1476-1720 (*tari*)

*Source: Cancila, *Impresa redditi mercato*, p.222

Inflationary pressures also affected prices for other foodstuffs and manufactures, although precise data are very scarce. The price of cheese increased by 38 per cent between the mid-sixteenth century and the early seventeenth century, and by 23 per cent between the 1650s and 1670s. In the first half of the seventeenth century, the price of wine increased by between 43 and 55 per cent compared to the last half of the sixteenth century.⁴¹ The price of some agricultural tools trebled during the sixteenth century. In 1512, Palermo city council set the price of a hoe at no more than 2.5 *tari*, and that of a brush hook at 1.5 *tari*; by the late 1590s, the price of a hoe had risen to 7 *tari*, and that of a brush hook to 3 *tari*.⁴² By contrast, compared with the trend elsewhere in Europe, nominal wages displayed far greater stickiness, showing only a doubling in value during the sixteenth century.⁴³

⁴¹ Ibidem, p.177.

⁴² Maggiore Pemi, *Popolazione siciliana*, p.592; Cancila, *Impresa, redditi e mercato*, p.113.

⁴³ However, according to Cancila's study of a big farm in the Palermo territory between 1472-73 and 1583-84 nominal salaries for sugar workers increased by 50 per cent with fluctuations between

3.2 Political institutions and the ‘late’ development of corporate groups

As discussed previously, the literature on early modern guilds has emphasised the privileged position that craft guilds acquired due to the support of the emerging nation-state. Ogilvie has argued that only the growth of a central state power could support the acquisition of privileges by corporate groups.⁴⁴ However, the literature does not clearly explain the relation between state formation and craft guilds. The analysis of the Sicilian case offers a new angle on this complex process. Although early modern Sicily was very much part of, and influenced by, the fast growing Spanish state, Sicilian craft guilds remained weak, and did not acquire any relevant political or economic privileges. Consequently, the Sicilian example suggests that the inevitability of guild success on the coat tails of burgeoning early modern state has been exaggerated. In chapter 2, we discussed the view that guild success might have depended on the presence of more strong political competition, than of a strong, monopolistic state and more specifically on the willingness by local and central institutions to support craft guilds and their regulations. In this section I examine whether the Sicilian case supports the latter hypothesis.

The end of the fourteenth century represented a turning point in Sicilian political history. Between 1392 and 1395, Martin, Duke of Montblanc, and his son Martin invaded and conquered Sicily, after a long period of baronial anarchy. Martin I became king of Sicily, and his father king of Catalonia and Aragon. The reconquest of the island by the Aragonese re-established a centralised institutional framework, based on a relatively stable government. Martin I of Sicily promoted

0 and +111 per cent in the second half of the sixteenth century. Maggiore Perni registered a similar increase for masons and carpenters:

salaries in <i>tari</i> :	1512-13	1580s
agriculture labourer	1.5-1.10	2-3
apprentice masons	1-1.15	2.10-3
carpenters and masons	2.10	4-5

Data from Maggiore Perni, *Popolazione siciliana*, p.587; C. Trasselli, ‘Alcuni calmieri palermitani del ‘400’, *Economia e storia* 3 (1968): 354; Cancila, *Impresa, redditi e mercato*, p.147.

⁴⁴ S. Ogilvie, *State Corporatism and Proto-Industry. The Württemberg Black Forest, 1580-1797* (Cambridge, 1997), pp.29-31.

the reorganisation of the institutional framework in order to guarantee the representation of different political and social interests. The need for central government to maintain the consensus of, and control over, local powers, through recognition of the feudal class, had its counterpart in the gradual extension of wider administrative autonomy to the royal demesne towns. Demanial towns represented a major political characteristic of late medieval and early modern Sicily, for they included the major commercial centres of the island and more than half of the population (Fig. 3.2). Increasingly from the end of the fourteenth century, royal demesne towns claimed stronger juridical and administrative prerogatives, which they obtained through negotiation over new customs and privileges. The formalisation of elective structures, the drafting of juridical rights, and the recognition of corporate privileges began under Martin I, and continued with increasing vigour until the reign of Charles V, as a counterpart for political and fiscal consensus.⁴⁵ The power of municipal governments was thus consolidated by the rise of central government and operated within the central structures of the monarchy, in order to obtain the confirmation, approval, and recognition of urban privileges and statutes.⁴⁶

From the 1430s onwards, in a period of institutional reform and upheaval instigated by king Alfonso, groups of masters requested the election of representatives and the formal approval of their statutes, as means both to affirm their authority over local producers and to find a place in local urban administrations.

The end of the sixteenth century saw another important turning point. On the one hand, the state supported a process of rationalisation of the central office for the administration and management of the Sicilian kingdom. Numerous centralised institutions emerged for the supervision of the territory and the organ of the *Magna Curia dei Maestri Rationali* was converted into the major institution of

⁴⁵ P. Corrao, 'Istituzioni monarchiche, poteri locali, società politica (secoli XIV-XV)', in F. Benigno and C. Torrisi (eds.) *Élites e potere in Sicilia dal Medioevo ad oggi* (Catanzaro and Rome, 1995), p.10.

⁴⁶ See S. Cavallo, *Charity and Power in Early Modern Italy. Benefactors and Their Motives in Turin, 1541-1789* (Cambridge, 1995), p.250 for a similar phenomenon in early modern Turin.

financial control, the *Tribunale del Regio Patrimonio*.⁴⁷ According to Muto, the state aimed to achieve a stronger linkage with the legal professions (*ceto togato*), in order to counterbalance the local aristocracy.⁴⁸

On the other hand, the kingdom saw the emergence of Messina, the most important centre of the east coast that was expanding rapidly in competition with the capital, Palermo. Messina could rely on a big surrounding territory and on the only export-oriented industrial product of the island, silk. Furthermore, its geographical position close to the mainland allowed the urban elite to expand commercial relations with the kingdom of Naples. This successful commercial and political network supported Messina's claim for a silk monopoly in val Demone in 1591, after the payment of a substantial fee to the Crown.⁴⁹ The island began to manifest a strong duality based on two different economic structures and commercial strategies; however, the centralisation of the main political offices, which was proceeding concurrently, advantaged the west and Palermo against Messina

In Sicily, the first privileges granted to urban artisans date to the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In 1199, Frederick allowed toll-free trade for Messina and Trapani producers. In Syracuse in 1298, barbers obtained the privilege to be toll free and in 1314 Trapani fishermen were allowed to catch and sell fish everywhere without restrictions.⁵⁰ Despite these few acquisitions, however, artisans were not allowed to organise independently and give themselves proper rules until the late fourteenth century at the earliest. From the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as the new Iberian were sought political support in local urban society, masters were given the opportunity to lobby for political recognition. At the same time, economic expansion and especially the rising demand for cheap manufactures had expanded the domestic manufacturing base. There was

⁴⁷ A. Baviera Albanese, *Diritto pubblico e istituzioni amministrative in Sicilia* (Rome, 1981).

⁴⁸ G. Muto, *Saggi sul governo dell'economia nel mezzogiorno spagnolo* (Naples, 1992).

⁴⁹ F. Benigno, 'La questione della capitale. Lotta politica e rappresentanza degli interessi nella Sicilia del Seicento', *Società e storia* 47 (1990): 27-63.

⁵⁰ Frederick II granted this privilege in 1314 because Trapani fishermen fought against the Turks from the Magreb in support of the king. The privilege is copied in the seventeenth-century manuscript *Privilegii regali et lettere viceregie di gratie concesse alli pescatori della città di*

therefore a growing need for skilled craft labour and for a system that would enforce and guarantee contractual relations between individual masters and apprentices. Although notaries had acted as witnesses and guarantors for apprenticeship agreements before formal guilds were established, such contracts helped gradually to confirm masters as public officials.⁵¹

The first document that mentions guild representatives is dated Palermo, 6 April 1403. It is a provision drafted by barbers and addressed to the city council, which is asked to authorise the election of a consul. The representative had to be elected by 'the other masters expert in similar crafts', and his functions were 'to control and supervise the other masters and apprentices who work in the same craft, and to correct, punish and dismiss them'.⁵² Other provisions by the Palermo cobblers, followed on 10 January 1413, and the coopers of the same town made themselves heard on 13 May 1431. It is particularly interesting that the cobblers' request for a consular election referred explicitly to the Palermo tailors, shearers, and barbers who had already obtained the right to elect a consul (*immunitatem, habendi consulum*). In most cases, the request of the statutes followed the consular election by few years later; however, the tailors in Palermo had a consul by 1413 but only received their statutes in 1465.⁵³

The second quarter of the fifteenth century saw the beginnings of a process of legitimisation of the guild system. In 1435, Alfonso confirmed twenty-two guilds in Catania and gave them the right to elect their own consuls and officials.⁵⁴ In 1443, potters and all other artisans (*artisti*) in Caltagirone were allowed to elect their own representatives. They had to manage guild business, as consuls did elsewhere in the kingdom.⁵⁵ In the statutes of Noto of 15 May 1444, the artisan

Trapani published in G. Lombardo, *Grazie e privilegi dei pescatori trapanesi tra Medioevo ed età moderna* (Marsala, 1997).

⁵¹ BCPa, ms. Qq D54, *Notamento de diverse cose della città di Palermo degne di memorie tanto di privilegi come d'ordinatione pragmatiche e bandi viceregi*, unnumbered fos.

⁵² 'Alios magistros expertos in talibus'. BCPa, Beccaria ms. Qq E 190 unnumbered fos.: 'videndi et scrutandi alios magistros atque discipulos qui huiusmodi magisterium exercent, eosque valeat atque possint corrigere, punire et effectualiter mandare' (ACPa, Atti Bandi Provviste, 113, unnumbered fos. (1406-07)).

⁵³ F.L. Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze di Palermo nei secoli XV-XVIII* (Trapani, 1991), pp.127-30.

⁵⁴ F. Marletta, 'La costituzione e le prime vicende della corporazione di Catania', *ASSOr* 1 (1904): 354-58.

⁵⁵ 'Ki li artisti di la ditta terra pozzano eligiri consuli, li quali consuli hagiano a conuxire et providiri in li causi di loru magisteru per la dicta universitati, cussi comu si costuma in nel altri

consuls of Noto were approved by Alfonso according to the statutes of the artisans in Catania.⁵⁶ On 10 July 1444, the statutes of Patti mentioned regulations for leather-workers.⁵⁷ In Palermo, on 12 May 1447 the silver- and goldsmiths' guild received their first set of regulations.⁵⁸

During the 1430s and 1440s king Alfonso V of Aragon approved numerous sets of urban constitutions, signed most of the first statutes, and confirmed the voting rights of craft representatives in the main Sicilian towns. Yet, Alfonso's role in the process of guild institutionalisation is ambiguous. On the one hand, his approval of the election of consuls and legal backing of artisan regulations seems to support the thesis that the emergence of a central state was a prerequisite for craft guild success.⁵⁹ On the other hand, Alfonso was clearly hostile to the guilds' political ambitions and actively prevented craft consuls from participating in urban administration. The formal approval of guild statutes, the recognition of craft representatives, and the support of local autonomies, were all part of the king's attempts to gather consensus for his military policies on the southern Italian mainland. Alfonso was not, however, keen to promote the claims of artisans and professional groups, which he clearly perceived as socially and politically subversive. He therefore lighted on a compromise, whereby formal recognition was mitigated by supporting the urban patriciate's demands that excluded artisan

chitati di lu regno' (A.M. Precopi Lombardo, *L'artigianato trapanese dal XIV al XIX secolo* (Palermo, 1987), p.24).

⁵⁶ 'Pro consulibus artistarum terre Nothi, (...) in observanciam capitulorum consulatus artistarum civitatis Cataniae' (ASPa, Regia Cancelleria, 80, c.303ss. (1443-44)).

⁵⁷ 'Item, imperoki li curbiseri di la dicta chitati su multiplicati in tantu ki quasi dipploruranu et supra vindinu l'arti loru et non fannu lu debitu et per quistu indi consequita grandi dannu la universitati per la trista coirami et pillami, ancora per quista opera e magisteriu loru et eccessivi pagamenti ki si piglianu, supplica la detta universitati ki sia sua merci conchedivi graciose ki li Iurati qui pro tempore fuerint poczanu eligiri et constitui unu consulu supra la dicta arti annuativi lu quali haia ad corregiri la dicta arti tantu di bonitati rej et operis quantu di lu magisteriu et di li preci, lu quali consulu pocza consequitari et exigiri per pena a contravenientibus quillu ki per li dicti Iurati sirr  ordinatu' (ASPa, Regia Cancelleria, 79, c.90 (1444-45)).

⁵⁸ ACPa, Atti Bandi Provviste, 174, unnumbered fos.(1467-68); BCPa, ms.2Qq F197, cited by G. Di Marzo, *I Gagini e la scultura*, vol.2 *Documenti*, pp.317-22, MC. Di Natale (ed.) *Ori e argenti di Sicilia dal Quattrocento al Settecento* (Milan, 1989), p.96; Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, pp.23-30.

⁵⁹ Although in Catania the presence of guild consuls in general assemblies is recorded in 1427, eight years before Alfonso's formal recognition, artisans needed the support of the central authority to acquire formal recognition. See P. D'Arrigo, 'Notizie sulla corporazione degli argentieri di Catania', *ASSOr* 14-15 (1936-37): 35. She cited ASCt, Atti dei Giurati vol.2 Consilia.

representatives from most public offices.⁶⁰ The Spanish Crown indeed remained generally hostile to the emergence and development of craft guilds, with the result that once the Spanish dominion was firmly established, Sicilian artisans were left with very little bargaining power and guild masters had few, if any, authority to enforce guild rules.

Based on the signatures on the town records, the participation by craft masters in the general meetings of the Palermo town council increased by 90 per cent in the late sixteenth century. Nevertheless, this did not coincide with a stronger involvement in decision-making processes, for by then general assemblies were dealing with issues of secondary importance. This marked a considerable change compared with the first half of the century. Up to the mid-sixteenth century, the Palermo city council had invited the most important citizens to discuss matters of common interest such as the imposition of new taxes, foodstuff prices, or the administration of town finances. Meetings involved lively debates between the jurors of the council and the local aristocracy. A final vote and further comments concluded the meetings.⁶¹ By the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, however when guildsmen made their appearance *en masse*, the general meetings discussed issues like charitable and religious support, the proclamation (rather than the setting) of prices, council expenditure on donations, and public works. The reports do not mention any debate, votes followed smoothly with no further intervention, and all the points were regularly approved. Only a few representatives of the local aristocracy still signed the reports, compared with the large number of masters who voted and signed the records.⁶² Guild masters' participation in council's general assemblies did not give rise to

⁶⁰ 'Item supplica lo ditto Regno, perché in alcuni citati et terri dello ditto Regno su stati creati, et facti Consuli, et Sindici artiansi, li quali capino in certa forma a lu regimentu di li dicti Cittati, et terri, li quali su persuni idioti, et illiciterati, et venino spissi volti a contentioni, et differentia cum li officiali ordinari di sua Majesta de li Cittati predicti et terri: per li quali naxino multi inconvenienti, et dibactiti indi venino, li quali non erano antiquamenti; et cussi li dicti Consuli et Sindici, cum loro capitulo et privilegi, digiono cessare in ogni Cittati, et terra di lo Regno predicto: et de cetero non si digiano fari; immo la Republica sia gubernata per li soi officiali di sua Majesta, cum ab antiquo fu sempre usato, et accustumato' (F. Testa, *Capitula Regni Siciliae* (Palermo, 1741), p.367).

⁶¹ See ACPa, Consigli Civici, 68 (1531-50).

⁶² ACPa, Consigli Civici, 71-2, cc.234-5v, cc.288-9v (1600-10, 1611-30). Masters signed under the name of the guild they belonged to; they were mainly silversmiths, tailors, sock makers, which seem to be the most representatives guilds in towns and the ones with more numerous members.

greater influence over urban policy, which was being set by small groups of patricians listed among those eligible to the urban offices (*mastre*).⁶³ Rather, guild participation in public events may have helped membership along the lines whereby participation in general meetings and religious processions increased the masters' visibility and improved their business, as discussed previously.⁶⁴

⁶³ F. Benigno, 'La questione della capitale. Lotta politica e rappresentanza degli interessi nella Sicilia del Seicento', *Società e storia* 47 (1990): 35.

⁶⁴ See above, ch. 4.1.1.

Chapter 4

Sicilian guilds

Sicilian guilds were always few. They only emerged in a few demanial towns, did not have many members, and had little political influence. Even the documents and records fail to define the guilds clearly, often confusing them with confraternities and other associations. Sicilian guilds do not seem to have been organised differently from other European guilds, but their links with local society were unusual. Sicilian guilds developed late, and achieved recognition from above, rather than through a process of self-definition from below. They had shallow roots in local administration and society, and were viewed with suspicion if not downright hostility by the central authorities, which only acceded to their requests at times of institutional upheaval and (temporary) necessity. Consequently, Sicilian crafts emerged relatively late, in the fifteenth century, when the island economy had already specialised extensively to agriculture, and they remained underdeveloped thereafter. During the seventeenth century, when Sicily experienced a redistribution of resources towards the western coast and the growing economic predominance of Palermo over Messina, the growth in demand in for high-quality manufactures supported a process of craft specialisation in Trapani and Palermo, but led to a contraction of the craft base in other cities like Messina. Specialisation gave rise to increased craft fragmentation; traditional 'umbrella organisations' broke down and were replaced by more specialised, smaller crafts, whose size was nonetheless limited by the generally low quality of the goods produced.

4.1 Definition

It is extremely difficult to define Sicilian guilds and to measure their size and development over any length of time. The terminology in the original sources does not help, because the word for craft guild (*maestranza*) was also applied to religious confraternities, professional groups such as notaries and brokers, and

other associations which did not correspond to the craft guilds described in this study. We have no contemporary lists of guilds, and none have been compiled by modern scholars. In the contemporary documentation, terms such as *maestranza* and *arte* would normally have distinguished two different groups of artisans: *maestranze* were constituted by those masters who asked for representatives and institutional recognition, while *arti* were groups of artisans who exercised the same craft and who agreed to regulate their daily activity collectively, but did not involve the urban authority.¹ However, the documents frequently confused the terms and even applied them to groups of workers who simply exercised the same craft but had no collective agreement.

Another significant distinction, but one that it is often impossible to make clearly, is that between guild and confraternity. Sicilian sources do not distinguish clearly between the two forms of association. Moreover, in certain areas, guilds seem to have depended more on ecclesiastical than on secular urban approval, since the statutes were first confirmed by the bishop's see, and then by the city council.² However, confraternities and guilds appeared to have been based on two substantially different contractual relations. Guild meetings might be held in churches, and guild masters frequently contributed to church building and maintenance, yet guild membership was rooted in a network of economic and professional links, officially recognised by local and central government, which circumscribed the institutional role of the crafts. On the other hand, religious confraternities relied on relations of mutual assistance that supported religious belief and practice, and they were backed by the Church.

Finally, there is a distinction to be drawn between guilds and simple crafts. Guilds existed side by side with unregulated manufacture, especially in the convents and monasteries where nuns, priests, and young women worked. In Sicily, the two forms of production seem to have complemented each other because of the limited degree of specialisation that some guilds could achieve, and this makes it even harder to define the boundaries between formally recognised groups and independent artisans working in private houses for noble families.

¹ BCPa, ms. Qq D 54, *Notamento de diverse cose della città di Palermo*, unnumbered fos.

² This is the case of few guilds in Syracuse. See F. Carpinteri, 'Capitoli dei Consolati d'arti e mestieri nel '700 siracusano', *ASSr* 15 (1969).

Nonetheless, during the seventeenth century, fully competent guild members producing high quality goods gradually replaced convent and monastery-based production.³

4.1.1 Craft guilds and religious confraternities

The present work focuses mainly on the economic aspect of guilds, and not on their religious, social, or military functions. However, in a context where the incentives for guild participation seem to have been very low, religious activities had an important role in promoting guild membership; in Olson's words, they functioned as 'non-collective social benefits', defined as gains for individuals participating in a group, which raise the costs of non-participation (free-riding) and help a group to retain its members.⁴

Artisans frequently met in churches for the election of their consuls or the discussion of guild affairs. Only the wealthier guilds could afford their own church; other guilds shared the same church and collaborated in the maintenance of the altars. Consequently, part of the Sicilian guilds' financial resources were devoted to Church maintenance, processions, and religious ceremonies,⁵ but also to the building of chapels and altars in existing churches, for example in the town cathedral.⁶ Guilds also played a special role in spreading the ideals of the Counter-Reformation. In Sicily (as in Spain) the Jesuits introduced the representation of

³ See E. D'Amico Del Rosso, *I paramenti sacri* (Palermo, 1997), p.27 for external commissioning of silver-ware by a Palermo convent.

⁴ M. Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action. Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge, 1965), pp.72-75; S.R. Epstein, 'Craft Guilds, Apprenticeship, and Technological Change in Preindustrial Europe', *Journal of Economic History* 58 (1998): 687.

⁵ Guild statutes mention three main reasons to invest the guild's money: first, upkeep of the church, altar and religious events; second, dowries for the members' daughters; and third, assistance of members in need. The tendency to use money for religious purposes became more noticeable as time went on. For example, Trapani tailors in the statutes of 1618 (ch.11) say that masters and apprentices had to pay respectively 3 and 1 *tari* to look after the icon of Saint Oliva, her chapel in the church of Saint Agostino, and to pay for the celebrations. Later, in an audit of 1773 all the expenditures registered have been used for religious functions and events. See A.M. Precopi Lombardo, *L'artigianato trapanese dal XIV al XIX secolo* (Palermo, 1987), pp.85 and 101-5.

⁶ Several examples can be mentioned for Palermo, where in most statutes a third of the fines collected were used for the building of the cathedral. See for example F.L. Oddo, *Statuti delle*

biblical stories and of the Good Friday Passion, and these became important aspects of artisan involvement. In Trapani, the Company of *Sangue Preziosissimo di Cristo* required the town's artisans to build 21 groups of statues, in cloth glue and wood, representing the main stages of Christ's Passion; these were known as *Misteri*, the same term used to define crafts themselves. Each group was sponsored by one or more guilds, and guild members carried these heavy groups of statues throughout the town for 24 hours on Good Friday.⁷ The Company assigned each group of statues to its allotted artisans with a public notarised act; most of these groups were assigned in the first quarter of the seventeenth century.⁸

The guild hierarchy was reflected in the position taken in a town's religious processions, which was established by the urban administration and sometimes by the viceroy himself. The rules employed are uncertain, but criteria of social prestige and tradition, even more than economic status, seem to have determined the order of such processions. A master could be a member of one or more confraternities and this could offer many advantages,⁹ while sub-groups within a guild with specific skills could use their role in a confraternity to further their interests, as a discussion of the fishermen and carpenters in Trapani will show.

In Trapani, the coral fishermen were 'brothers' of Saint Lucia, and the carpenters, 'brothers' of Saint Joseph. The fishermen's guild was divided in two groups, fishermen and coral fishermen, but the first alone (known as *Casalicchio*) controlled both the group's administration and the management of the guild's financial resources, perhaps because it was the first to take shape and was the depository of the guild books. This led the coral fishermen to find an autonomous space in the confraternity of Saint Lucia, which also allowed them to further their claims of independence from the main guild. Coral gave them a significant source of income, higher than that gained from fishing, and the coral fishermen used their

maestranze di Palermo (Trapani, 1991), p.151 (Palermo, statutes of tailors, 1488); p.153 (Palermo, statutes of belt makers, 1488); p.159 (Palermo, statutes of belt makers, 1509).

⁷ The procession is still one of the most important religious events of this town and is still sponsored and organised by shopkeepers and local artisans.

⁸ See L. Novara and A.M. Precopi Lombardo, *Argenti in Processione* (Marsala, 1992). The authors recovered most of the notary contracts concerning the *Misteri*, according to which some guilds became responsible for the twenty-one groups.

⁹ S. Barraja, 'La maestranza degli orafi e argentieri di Palermo', in M.C. Di Natale (ed.) *Ori e argenti di Sicilia dal Quattrocento al Settecento* (Milan, 1989), p.367.

links with the church to store and sell the coral there. After over a century of attempts, the coral fishermen finally obtained total independence from the main guild in the early eighteenth century.¹⁰

Carpenters in Trapani formed one of the biggest guilds in town. They included a number of sub-groups, represented by independent consuls and characterised by a high degree of specialisation. The carpenters' patron saint was Saint Joseph, and in Trapani, the fraternity of Saint Joseph seems to have included most of the local carpenters, since membership provided exemption from payment of guild mastership fees.¹¹ Many masters therefore joined the confraternity in order to ensure themselves and their children extra benefits; but if an artisan did not show full commitment, the guild could ask him to leave the brotherhood and pay the mastership fees after all.

Guilds gave their members the opportunity of being actively involved in religious events, and this participation had a direct impact on masters' reputation. Masters who joined a confraternity would also be perceived as members of a formally recognised group, in contrast to those who practised similar activities without being member of any corporation. Religious duties therefore enhanced visibility, and often worked as incentives for guild membership. The numerous disputes over position in religious processions expressed competition for prestige: literally, for an intangible 'positional' good. Artisans cared deeply about their reputation, which can be viewed as 'social capital' that could be converted into a source of income. Particularly in a context where manufacture was mainly intended for a domestic market, public reputation could make a difference in expected returns. Investments in relationships and public events can be seen as a promotional strategy *ante litteram*.¹²

¹⁰ According to Serraino, the two groups were separate guilds because of the strong independence that the groups of coral fishermen showed since the early seventeenth century. M. Serraino, *Trapani nella vita civile e religiosa* (Trapani, 1968). Only recently, the fee administration of the *Casalicchio* group showed that the two groups formed one guild at least until the eighteenth century. See G. Lombardo, *Grazie e privilegi dei pescatori trapanesi tra medioevo ed età moderna* (Marsala, 1997).

¹¹ S. Corso, '“Fabri lignarij”. La maestranza a Trapani nei secoli XVII e XVIII', *La Fardelliana* 8-9 (1989-90): 39-99.

¹² See S. Cerutti, 'Group Strategies and Trade Strategies: The Turin Tailors Guild in the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries', in S. Woolf (ed.) *Domestic Strategies: Work and*

4.1.2 Military functions

The military duties of artisans have been interpreted as one of the main functions of the guild system, and one of the main reasons why the state supported the development of guilds. In Sicily, however, entrusting the defence of the urban walls to artisans, or better to the citizens in general, was an ancient, well-established custom, long before the formal recognition of the corporate groups.¹³ During the early modern period the guilds provided the cities' night watch, even if they did not normally organise a proper military force; nevertheless, guild statutes never referred to participation in these night guards, and guilds did not impose fines on those who did not participate in this military duty.¹⁴ By the early seventeenth century, moreover, guilds tried increasingly to be exempted from the night guard, either because this duty prevented them from working at night,¹⁵ or because it affected their dignity and reputation.¹⁶ In seventeenth-century Syracuse, citizens and guild members demanded the recruitment of a proper military force for the city's defence. Although the cost of a military force was very high, 700 *onze* instead of the previous 200 *onze*, in 1636, the city council approved the recruitment of 60 people for the protection of the town.¹⁷

In Palermo, however, guilds always provided the military defence of the town. A chronicle records that in 1583, the viceroy Marco Antonio Colonna was received by a military force composed of guild members, including tailors, sock

Family in France and Italy, 1600-1800 (Cambridge, 1991), pp.102-47; S. Cerutti, *Mestieri e privilegi. Nascita delle corporazioni a Torino, secoli XVII-XVIII* (Turin, 1992).

¹³ L. Siciliano Villanueva, *Consuetudini della città di Palermo*, in DSSS ser.2, 4 (1894): 287 and 404. Already in the fourteenth century, Palermo *consuetudines* established that citizens had to protect the town, in spite of their privilege to be exempted from any unpaid job ('De modo et qualitate custodiae adhibendis in civitate de nocte'). Masters of escort in 1320 were Filippo Bancheri smith, master Enrico carpenter, and in 1327 master Brando saddler. F.L. Oddo, *Le maestranze di Palermo. Aspetti e momenti di vita politica e sociale (secc. XII-XIX)* (Palermo, 1991), p.79 n.1. Cfr. BCPa, ms. Qq E 29, F. Paruta, *Annali delle cose oscure di Palermo*, cc.126.

¹⁴ See below, ch.6.

¹⁵ See ASTp, Notai, not. F. Gioemi unnumbered fos. (8 aprile 1612), statutes of Trapani silversmiths.

¹⁶ The requests of the artisans to be exempt from the night guards had already started by the beginning of the fourteenth century. See Oddo, *Maestranze di Palermo*, p.81.

¹⁷ ASSr, *Consigli del Senato*, vol.13, unnumbered fos. (1633-1638), cit. in F. Gallo, 'Le gabelle e le mete dell'università di Siracusa', in D. Ligresti (ed.) *Il governo della città. Patriziati e politica nella Sicilia moderna* (Catania, 1990), p.114, n. 96.

makers, engravers, and masons.¹⁸ In 1614, the guilds of Palermo numbered 20,000 soldiers, including 1,300 members of the so-called *Nazioni*, that is people from Naples, Genoa, and Lombardy, now established in town.¹⁹ However, the accuracy of the number is hard to assess, and it is in any case unclear whether 18,700 represented only the number of guild members involved in the urban militia, or the overall number of artisans in Palermo (which had a total population of more than 100,000). At the end of the seventeenth century, the urban militia was still formed by guild members, and in 1735, king Charles III promoted the urban militia to royal status.²⁰

4.2 Structure and organisation of Sicilian guilds

The late emergence of Sicilian guilds and their scarce development did not alter their basic features and organisational structure; what actually distinguished them from other European guilds was their singular weakness, which was, as I have suggested, a result of the lack of institutional support for the enforcement and development of craft skills except in a few large cities.

This section shows first how Sicilian guilds mirror the other guilds in their general features and then how the difficulties that Sicilian craftsmen faced in having their right to organise formally, resulted in the creation of smaller and less specialised guilds. However, once the process of craft organisation was begun, the supply of skills was enhanced, and craft guilds tended to become more specialised over time in spite of the authorities' attempts to override guild jurisdiction.

As elsewhere in Europe, the only full members of a Sicilian craft were the masters. Masters had the right to vote, and were eligible for the highest offices of

¹⁸ F. Paruta and N. Palmerino, *Diario della città di Palermo* (Palermo, 1881), p.103; Oddo, *Maestranze di Palermo*, p.83.

¹⁹ V. Auria, *Diario delle cose occorse in Palermo* (Palermo, 1881) p.153; Oddo, *Maestranze di Palermo*, p.84.

²⁰ BCPa, ms.Qq F 36, Memorie storico-diplomatiche della milizia urbana di Palermo, scritta da Gerolamo de Franchis maestro di cerimonie dell'eccellentissimo Senato l'anno 1796, cit in S. Laudani, 'The Guild System and City Government. Palermo in Eighteenth and Nineteenth

consuls and councillors, and they transmitted the secrets of the craft to younger apprentices. Apprentices and journeymen (*garzoni* and *lavoranti*) also benefited from the guild and contributed to the organisation and maintenance of the group, but they had no formal decision-making rights. Finally, the craft statutes – the guilds' basic rules of engagement – were prepared by the masters with the help of a notary, but required the authorisation and political and legal backing of the local and central authorities.

Sicilian guilds frequently developed as a single structure assembling numerous crafts. As in many European guilds, particularly in the first phase of their emergence, the lack of boundaries between similar crafts under a single denomination, which Epstein calls 'umbrella organisation', made it easier for craftsmen to move between different sectors.²¹

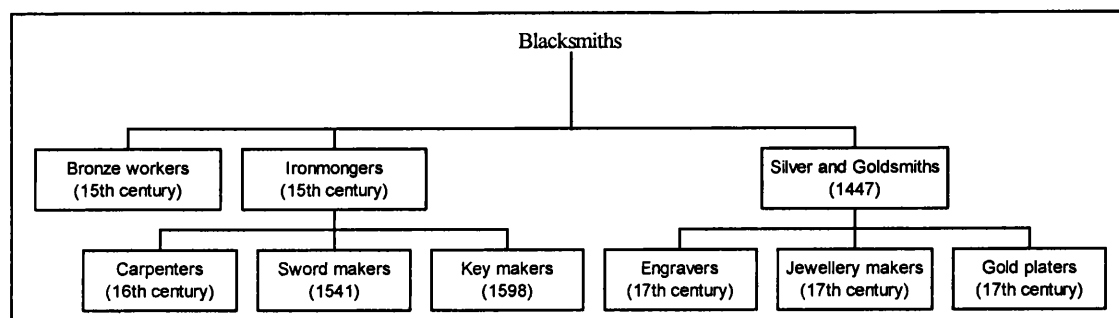
The first Palermo guilds to obtain formal approval included metalworkers (silversmiths, goldsmiths and blacksmiths); masons and carpenters; leather workers (shoemakers and saddle makers) and tailors, who outnumbered the weavers (Fig.4.1). Another example of a guild composed by other trades, is that of the Trapani carpenters, who specialised in the building of ships for fishing, or in making sails for the numerous windmills used in the milling of grain and local salt (Fig. 4.2). As elsewhere in Europe, artisans tended over time to specialise to sub-sectors within the same original organisation;²² but in Sicily the emergence of sub-groups occurred later and was more limited in amplitude than in other western European societies.

Centuries', in A. Guenzi, P. Massa, and F. Piola Caselli (eds.) *Guilds, Markets and Work Regulations in Italy, Sixteenth-Nineteenth Centuries* (Aldershot, 1998), pp.98-116.

²¹ Epstein, 'Craft Guilds', p.690.

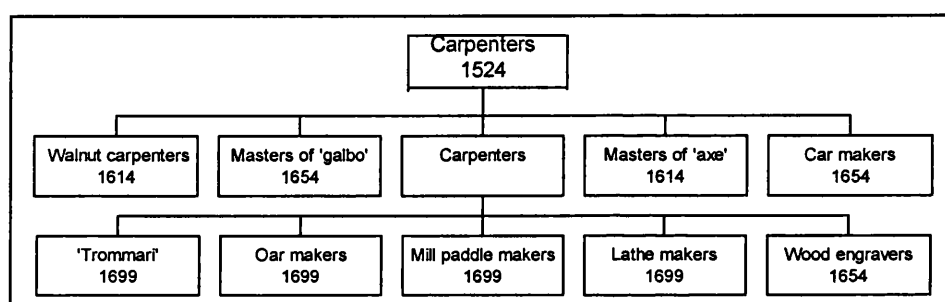
²² For example, some blacksmiths concentrated on the production of keys and locks while remaining members of the metalworkers (Fig. 4.1).

Fig. 4.1 The blacksmiths of Palermo



*Sources: BCPa, ms.2Qq F197; ACPa, Provviste 1551-1651 *ad annum*. The exact dates for the emergence of some of these guilds are not known.

Fig. 4.2 The carpenters of Trapani



*Source: Corso, '“Fabri lignarij”', p.40.

Although it is still very difficult to determine with any precision what percentage of European urban population were artisans, as there are few sources which permit comparison guilds in Sicily seem to have emerged only in a few demanial towns and to have involved a very limited number of crafts, compared to other Italian and European towns.²³ While the total number of crafts is not necessarily a precise indicator of craft guild strength, since the presence of 'umbrella groups' in some societies could easily mask the intensity of the phenomenon, the difference between Palermo, with a population of around 100,000 and about 37-46 guilds, and most other European towns is very striking.²⁴ Dijon, for example, had around

²³ See J.R. Farr, *Artisans in Europe* (Cambridge, 2000), p.96.

²⁴ The lack of records for Sicilian guilds prevents any reliable calculation of numbers of members, though an approximation can be made based on the number of members who participated in the drafting of the statutes.

80 guilds with a population of 15,000 in 1556; Nördlingen in 1579 had a population of 10,000 and around 60 guilds; and Norwich, with a population of 20,000 in 1579, had between 171 and 200 guilds.²⁵

A more conclusive picture is provided by the percentage of the city's population. It seems that only around 16 per cent of Palermo's population of over 100,000 were members of a guild compared to figures ranging from about 30 per cent in Dijon to up to 80 per cent in Nördlingen (Table 4.2).²⁶

Table 4.1 Artisans as proportion of urban population

Towns	Date	Percentage of population	Artisan numbers	Population
Dijon	1464	30	910 households	15,000
Cuenca	1561	58	2,007 all household heads	15,000
Nördlingen	1579	83.3	1,054 taxed male citizens	c.10,000
Frankfurt am Main	1587	56.1	1,247 households	2,223 households
Palermo	1616	15.8	ca. 20,000	127,000

*Friedrichs, *The Early Modern City*, pp.147-48 (Dijon and Frankfurt am Main); Farr, *Artisans*, p.97 (Cuenca and Nordlingen); Auria, 'Diario delle cose occorse in Palermo', p.153 (Palermo).

²⁵ J.R. Farr, *Hands of Honour. Artisans and Their World in Dijon, 1550-1650* (Ithaca and London, 1988), pp.271-74 (Dijon); C.R. Friedrichs, *Urban Society in an Age of War: Nördlingen 1580-1720* (Princeton New Jersey, 1979), p.78 (Nördlingen); C. G. A. Clay, *Economic Expansion and Social Change: England 1500-1700*, vol.1, p.179 (Norwich). However, the case of Milan which had around 100 guilds and a population of 130,000 people, show the weakness of this kind of comparisons. See E. Merlo, *Le corporazioni conflitti e soppressioni. Milano tra sei e settecento* (Milan, 1996), p.22.

²⁶ There is an interesting debate to establish whether the best conditions for craft settlement were articulated in small communities where craftsmen and their institutions were densely woven into the structure of a traditional urban world, or in towns of middle size which were not dominated by a single interest. See M. Walker, *German Home Towns: Community, State and General Estate, 1648-1871* (Ithaca, 1971); Thrupp, 'The Gilds', p.230. According to Crossick, 'future research must bring urban size more clearly into focus, by reflecting on the tendency to inflate conflict that is inherent in the sources used for large-town studies, and by exploring the tensions within smaller urban centres, especially those involved in production for wider markets' (G. Crossick, 'Past Masters: In Search of the Artisan in European History', in Crossick (ed.) *Artisan and the European Town*, pp.15-16).

4.3 Characteristics of Sicilian craft guilds

Craft guilds remained under the jurisdiction of city councils. Masters therefore had very little bargaining power with the central government to obtain privileges (such as access to public offices) that would attract individuals to participate in the group.²⁷ In Palermo, all guilds came under the authority of the Praetor, and in Messina they were subject to the *Strategoto*; in other towns guilds were governed by the local city councils, who either appointed the guild consuls and councillors directly, or approved and confirmed them after their election by the guild. Consequently, without the local council's approval, craft consuls had no authority to enforce guild regulations and to monitor guild members.

The city council could easily interfere in guild elections lobbying, factionalism and attempts to monopolise guild offices were encouraged by opportunities to alter election results with the support of the urban officials. The balance of power within guilds was mainly determined by these vertical allegiances, since masters could not have access to the highest political offices directly.

The example of a consul election in the guild of Palermo shoemakers shows how splinter groups could easily emerge.²⁸ According to the provision sent to the council in 1660, four names were proposed by the election among guild members: Domenico Galici, Francesco Tindaro, Micheli Cozo, and Giacomo Deci.²⁹ The Senate had to elect the consul from among these names by lot (*bussolo*).³⁰ One of the jurors, don Ottavio Palminteri who was substituting the Praetor, changed two of the appointed names with another two, and introduced one further name.³¹ In spite of the masters' complaints, the Praetor declared the election to have been conducted in full respect of the rules, on the basis of the Praetor's right to substitute named candidates, or to suggest new ones.³²

²⁷ These represent the so-called 'non-collective social benefit'. Cfr n.4 of this chapter.

²⁸ ACPa, Provviste, 693, c.51 (1660-61).

²⁹ See ACPa, Provviste, 624, cc.89v-109r (Statutes of Palermo shoemakers approved by Marc'Antonio Colonna 1580-81).

³⁰ *Bussolo*: this is the most widespread system of voting in Sicily, which ensured a free-election to the municipal offices. See the term in F.L. Oddo, *Dizionario delle antiche istituzioni siciliane* (Palermo, 1984), *ad vocem*.

³¹ He substituted Francesco Tindaro and Micheli Cozzo with Giuseppe Palumbo e Onofrio Mollo. The extra name was Francesco Mazza (ACP, Provviste, 624, c.92r (1580-81)).

³² *Ibidem*, cc.90rv. The first chapter stated that every quarter must have its own representative.

This was not an isolated case. On 11 September 1660, Palermo's soapmakers claimed that the consul Vincenzo Romano and the councillor Filippo Bongione had been elected owing to an irregular agreement with the Praetor.³³ They then included a new article in their regulations, which forbade the election of masters who had been elected before, except in case of necessity. Another of these provisions denounced an internal group of masters sharing the consul office for nine years, because 'this is against the correct government of the guild'.³⁴ In both Trapani and Palermo, a number of provisions and new statutes claimed to forbid re-election of members who had held the offices of consul or councillors in the past, but the rules could be flouted by gaining access to the politicians' ear.

All guild statutes had to be approved by the highest institutional office in the kingdom, the *Tribunale del Regio Patrimonio*.³⁵ This office, as the main organ of control, both approved and registered the statutes and acted as Supreme Court of Appeal in disputes between the urban authorities and guilds in the royal demesne; to a certain extent, it oversaw and protect the legal terms of the statutes and the effectiveness of guild privileges and rights. Consequently, if any objection arose in the process, there was frequently a long delay between the drafting of these statutes and the formal approval from the local and central governments, sometimes even a few years. Thus, a provision for the Palermo tailors stated that the regulations, drafted on 25 June 1612 by notary Michele Greco, were invalid because the local city council had never approved them.³⁶

The presence of these two institutional levels of approval for the guild statutes in all the towns of the kingdom made it harder for Sicilian masters to obtain formal recognition and held back guild development. The process of guild and statute approval therefore provides crucial insights for an understanding of the limits and potential of craft guilds. Rather different conditions seem to have characterised guilds in northern Italy. In the communes, guilds emerged in a context of strong political competition through a process of self-definition from

³³ ACPa, Provviste, 693, c.3 (1660-61).

³⁴ Ibidem, c.4.

³⁵ The archive of the *Regio Patrimonio* is in the *Archivio di Stato of Palermo* (sez. Gancia). Unfortunately, most of the files are in a terrible condition and are not available to the public. In addition, they are not yet ordered chronologically.

³⁶ Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.137. See also ASPa, Notai, not. Michele Greco unnumbered fos. (25 June 1612).

below. Craft guilds could become a tool for gaining support against a political adversary; in several places, seigniorial lords were able to acquire political authority through support from the crafts, though artisans were not necessarily involved in the decision-making process.³⁷ Similar conditions of political instability often occurred in German towns, where ‘artisans (...) realised that their opportunities were heightened when the city’s elite itself was divided’.³⁸ In these cases, guilds could enforce their position because of the strong bargaining power that they had towards local institutions.

In other contexts, moreover, guilds could control and enforce not so much their political ambitions, but rather their economic features. As Epstein suggests:

the most distinctive feature of English guilds... was not so much a generic weakness... Rather it was the relative decline in their political links with the state and with merchant corporations... This institutional decoupling, which made restrictive legislation increasingly hard to enforce but maintained the technological benefits of the guild system after the 1660s, may have give post-Restoration England the technological edge over the Continent’.³⁹

In sum, the ability to implement guild regulations depended on the relation established between guilds and local and central governments. Venetian guild masters were closely monitored and explicitly excluded from the political arena;⁴⁰ nonetheless, local institutions gave very little attention to the revision of their regulations.⁴¹ The Venetian state gave the guilds enough legal backing to enforce

³⁷ D. Degrassi, *L'economia artigiana nell'Italia medievale* (Rome, 1996), p.132.

³⁸ C.R. Friedrichs, ‘Artisans and Urban Politics in Seventeenth-Century Germany’, in G. Crossick (ed.) *Artisans and the European Town*, p.44. The author however identifies masters’ authority with their involvement in political affairs, whereas the Venetian example and London guilds clearly showed that political activity frequently played only a secondary role.

³⁹ Epstein, ‘Craft Guilds’, p.698.

⁴⁰ ‘Venetian guilds ... were kept under firm governmental control without any chance of political power’. S. Thrupp, ‘The Gilds’, in *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, vol.3, *Economic Organization and Policies in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1963), p.237.

⁴¹ The two registers expected to preserve the statutes led different existences. While the official copy remained unaltered, thus assuming the fixity of law, the copy housed at the guild’s premises was periodically updated. Updating meant inserting not only the decrees of the ‘prince’ but also the provisions proposed by the guild’s chapter and subsequently approved either by the city council (in the case of *Terraferma*) or by one of the many magistracies superintending the individual guilds (in the case of Venice). Also included in this register – and this is significant – were proposals that had not been officially approved but which had nonetheless acquired rule-status merely by the fact of being registered (P. Lanaro, ‘Guild Statutes in the Early Modern Age’, in Guenzi, Massa, and Piola Caselli (eds.) *Guilds, Markets and Work Regulations*, p.201).

membership and further their primary purposes, while generally opposing restrictive regulations and monopolistic behaviour.⁴² Masters in such contexts could easily obtain formal approval for their organisations; by implication, the masters' ability to implement their organisations and regulations did not derive from any direct involvement in political affairs.

4.4 Territorial distribution

Guilds in Sicily emerged only in the demanial towns (towns under direct authority of the Crown). Palermo, Messina, Catania, Trapani, and Syracuse seem to have had more numerous groups than other towns. Palermo was the largest city in the island: its population increased rapidly during the sixteenth century and at a slower rate in the seventeenth century. As the city gradually expanded, it took its place as sole capital in competition with Messina. It is not therefore surprising that Palermo had the largest production and consumption of luxury goods, and the largest number of guilds and members.

During the first half of the seventeenth century, the Palermo city council approved numerous new guilds in response to the growing demand for specialised manufactures. The permanent presence of the viceroy, of the major aristocracy, and of numerous important Church representatives, upheld demand for carriages and skilled coachmen, for good masons and carpenters for luxury buildings, and for high-quality silver- and goldsmiths; there also had to be weavers and artisans able to work with velvet, brocade, and silk; and Palermo's guild of cooks and cake-makers was set up in response to demand for rich food in the capital. Consequently, the number of guilds in Palermo increased by 20 per cent, from 36 in the mid-sixteenth century to 45 in 1647.

The reputation of masters working in Palermo was such that the city's biggest workshops also absorbed the demand for luxury goods from clients elsewhere. This tradition went back at least to the mid-sixteenth century, but it gained in significance during the seventeenth century when Palermo became the

⁴² Mackenney, R. *Tradesmen and Traders: the World of the Guilds in Venice and Europe (1250-*

primary centre for high quality production on the island. Already in 1546, the abbess of a monastery in Monte San Giuliano (Erice) had ordered a bas-relief from the workshop of the Palermitan Paolo Gili,⁴³ even though the nearby town of Trapani could boast well-known silversmiths. In 1552, Pietro Morana, the rector at the church of Saint Martino also in Monte San Giuliano, ordered silver objects including a reliquary and a silver case from another Palermo goldsmith, Antonio Lo Picholo. Though Palermo was more than 100km from Monte San Giuliano, the reputation of these masters was well known. Antonio Lo Picholo used to work with Scipione Casella, who had been an apprentice in the workshop of Paolo Gili and Francesco la Torre, at the time of their partnership in 1531.⁴⁴

Another very well-known Palermitan workshop was that of Nibilio Gagini and Pietro Rizzo, partners from 1531. Salvatore Ferrigno, treasurer of the primate church of Castrogiovanni, ordered six silver candlesticks from them to the value of 120 *onze*, paid by the *magnifico* Giulio Grimaldi, baron of Risichella.⁴⁵ They received a commission for another two silver candlesticks from the church of Annunziata in Trapani to the value of 20 *onze*, and for a cross for the cathedral in Polizzi. Nibilio later made a silver case for the church of the Santissimo Sacramento in Sciacca (1576-80), an ostensory for the primate church of Mistretta, and two silver chalices for the major church of Sciacca in 1580.⁴⁶

In July 1599, the jurors of Caltagirone asked the baron of San Michele, Sanchez Gravinias Cruillas, to order a silver case from Nibilio Gagini; the container was to hold the relics of Saint James. According to the terms of the contract, signed on July 12, Nunzio Trovato, a procurator of the baron, had to monitor the work of the silversmith in Palermo, and when the silver case was ready, some Jesuits were to carry it to Caltagirone. Unfortunately, the silversmith died in 1607 before finishing the chest, although all the panels were ready. They were inherited by Giuseppe, Nibilio's son who was working in a major workshop with his grandfather and his uncles Pietro Ciaula and Pietro Lazara. But Giuseppe

1650). London, 1987.

⁴³ G. Di Marzo, *I Gagini e la scultura in Sicilia nei secoli XV e XVI*, 3 vols. (Palermo, 1880-83), vol. 1, p.623; I. Navarra, 'Notizie sugli orafi e argentieri operanti a Messina, Palermo, Sciacca e Trapani, nei secoli XVI e XVII', *Libera Università Trapani* 27 (1991): 60.

⁴⁴ Navarra, 'Notizie sugli orafi', p.83.

⁴⁵ M. Accascina, *Oreficeria di Sicilia dal XII al XIX secolo* (Palermo, 1974), p.182.

⁴⁶ Navarra, 'Notizie sugli orafi', p.86.

died only three years later in 1610 and left numerous debts, which were settled by the sale of his properties. The court appointed some silversmiths to value the goods in the workshop; in particular, two goldsmiths were asked to value the panels of the chest for the relics of Saint James, one representing the interest of Caltagirone, and the other of Palermo. On 12 September 1611, Francesco Di Stefano from Caltagirone met Deodato Mortello, silversmith of Palermo, to value the chest. Later, the jurors of Caltagirone sent Geronimo Ursia, a silversmith from Catania to make a second valuation with Ferdinando la Rosa from Palermo, but we do not know the end of the story.⁴⁷

The story shows a complex play of relations between urban administrations and local artisans. The valuation of such an important piece of work was carried out by two local silversmiths representing the interests of both the towns involved in the dispute, Palermo and Caltagirone. However, in the second valuation Caltagirone sought to be represented by a silversmith from Catania, perhaps because they sought a non-Palermitan would be more independent. Catania's guild of silversmiths had a high reputation ever since Alfonso had approved its statutes in 1435 and the town had obtained the privilege of marking the silver with its own trademark; but it is clear that the workshops of Palermo were considered to be the best in Sicily, capable of supplying the highest quality of manufactured goods, and it is no coincidence that Palermo was also the town in which guilds were most developed.

We would expect a similar situation in Messina, which competed with Palermo for the role of capital and about which Arenaprimo states that 'the guilds of Messina had the most important development among the Sicilian guilds and had a great influence in the political, economic and social life of the town'.⁴⁸ Unfortunately, the lack of documentation makes it impossible to establish the number of guilds that might have existed there before the sixteenth century. Contemporary chronicles indicate that at the end of the fifteenth century, and in the early sixteenth century, Messina probably numbered as many guilds as

⁴⁷ Navarra, 'Notizie sugli orafi', p.86.

⁴⁸ G. Arenaprimo, 'Statuti dell'arte dei sarti di Messina del 1522', *ASM* 7 (1906): 315.

Palermo. Messina relied on a vast hinterland, and its authority extended over the straits to southern Calabria, whereby it established a privileged contact with the Neapolitan area. From the late fifteenth century, the economy of this town was dominated by silk production. The cultivation of mulberry trees and the rearing of silkworms were in the hands of smallholders and tenants, who lived in the hilly countryside around the town, and unlike other towns in Sicily, a guild of silk weavers existed here. Messina's silk industry reached its peak in 1591, when, thanks to a payment to the Crown of 583,333 *scudi*, Messina obtained the monopoly over silk exports from eastern Sicily and the residence of the viceroy's court for eighteen months every three years.⁴⁹

The changes in demand that occurred in Messina at the beginning of the seventeenth century when the viceregal court began to take up residence there, can be discerned in the production of luxury goods and in the booming building trade, which was also stimulated by a steady influx of new immigrants and since a plague in 1532. Masons, marble cutters and other craftsmen in the building industry gathered in new guilds,⁵⁰ as did the silver- and goldsmiths, who had their own unique silver – gold alloy and trademark and exported their goods throughout Europe.⁵¹

Despite this, seventeenth-century Messina had only about 18 guilds and an estimated population of 100,000 people. It seems reasonable to assume that conditions were affected by the emergence of Palermo as permanent capital, and by the resulting shift of resources westwards; Messina's claim to the patronage of a resident viceregal court came to an end during the 1630s. Furthermore, commercial relations between Messina and the southern mainland (with Naples and Calabria in particular) may have been affected by the economic downturn in this area after the difficult 1590s. Between 1595 and 1648, the population in Naples declined by 7.4 per cent, and the whole area seems to have suffered more than Sicily as a result of the economic changes of the seventeenth century.⁵² The

⁴⁹ S. Laudani, *La Sicilia della seta* (Catania, 1996), p.51.

⁵⁰ D. Novarese, 'Gli statuti dell'arte dei muratori, tagliapietre, scarpellini e marmorari di Messina', in A. Romano (ed.) *Istituzioni, Diritto e Società* (Messina, 1988), p.186.

⁵¹ The silver of Messina had its own alloy, though slightly lighter in karats than the Palermo alloy.

⁵² S.R. Epstein, *An Island for Itself. Economic Development and Social Change in Late Medieval Sicily* (Cambridge, 1992), p.406.

final straw was the revolt of Messina against the Spanish Crown in 1674, which caused the entire economy to stall until the early eighteenth century.⁵³

Catania, another important demanial town of the eastern coast, is poorly served by documentation on guilds, and local studies are equally thin on the ground. Nevertheless, the presence of good silver- and goldsmiths is attested from the early fifteenth century, and the craft had its own trademark.⁵⁴ By the seventeenth century, silk dying had also become very important, and had given rise to a guild of silk dyers, the only one of this kind documented for early modern Sicily. As in Messina, the total number of guilds in Catania probably fell over time. In spite of the important role that guild representatives seem to have acquired in the local council in the fifteenth century,⁵⁵ there were only 18 guilds there by the mid-seventeenth century, when the city had a population of about 30,000 – a higher ratio than in Messina, but very low by international standards.

Trapani is a town on the south-western coast of Sicily, whose main activities in the early modern period were fishing, particularly of tuna, and coral, salt production, and port trade. The high degree of specialisation of the Trapani carpenters reflected high demand from the shipping industry; some craftsmen specialised in the production of specific kinds of boat, and boats from elsewhere in the Mediterranean would stop off in Trapani for repairs (see above, Fig.4.2).⁵⁶ Tuna fishing supported large number of coopers, ropers, and others. Sicily's only guild of coral workers emerged here in response to the abundance of raw material fished along the nearby coast. Some typical techniques of the Trapani coral masters (*corallari*) have been found in Naples, suggesting that Sicilian masters had travelled there and taught their secrets to local artisans. The higher reputation

⁵³ R. Davico, 'La morte barocca: popolazione, quartieri e campagne di Sicilia nella rivolta del 1674-78', in S. Di Bella (ed.) *La rivolta di Messina (1674-78) e il mondo mediterraneo nella seconda metà del Seicento* (Cosenza, 1979).

⁵⁴ In Sicily, only Palermo, Messina, Trapani and Catania had their own trademarks for silver and gold production. See M. Accascina, *I marchi delle argenterie e oreficerie siciliane* (Trapani, 1976).

⁵⁵ See F. Marletta, 'Le costituzione e le prime vicende delle maestranze di Catania', *ASSOr* 1(1904), pp.354-58, and 2 (1905), pp.88-103.

⁵⁶ 'Liudelli' and 'schifazzi' were little boats for fishing. Other particular boats were those used for tuna and coral fishing, which had special 'ingegna' (tools) built on the boat.

of Trapani's coral makers was reflected in a number of commissions from the rest of the kingdom, including a commission by Palermo city council for a statue of Saint Rosalia and the Virgin.⁵⁷

Most of the crafts in Trapani only obtained official recognition in the early seventeenth century, though the existence of informal organisations with unrecorded customs is documented for a longer period. With the exception of masons, blacksmiths, and probably silversmith, who had established craft guilds at earlier times, Trapani crafts only drew up their statutes from the 1600s onward, probably in response to growth in artisans number, which required more formal arrangements for monitoring labour conditions.⁵⁸ The eighteen or nineteen guilds present in Trapani are comparable in number to those in Catania, but Trapani's population of 16,000 was only half that of Catania, suggesting that it benefited like Palermo by the institutional and economic changes of the early seventeenth century.

Very little is known about guilds in Syracuse, another major town in the south-east, although the streets on the island of Ortigia, the original nucleus of the town, were named after guilds. What little evidence there is suggests that there were never many crafts, and those that did exist decreased over time, as in Messina and Catania. Between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, the population in Syracuse increased from 13,000 to 17,000,⁵⁹ whereas the recorded number of guilds fell from fourteen to eight.⁶⁰

All other Sicilian towns had less than ten guilds each. Caltagirone was characterised by a flourishing pottery production, mainly for domestic use, and in 1432 Alfonso exempted the guild of potters from tolls in other demesne towns;

⁵⁷ See for example the inventory of the priest Giovanni Virdiramo, who had silver and gold items and many coral manufactures; the coral came from Trapani. Navarra, 'Notizie sugli orafi', p.106.

⁵⁸ R. Daidone, 'Un maiolicaro trapanese del XVI secolo e la corporazione dei vasai del 1645', in R. Daidone (ed.) *Maiolicari trapanesi del XVI e XVII secolo e gli statuti del 1645* (Palermo, 1992), p.70. The statutes of Trapani potters were first required for recognition in 1645, following a long period during which they exercised the craft without written rules, as they say in the prologue.

⁵⁹ Population increased especially between 1651 and 1681, rising from 13,000 to 16,000. G. Longhitano, *Studi di storia della popolazione siciliana. Riveli, numerazioni, censimenti (1568-1861)* (Catania, 1988).

⁶⁰ See Appendix 1.

the potters could claim exclusive rights to collect coppice for their furnaces on the town's commons. In 1518, Caltagirone exported its pottery within a radius of about 130 km.⁶¹ By the second half of the sixteenth century Sciacca had also developed a vibrant pottery industry. Five furnaces discovered in the 1970s were located just outside one of the urban gates, Porta Bagni, where the potter lived.⁶²

In the 1590s, some ropers and potters from Caltagirone moved to the town of Burgio, where they installed numerous workshops for the production of vases and kitchen utensils. These new arrivals challenged the existing potters in Burgio, who had moved there from Sciacca, and began supplying the surrounding markets of Bisacquino, Giuliana, Sambuca, Santa Margherita Belice, Caltabellotta, and Ribera. By the seventeenth century, Burgio potters supplied markets far to the west like Mazara and Trapani, where demand was increasing rapidly. Nevertheless, there is no evidence relating to the existence of guilds in Burgio, as there is not elsewhere either where artisans supplying local markets are recorded.

To sum up, although artisans were present throughout the island, the number of craft guilds was modest. Skilled ironworkers, carpenters, and masons formed guilds only in a few demanial towns where a large and competitive labour market existed. The largest city, Palermo, had the greatest number of craft guilds and their number increased during the seventeenth century, as the city's political role expanded. Trapani followed a similar pattern and benefited in a similar way from seventeenth century changes, maintaining a relatively high number of guild organisations until the eighteenth century. By contrast, Messina, Catania, and Syracuse, which had witnessed the earliest development of craft guilds during the fifteenth century, suffered more severely from the seventeenth-century depression, indeed in seventeenth-century Syracuse the number of trades actually decreased.

Elsewhere in the island, craft guilds are recorded only for Patti, Acireale, Noto, Caltagirone, Castrogiovanni, Sciacca, Marsala and Monte San Giuliano, and the number of crafts in each locality was never more than ten (Fig.4.3). The

⁶¹ A. Ragona, *La maiolica siciliana dalle origini all' Ottocento* (Palermo, 1975), p.82.

⁶² *Ibidem*, p.68. This is the only information we have about artisans in Sciacca, which does not prove the existence of guilds. Potters' workshops were always located next to the walls or even outside the urban perimeter, because the smokes from the furnaces was particularly bad smelling and harmful.

scarcity of evidence for guilds in Sicily, despite more than a century of research, clearly reflects the limited presence of these groups, rather than a lack of exploration of the sources.

Fig. 4.3 Map of guild distribution



- Less than 10 craft guilds
- ▲ Between 10 and 20 guilds
- Between 20 and 30 guilds
- More than 30 guilds

4.5 Artisan migration

Artisans moved from one town to another, where better conditions were offered and where guilds could provide training and access to the market. Young people and aspiring craftsmen travelled in search of skilled masters, who could train them into an occupation. In Sicily, most apprentices seem to have come mainly from small villages and towns where guilds did not exist; they were attracted to the larger towns where a guild system could ensure they received full training. Sometimes aspiring apprentices moved to places where they already knew a master, who might have originated from the same village. On 12 October 1534, Pietro Marchisio left Mazara for the workshop of Antonio Santarello, a silversmith living in Sciacca about 30 km away, who was himself from Mazara. He was employed for three years in the silversmith's workshop doing any sort of work and in order to practise the craft.⁶³ The Santarello family may in fact have come originally from Trapani, about 80 km from Mazara, which was well known for its silversmiths and goldsmiths in addition to the coral workers.⁶⁴ Sicilian apprentices however did not move systematically, or 'tramp', as they did for example in Germany.⁶⁵

Foreign masters also arrived from outside the kingdom in search of better opportunities. Immigration seems to have been particularly strong during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Most immigrants came from other parts of the Aragonese empire, only a few masters came from northern Italy, apparently to introduce new industrial techniques with the support of local urban councils.⁶⁶ Immigration is especially well-documented for silver- and goldsmiths in Palermo,

⁶³ 'ad omnia servitia ... apotece argentarie' (ASSc, Notai, not. Bartolomeo Modica, 150, c.96rv (1534-35), cit. in Navarra, 'Notizie sugli orafi', p.54-55). In 1537, another silversmith Andrea Santarello is mentioned in a contract as coming from Mazara and living in Sciacca. It was common that brothers and relatives moved together.

⁶⁴ Di Marzo, *I Gagini e la scultura*, vol.1, Index ad vocem.

⁶⁵ According to Ehmer, there were numerous reasons why authorities and guilds encouraged journeymen to travel. It provided a structure for flexibility in local labour markets, while German states, in particular, saw it as a force for technical competence and the diffusion of information about production methods (J.F. Ehmer, 'Worlds of Mobility: Migration Patterns of Viennese Artisans in the Eighteenth Century', in Crossick (ed.) *Artisan and the European Town*, pp.172-99). For a good comparative survey see U.C. Pallach, 'Fonctions de la mobilité artisanale et ouvrière-compagnons, ouvriers et manufacturiers en France et aux Allemagnes (17^e-19^e siècle)', *Francia* 11 (1983): 365-406.

⁶⁶ See below, chapter 7.

possibly because of the good conditions that the silversmiths' statutes of Palermo could offer. In 1509, master Salvatore Landi from Naples rented the workshop of Paolo Petta in Palermo.⁶⁷ The silversmiths Geronimo Castella came from Castile, and Giacomo Landi from Naples.⁶⁸ In 1539, the Neapolitan goldsmith, Giandomenico Laureto is recorded in Palermo.⁶⁹ In 1551, Giovanni Andrea Chilintano, Neapolitan goldsmith, but inhabitant of Palermo, sold some silver to Giovannello d'Amato, a goldsmith from Syracuse who lived in Agrigento. Between 1563 and 1564, Giacomo Baldesi from Florence worked as a silversmith in Sciacca.⁷⁰ The number of foreigners applying for work in Palermo workshops was such that on 17 August 1546 it was declared that any foreign master coming to work in the town had to pay a deposit to guarantee his behaviour, since some foreigners who had opened a workshop had later departed with the silver and gold entrusted to them by their clients.⁷¹ As the large number of bonds (*malleverie*) that filled the notaries' and town archives in the early sixteenth century show, Palermo was a popular destination for foreign silver- and goldsmiths, and the guild – one of the most ancient and powerful in the city – offered no hindrance to their influx.⁷²

Masters within the island frequently moved from smaller towns towards bigger ones, probably to work in another master's workshop and improve their skills. Sicilian immigrant masters could either set up a partnership with other masters or open their own workshop after receiving a licence from the local consul. In 1441, master Leucio de Xacca (Sciacca) worked in a workshop in Palermo with the potter Nicolao de Cusentia. On 7 November 1448 master Pietro di Nardo, also from Sciacca but based in Corleone, signed a partnership with Giovanni and Gerardo Lombardo, other immigrants probably also from Sciacca.⁷³ Master

⁶⁷ Di Marzo, *I Gagini e la scultura*, p.612.

⁶⁸ Probably related to the other Landi, so well informed of the good conditions and the opportunities of work that existed in the town. See Navarra, 'Notizie sugli orafi', p.52.

⁶⁹ Di Marzo, *I Gagini e la scultura*, p.618.

⁷⁰ Navarra, 'Notizie sugli orafi', p.58.

⁷¹ Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.30, statutes of Palermo silver- and goldsmiths.

⁷² See also ACPa, Atti Bandi Provviste, 151, cc.83v, c.92rv, c.102r, c.125rv (1546-47); 152, cc.92rv, c.95r, c.97r, c.105v, cc.115v-116r, c.119r, c.120r (1547-48); 153, cc.96v (1548-49).

⁷³ *Ibidem*, p.53.

Vincentius Mole, mentioned as a citizen of Sciacca (*saccensis*) in documents of Sciacca, and as a citizen of Agrigento and inhabitant of Sciacca (*de civitate Agrigenti et habitatores saccensis*) in documents from Agrigento, had probably moved to Sciacca from Malta in 1545. Girolamo Lazzaro was born in a little village in the territory of Messina, went to Patti as a potter's apprentice; having gained his mastership, he decided to specialise in decorated floor tiles and moved to Palermo, where demand for such goods was greater. On 27 May 1591, the Senate of Palermo requested from master Girolamo 4,000 tiles decorated with a design of the royal architect Giovan Battista Collipietra to cover the floor of the town hall, *Palazzo Pretorio*.⁷⁴

Artisan mobility was not prevented by guild statutes. The Palermo hat makers' regulations clearly stated that if a master from outside the town asked to work, the consuls had to try to find him a job. If they could not find any, the guild paid him 3 *grani* to help him on his way.⁷⁵

The statutes of the Palermo belt makers of 1509 allowed a master to leave the town and close his workshop for a short period of time. Although previously the guild had required the master to submit to new examinations on his return,⁷⁶ by 1509 absent masters were simply required to pay a tribute to the guild's church on his return, with no further penalty.⁷⁷ In one case a guild forbade the 'reintegration' of a former master, that is when he had practised a 'dishonourable' craft, defined usually as any activity that did not require formal training.⁷⁸ The prohibition, which is justified as defending the dignity of the craft and of its workers, implies that training was perceived as the distinguishing feature of craft activities compared to others.

The sword-makers specified that a master who left and closed his workshop had to pay 6 *tari* to the church as soon as he returned; after six months of absence

⁷⁴ Ragona, *Maiolica siciliana*, p.62.

⁷⁵ 'Chi quando ascadissi chi alcuno foristeri di larti venissi a dimandari di potiri lavurari et fari servizio li dicti consuli siano tenuti a quilli tali foristeri chercarichi di potiri loro lavurari et non chi trovando li dicti consuli siano tenuti di soccurriri quillo tali foristeri di grana tri per potirisi soccurriri' (Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.158 (1509)).

⁷⁶ Ibidem, p.155, statutes of Palermo belt makers, ch.8 (1489).

⁷⁷ Ibidem, p.169, statutes of Palermo blanket makers (1541).

⁷⁸ 'Che non si possa rientrigare chi haverá fatto exercitio vile' (Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.272, statutes of Palermo sword makers, ch.25 (1649)).

the master would lose the rights to keep a workshop. However, if the master left his workshop open under the management of a qualified apprentice or journeyman, carried on paying the fees to the church, and returned within six months, no additional contributions were due. If a master had to leave Palermo under duress, on the other hand, and was married and had children, his wife was allowed to keep the workshop open, with the help of a qualified apprentice or journeyman, for as long as he was away in order to support the family.⁷⁹

4.6 The fragmentation of guilds in the seventeenth century

As discussed in chapter 3, the long period of economic and demographic expansion from the mid-fifteenth century came to an end between the 1570s and 1590s, when the war against the Turks and demographic slowdown in northern markets also closed off the traditional outlets for Sicilian grain. The economic slowdown coincided with a period of rapidly increasing financial needs by the Habsburg monarchy, which responded by selling municipal property and rights over the royal demesne, including charters of autonomy for hundreds of villages.⁸⁰ The Sicilian aristocracy took the opportunity to buy up new land and rights to found numerous new villages and extend cultivation. Out of the 131 new villages founded between 1583 and 1748, around 90 were created between 1583 and 1630. The new settlements attracted unemployed immigrants from the larger towns, who were granted land on favourable terms and were given fiscal and judicial protection.⁸¹ The new settlements did not require highly skilled labour; apart from a few master builders, there is no trace of craft guilds in these villages, where the main activity was agricultural. However, the new settlements set off a redistribution of population from the eastern half of the island to the west, and thus also a redistribution of income from the eastern Sicilian landlords to the (already wealthier) western landed aristocracy. To this must be added the

⁷⁹ Ibidem, pp.268-69, statutes of Palermo sword makers, ch.18 (1649).

⁸⁰ T.B. Davies, 'Changes in the Structure of the Wheat Trade in Seventeenth-Century Sicily and the Building of New Villages', *Journal of European Economic History* 12 (1983): 371-405.

⁸¹ A higher proportion of inhabitants in the new villages came from the main demanial towns in the neighbourhood, as explained in chapter 3.

definitive establishment of Palermo as sole capital against Messina's claims. The combined effect was to stimulate demand in western Sicily, particularly in Palermo and Trapani, for luxury manufactures and skilled labour. Growing demand also accelerated a process of specialisation begun during the sixteenth century. In the early sixteenth century convents and monasteries had still commonly produced their own cloths; but by the second half of the century they were turning to the trained guild masters. In 1517, the nun Caterina in the Palermo convent of Saint Domenico received 3 *tari* for the price of *unius palli veteri*, brother Petrum de Costantino made a cowl, and brother Antonino Beneditto received a payment for dyeing a cowl. In 1561 and 1571, on the other hand, a master embroiderer (*imburdituri*) was hired to prepare the best gold embroidery of the holy paraments for the convent.⁸²

Particularly between the 1580s and 1630s, a sharp increase of requests for statute approvals came from new and existing guilds in both Trapani and Palermo. Sub-groups asked to be independent from the main guilds, stimulating a phenomenon of fragmentation. It is still very difficult to date and give details of the process of guild fragmentation, which triggered a rapid expansion of the number of craft guilds. Groups separated and re-joined according to economic and political conditions, in particular their ability to cover the costs of organising a group and the chances of obtaining approval from the local authorities. Guild independence however was frequently the end of a lengthy process of specialisation and self-organisation within a larger 'umbrella organisation'; formal recognition sometimes had merely the effect of constituting financial independence through control over the *cassa*, and allowing the masters to collect their own fees.

The phenomenon of craft fragmentation is of course common to most European regions. Between 1464 and 1750 the total number of craft descriptions on the tax rolls of Dijon increased from 81 to 102; 67 new descriptions had appeared, whilst 45 had vanished.⁸³ Early seventeenth-century London was marked by the proliferation of new corporations of artisans, often breaking away from older

⁸² D'Amico Del Rosso, *Paramenti sacri*, p.27.

⁸³ Farr, *Artisans in Europe*, p.52.

organisations; between 1600 and 1640 twenty-seven new guilds were set up.⁸⁴ In Milan the number of crafts increased from about twenty-eight to sixty-two in 1580, to 101 in 1772.⁸⁵ But the explanation for the process is controversial. Some scholars see it as a sign of corporate decline driven by urban governments, which saw the multiplication of sub-groups, often in conflict with each other, as a means to weaken opposition to the patriciate. However, this interpretation does not explain why, if bigger guilds could protect artisans more effectively, craftsmen should deliberately weaken their position by splitting into separate organisations. An alternative explanation is linked to the classical view, discussed in chapter 2, that guilds acquired institutional support in exchange for fiscal revenue.⁸⁶ However, although Spanish fiscal demands did increase roughly at the time when Sicilian guilds began to splinter, guild fragmentation occurred only in Palermo and Trapani, whereas growing fiscal pressure clearly affected the entire island, and guild numbers in eastern Sicily – in Messina, Catania and Syracuse – actually fell. Moreover, there is no evidence of a significant change in fiscal policy that particularly affected artisans.⁸⁷

A more convincing explanation for craft fragmentation points to an internal process of gradual specialisation. Insofar as craft guilds promoted the transmission of skills, craft specialisation arose spontaneously from the passage of time and market expansion. Skills that originally came within the remit of broader manufacturing activities acting as ‘umbrella organisations’ tended to organise as independent activities that required their own specialised organisations. Thus, artisans who were already members of a group specialised in a particular sector, but part of an existing guild, would ask for independent statutes and representatives. Alternatively, master artisans with similar skills but part of different guilds could join together to form a new group.

⁸⁴ Berlin, ‘Breaking in Pieces’, pp.77-78.

⁸⁵ Merlo, *Corporazioni*, p.22. An interpretation for the fragmentation of Italian guilds is in T. Fanfani, ‘Le corporazioni nel centro-nord della penisola, problemi interpretativi’, in G. Borelli *Le corporazioni nella realtà economica e sociale dell’Italia nei secoli dell’età moderna* (Verona, 1991), pp.33-34.

⁸⁶ S. Ogilvie, *State Corporatism and Proto-Industry. The Württemberg Black Forest, 1580-1797* (Cambridge, 1997).

⁸⁷ The extent of fiscal pressure is one of the most debated arguments for seventeenth-century Sicily. See R. Giuffrida, ‘La politica finanziaria spagnola in Sicilia da Filippo II a Filippo IV (1556-1665)’, *Rivista Storica Italiana* 88 (1976): 310-41.

An example of the first case of fission is that of the guild of Palermo embroiderers, which initially split into sub-groups according to specific qualifications, and which by the seventeenth century had divided into at least four different guilds.⁸⁸ In 1502, no less than twelve masters had formed the guild of embroiders, and in July that year the Palermo jurors had approved their statutes. They set up their workshops in the Capo quarter, and they subsequently chose Saint Anna as their patron and the church became the seat for their meetings. The statutes stated that anyone, citizen and foreigner, could exercise the craft on producing a masterpiece, obtaining a licence from the guild consuls, and paying a fee of 1 *onza* and 15 *tari* to the city cathedral and 15 *tari* to their church.

The emergence of the embroiderers' guild affected other workers in the same sector. The production of fringes and decorations for cloths, until then done by tailors, now came under the embroiderers' remit and the latter required that new tailors be examined in the presence of the consuls of both the tailor and embroiderer guilds. In 1563, 38 masters signed new statutes, which specified the craft's fields of competence. Master embroiderers were no longer limited to weaving precious cloth for religious paraments; they were now allowed to sew male and female clothing, cart covers, home tapestry, and any other sort of embroidery. The statutes even described how the designs had to be made,⁸⁹ and explained how silk embroiderers had to use velvet, silver, and gold brocade and silk for episcopal hats and belts, while the embroiderer-weavers (*cordilleri*) work similar cloth on the loom. By 1591, a number of provisions refer to unlicensed artisans producing embroidered goods outside the craft's jurisdiction. Other masters worked as embroiderers under the control of certain unnamed 'silk consuls'.⁹⁰ In 1613, the statutes of embroiderers introduced a compulsory apprenticeship of five years plus another year as journeyman; however, many of the new apprentices went to work in the aristocratic houses, since the city councils

⁸⁸ The data about this guild have been collected by E. D'Amico, *La maestranza palermitana dei ricamatori* (Palermo, 1984).

⁸⁹ 'La figura declarata in lo dicto primo digia fari lavorata di sita clara et obscura di Palermo cum soy firmatii comu conveni fari' (D'Amico, *Maestranza palermitana*, appendix II, pp.21-22).

⁹⁰ ACPa, Provviste, 633, cc.177-79v (1590-91).

deliberated in favour of apprentices working outside the workshop for the support of their families.⁹¹

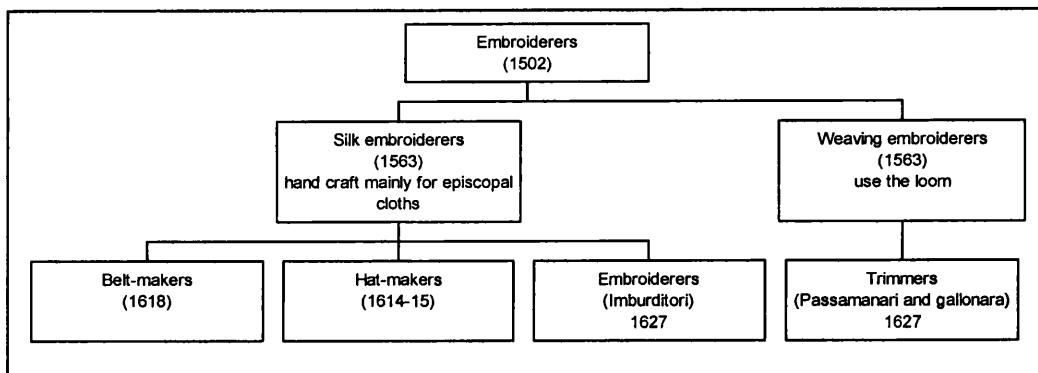
The introduction of formal training might have seemed a way of restricting access to the market. Alternatively, it may have been aimed at maintaining or establishing standards of quality in a craft that was becoming increasingly specialised. The statutes of 1627, introduced a range of mastership tests, with young embroiderers (*imburditori*) having to make episcopal hats using different materials, as well as buttons, fringes with or without gold, and other works, and trimmers (*passamanari*) having to make three designs that the consul gave them. By the second half of the century, the guild of trimmers (*passamanari*) and embroiderers (*gallonara*) competed for the exclusive right to produce certain goods. Hat-makers, who drafted their statutes in 1614-15,⁹² and the belt-makers who appeared in 1618 seem to have been originated within the guild of embroiderers, so that they claimed similar exclusive rights in the production of embroidered hats and belts for the clergy (Fig. 4.4).⁹³

⁹¹ It is now proven that even where workshops were the location of production, they were far from introspective places, with personnel and activities spilling out on the street and into the neighbourhood, and a great deal of coming and going. See for example A. Farge, *Fragile Lives. Violence, Power and Solidarity in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Cambridge, 1993), pp.104-30. See also M. Sonenscher, *Work and Wages. Natural Law, Politics and the Eighteenth-Century French Trades* (Cambridge, 1989), who portrayed a myriad of methods of employment, contract, and payment in artisanal production.

⁹² We have only indirect evidence that in this year the hat-makers prepared a set of statutes. The register of provviste 1614-15, which contained these statutes, is now missing. Another guild of hat makers existed already in the fifteenth century. From the documents is not clear whether the case of the hat makers might have been rather an example of specialisation leading to encroachment between different guilds.

⁹³ ACPa, Provviste, 652, c.407 (1618-19).

Fig. 4.4 The fragmentation of the embroiderers' guild of Palermo



* Source: D'Amico, *La maestranza palermitana*.

The sculptors in Trapani and Palermo provide another example of guild specialisation through the reorganisation of the productive system. In each of the guilds of masons, carpenters, silver- and goldsmiths, and coral workers, a few of the masters specialised to engraving, albeit with different materials such as stone, wood, metals, alabaster, or coral. These masters constituted an almost independent group, whose skills were closer to one another's than to those of their fellow guildsmen, and who were sometimes discriminated against. For example, the sculptors of alabaster in Trapani were particularly keen to break away from the main group of the coral workers, because they could not be elected to the main offices of the guild, although they enjoyed full membership of it.⁹⁴ Growing demand for building decorations in Palermo and Trapani hastened the split.⁹⁵ On 13 March 1645, the masonry and carpentry masters of Trapani, specialising in carving and engraving, asked the notary Francesco Antonio Felice to draft a set of statutes for a new guild of marble and stone cutters (*marmorari et scarpellini*).⁹⁶ They were probably mimicking the Palermo masters, who had established a similar guild in 1616-17.⁹⁷ They specified a period of three months to enrol of the

⁹⁴ L. Cocco, *I consolati della città di Trapani* (Thesis, University of Palermo 1934-35), p.99, statutes of Trapani coral workers (1633).

⁹⁵ R. Del Bono, and A. Nobili, *Il divenire della città* (Trapani, 1986), p.52.

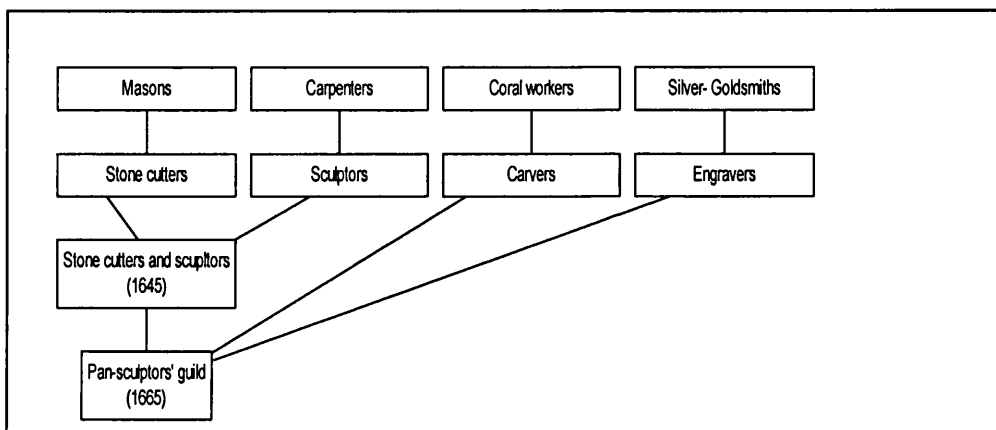
⁹⁶ A.M. Precopi Lombardo, 'Tra artigianato e arte: la scultura del trapanese nel XVII secolo', in V. Abate, *Miscellanea Pepoli. Ricerche sulla cultura artistica a Trapani e nel suo territorio* (Trapani, 1997), pp.83-113. ASTp, Notai, not. Francesco Antonio Felice, c.293r (13 marzo 1645).

⁹⁷ ACPa, Provviste, 650, cc.439-45v (1616-17).

new masters and pay a fee of 4 *tari* that was needed to cover the guild's set up costs.

The sculptors of other crafts manage to break the link with their main guilds only some twenty years later. By 1665 the guild of marble and stone cutters of Trapani gathered all the sculptors of every craft.⁹⁸ A year later, Trapani city council approved the new set of statutes signed by 36 sculptors. They claimed the right to organise by skill rather than working material and demanded a monopoly over the use of the burin (*bulino*) and in all sculpturing techniques (Fig. 4.5).

Fig. 4.5 The fragmentation of the sculptors' guild of Trapani



*Data: Precopi Lombardo, 'Artigianato e arte', pp.83-113.

In the second half of the seventeenth century, another important distinction emerged, that between retailers who sold unmarked, second hand, and repaired goods, and masters who sold their own product.⁹⁹ The retailers used to buy the goods not just from the guild masters, who produced with a licence or respected quality standards, but also from unregulated artisans selling at a cheaper price. This suggests two points. Firstly, the rise and specialisation of guilds was accompanied by the emergence of artisans (frequently family members) who,

⁹⁸ ASTp, Notai, not. Antonino Russo, unnumbered fos. (23 april 1665).

⁹⁹ Evidence of an increasing number of retailers is indirect, because only by the seventeenth century did the statutes tend to prevent the sale of products under the competence of guilds, without the approval of the consuls. See for example 'Che nessuno delli nostri mastri ... possa ne voglia ne prosumma vendere ... a detti pubblici mezzani ne' a qualsivolgia altra persona che facisse officio di comprare ovvero far comprare per poi quelli rivendere... nessuna specie di

having acquired some skills from relatives without receiving a formal training, fitted in niches of semi-skilled work repairing guild products. For example, the guild of shoemakers allowed journeymen to teach their brothers and close relatives, although it forbade the training of apprentices.¹⁰⁰ Second, the increased level of specialisation and the increased size of the market undermined the guilds' ability to impose their rules and control the labour market.

In short, by the seventeenth century, the process of redistribution of resources toward the west coast, and the establishment of the Viceroy's court in Palermo, favoured the rise of craft guilds to meet demand by aristocratic consumers. Expanding markets stimulated specialisation, and specialisation hastened a process of guild fission. At the same time, new categories of semi-skilled labourers or retailers and second-hand producers emerged to fill product niches created by the more specialised masters.

We should not exaggerate the extent of these processes, which remained confined to Trapani and Palermo. Sicilian manufacture did not break out of the boundaries of the island economy. Manufacture remained largely directed to the domestic market. With few exceptions, such as gold- and silversmiths, Sicilian craftsmen were still characterised by comparatively low skills and, hence, by a limited number of crafts.

Guilds emerged when the island had already developed a strong comparative advantage in the export of agricultural goods. Once established, however, craft guilds took on a life of their own in spite of the attempts by local councils to override their jurisdiction. Let us turn now to examine how the guilds actually worked.

concio che spettano a detta arte di spadari' (Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.270, statutes of Palermo sword makers, ch.21 (1649); p.211, statutes of Palermo ropers, ch.10 (1613-14)).

¹⁰⁰ 'Che li lavoranti ... non possino tenere garzone per impararle la arte predetta appoi che non si fosse frate o parente stritto...' (Lionti, *Statuti inediti*, p.33).

Chapter 5

Structure and costs of Sicilian craft guilds

Labour relations between masters, apprentices, journeymen, foreigners, and women were at the base of the guild system. This chapter discusses the formal conditions for membership established by the regulations and compares them with their practical application, with the aim of investigating how the system really worked and what its effects were on the economy and society.

Contemporaries and historians have offered vastly differing judgements, while recent research has questioned many of the traditional assumptions about guild functions. This chapter addresses two aspects of guild norms that are particularly contentious, entry fees and the guilds' control over artisanal activities. Entry and participation fees represent one of the most debated aspects of the guild system. Data on fees collected from the craft statutes of different Sicilian towns offer some insight into the reasons why masters and apprentices paid them and on the impact they had on masters' income. The data show the gap between the letter of the law and actual practice. The evidence also suggests that political authorities overrode guild jurisdiction, and that guilds were unable to implement a strict monopoly over artisanal activities. Guild masters could, however, enforce apprenticeship contracts and ensure the transmission of skills; training in skills appears to have been the *conditio sine qua non* of guild existence.

5.1 Guild structure: masters, apprentices and journeymen, women, and foreigners

This section discusses participation in the guild system according to the picture that emerges from the statutes of Palermo and Trapani, where craft guilds were established most successfully. Masters were the only full members of guilds, and guilds emerged from the agreements made by masters before a notary. In the sources, masters appear mainly as artisans living off their work, as teachers and competitors; apprentices, who were also part of the guild, albeit with few powers, enjoyed more flexible conditions than might be imagined from classical studies.

Here we will examine the relation between master and apprentice, the process of recruitment and training, the system of promotion in the workshop, the importance of family ties in learning a craft, the process of acquiring a mastership, and the organisation of the guild. The section also examines the position of women and the system of licences that allowed foreigners to be integrated in the local market. The role of women in Sicilian crafts is interesting because few of the statutes carried explicit regulations against female participation; nevertheless, there were no female masters or apprentices, and they did not own any workshops.

a) Masters

Masters were specialised artisans who acquired a particular position owing to their specific ability and skills, who required institutional recognition of their authority and formal backing by local and central authorities to set up a guild. Sicilian masters constituted the first formally acknowledged guilds during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries; an unfavourable institutional context, in particular strong hostility by the Norman, Hohenstaufen and Angevin monarchs, prevented earlier attempts to establish organisations of masters. During the fifteenth century, political and economic changes supported craftsmen's claims: the Crown became more willing to accede to local interest groups' requests, and demand for skilled labour increased. The Palermo statutes of the shoemakers' guild claimed that the number of shoemakers in town had almost doubled, that they were selling their product without respect for any rule, and that they charged high prices, and demanded that the city jurors appoint guild representatives to monitor the masters.¹ Associations of masters were recognised and their representatives, experts in their craft,² acted as public officials with specific duties

¹ 'Item, imperoki li curbiseri di la dicta chitati su multiplicati in tantu ki quasi dipploruranu et supra vindinu l'arti loru et non fannu lu debitu et per quistu indi consequita grandi dannu la universitati per la trista coirami et pillami, ancora per quista opera é magisteriu loru et eccessivi pagamenti ki si piglianu, supplica la detta universitati ki sia sua merci conchedivi graciose ki li Iurati qui pro tempore fuerint poczanu eligiri et constitui unu consulu supra la dicta arti annuati lu quali haia ad corregiri la dicta arti tantu di bonitati rej et operis quantu di lu magisteriu et di li preci, lu quali consulu pocza consequitari et exigiri per pena a contravenientibus quillu ki per li dicti Iurati sirrâ ordinatu' (ASPa, Regia Cancelleria, 79, c.90 (1442-43) and 80, c.303 (1443-44)).

² 'alios magistros expertos in talibus' (G. Beccaria, *Statuti ossia capitoli di corporazioni artigiane nel secolo XV in Sicilia*, in BCPa, ms Qq E 190, unnumbered fos.).

in the urban constitutions of some demanial towns. According to the urban statutes these duties were 'to control and supervise other masters and apprentices working in the same craft, and to correct, punish and dismiss them'.³ According to the official sources, therefore, craft guilds organised in order to enforce contractual relations between master and apprentice, and to share the costs of training. Masters also controlled the quality and sometimes also the production of manufactured goods. This was particularly important for silversmiths and leather workers, who adopted the system of trademarks already in use in many Italian towns.⁴

However, the legal position of masters continued to be weak, which made it difficult to enforce guild membership. Only by the seventeenth century did Sicilian statutes start to mention compulsory guild membership; earlier statutes had focused mainly on the formal training required of guild members, and on the apprentices' participation in upholding the guild.⁵ Guild members could suspend their memberships, either for travelling⁶ or because they were unable to work or pay the membership fees, and they were entitled to rejoin the guild thereafter.

The evidence indicates that more specialised guilds were more likely to demand higher fees, yet specialised guilds also seem to have suffered more from the problem of non-participation. The reason for this may have something to do with the fact described in the previous chapter, that increasing specialisation through formal apprenticeship also created niches for semi-skilled labour, and that the number of semi-skilled and unregulated labourers seems to have increased in proportion to the expansion in formal training. Within the families of masters and apprentices some informal teaching would invariably occur; even apprentices were allowed to teach brothers, sisters, and close relatives.⁷ Thus the most highly developed guilds also tended to suffer more from unregulated competitors, who

³ 'Videndi et scrutandi alios magistros atque discipulos qui huiusmodi magisterium exercent, eosque valeat atque possint corrigere, punire et effectualiter mandare' (ACPa, Atti Bandi Provviste, 113, unnumbered fos. (1406-07)).

⁴ See M. Accascina, *I marchi delle argenterie e oreficerie siciliane* (Trapani, 1976); S. Barraja, *I marchi degli argentieri e orafi di Palermo* (Palermo, 1996).

⁵ See F.L. Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze di Palermo nei secoli XV-XVIII* (Trapani, 1991), pp.127-32, statutes of Palermo tailors (1485); pp.149-53, statutes of Palermo pan makers (1488); and pp.153-59, statutes of Palermo belt makers (1488).

⁶ See above, ch. 4.3.

⁷ See F. Lioni, *Statuti inediti delle maestranze della città di Palermo*, DSSS ser.2, 3 (1883), p.33.

benefited from the guild system but did not pay the costs of membership: so-called 'free-riders'.⁸

The association between free-riding and craft specialisation explains why the more specialised crafts were also most concerned with enforcing membership. During the seventeenth century some of the most specialised craft guilds in Palermo, which included the embroiderers, tailors, confectioners, tin platers, and cooks, introduced forms of enforcement and exclusion of membership through fines, which did not previously exist.⁹ They also established new punishments for trainees who performed guild masters' duties (such as cutting cloth in the tailors' guild), or worked outside the workshop, and for masters who created partnerships with journeymen or non-guilded artisans.¹⁰ Finally, new regulations were enacted against selling guild goods to retailers who were not guild members.¹¹ However, legal backing for such restrictions was not always forthcoming. In 1619, the guild of Palermo embroiderers asked the city council to authorise a ban against unlicensed young workers exercising the craft outside the workshop, but a few months later, the council decided that apprentices were free to work wherever they wanted in order to support their families. The only conditions were that they could not leave the masters without being dismissed, that they obtain the licence from the consuls, and that they pay 2 *tari* to the church of Saint Anna.¹² The provision

⁸ The problem of free-riding – the short-term exploitation of a group, without paying the costs – occurred because the group could not exclude others be excluded from consumption of the collective good gained by the group's activity. See M. Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action. Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge, 1965), pp.37-38, 51; T. Eggertsson, *Economic Behaviour and Institutions* (Cambridge, 1990), p.5.

⁹ See for example a new regulation of Palermo tailors dated 1612 (Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.133); a 1621 provision of Palermo confectioners enforcing compulsory membership with a fine (ACPa, *Provviste*, 655, c.181 (1621-22)); and a 1622 provision of the Palermo confectioners against women (ACPa, *Provviste*, 655, c.168 (1621-22)).

¹⁰ Examples of rules against partnership with masters who did not belong to the guild are found in the statutes of Palermo shearers (Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.163), in the statutes of Palermo sword-makers, ch.16 (Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.268), and in the statutes of Palermo embroiderers (E. D'Amico, *La maestranza palermitana dei ricamatori, 1502-1822* (Palermo, 1984) p.30)). For other examples see Table 6.5 in the following chapter. Regulations against apprentices working outside the workshop are found in the statutes of Palermo ropers (ACPa, *Provviste*, 648, c.509 (1613-14)), and in the statutes of Palermo confectioners (ACPa, *Provviste*, 628, c.388 (1585-86)).

¹¹ See in Palermo the provisions of tailors and silk sock makers against retailers and unregulated producers (ACPa, *Provviste*, 644, c.197 (1606-07)); see also the new statutes of Palermo tin platers (ch.14, 1636), which tend to prevent unregulated selling (Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.232).

¹² D'Amico, *Maestranza palermitana*, p.7; ACPa, *Atti*, 234/56, cc.48v-9 (1619).

therefore protected the apprenticeship system from free-riding, but equally upheld young men's right to pursue an independent living.

In 1627, the guild of embroiderers managed to ban silk merchants and retailers from selling any material suitable for making gold embroidery to men and women who were not members of the craft, and three years later the senate approved even more restrictive statutes which attempted to control the problems of fraud and free riders.¹³ In the first statutes women had been allowed to work freely, though they were not regularly enrolled as members; in the new statutes women were prevented from using new and old materials together, and foreign and local apprentices were formally required to undertake a further year of practice in the workshop before taking the ability test.¹⁴

The growing number of restrictions at a time when guild membership was rapidly increasing¹⁵ suggests that the number of 'false labourers'¹⁶ able to produce goods in competition with the embroiderers expanded along with the development of the guild itself. In 1627, twenty-two artisans signed the statutes and probably there were twice as many artisans in the guild at this point. Although more restrictions were imposed by the statutes, compulsory membership became even more difficult to enforce.

b) Apprenticeship, apprentices and journeymen

The guilds exercised their educational functions through institutionalised apprenticeship, which constituted the entirety of a child's formal education and was therefore a route to adulthood. Training was intended to provide skills and training for adult work; during apprenticeship important social values and behaviour were also transmitted to the young person.

¹³ ACPa, Provviste, 664, cc.148-56 (1629-30). See also D'Amico, *Maestranza palermitana*, p.24.

¹⁴ See in comparison the statutes approved by 1512 and those drafted in 1630, which are more restrictive. D'Amico, *Maestranza palermitana*, p.8.

¹⁵ There were about over forty members in 1627.

¹⁶ See M. Sonenscher, *Work and Wages. Natural Law, Politics and the Eighteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, 1989); S. Kaplan, 'La lutte pour le contrôle du marché du travail à Paris au XVIIIe siècle', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 36 (1989): 363.

Under normal circumstances, a master agreed to train a child in a trade for a specified number of years, and to provide board and lodging. In return, the master was paid the agreed premium and the child contracted to serve him faithfully. Training could of course occur outside a guild; but as the division of labour became more complex, the need to formalise the process of transmitting technical knowledge gained importance. Already in the fourteenth century, notarial documents attest to the existence of artisans who were trying to formalise apprenticeship, particularly where co-operation with other masters was involved. As the size of the market expanded, the masters needed more formal institutional backing for the contractual relation between masters and trainees to be upheld. Masters had to be sure that the apprentice would stay after he learnt the craft, rather than leave to go elsewhere, so that they could recover their investment in training, whilst the apprentice had to be willing to commit himself to a long-term relationship in which he acquired skills that could not be learnt in any other way.

These arrangements were formalised through the guilds that began to emerge in the early fifteenth century. In every known statute, the highest fines apply to the 'poaching' of apprenticed labour, suggesting that it was not unusual for masters to hire an apprentice who was already partially trained by another master, and that this offence was perceived as especially dangerous to the craft's survival. The apprentice could easily be hired for a better salary, compared to the one he received from the previous master, who had to recover his training costs by paying the apprentice below-market wages. At the same time, the new master acquired a semi-skilled labourer at a lower cost than if he had had to train him from the beginning.

Guild regulations also protected the apprentice from being given sub-standard training and from being fired by a master experiencing economic difficulties and reneging on his agreement. As the statutes of Palermo shearers state, masters who trained an apprentice for just a year were wasting the apprentice's time; by implication, they also dissuaded other potential apprentices

from signing up for fear of being cheated.¹⁷ Lastly, the guild protected apprentices from physical violence by the master.¹⁸

An aspect of training about which little is known concerns the literacy of the apprentices. Some masters were able to count and read, at least to a basic level, and could transmit this knowledge to the apprentice along with the skills of the craft. Literacy was probably not widespread among Sicilian artisans, and some guilds made a point about the importance of such skills for the type of craft being exercised. Thus, the confectioners of Palermo stated that every aspiring master wishing to undertake the test of ability had to be able to read and write ‘in order to prepare the labels for the jars’.¹⁹ Masters aspiring to the highest offices of a guild were also expected to have a basic knowledge of reading, writing, and counting. They were required to keep and update the account books, to read and draft the statutes, and prepare the provisions addressed to the city council. Most craft statutes specified literacy as a *conditio sine qua non* for the acquisition of the office of treasurer.²⁰ However, the formal requirement of literacy suggests that only a few masters were actually qualified for office, and written records were not commonly used. The last point may explain why guild account books are entirely missing, although they are sometimes mentioned in the statutes.

The recruitment of apprentices had a direct impact on workshop business. The skills that a master could teach were an important factor in the recruitment of apprentices, and masters competed for apprentices through their skills.²¹ Moreover, the discussion of artisans’ mobility in the previous chapter indicates that apprentices moved to cities where the demand for labour was higher. The

¹⁷ ‘Perchi alcuni fiati li mastri che piglianu garzuni ad insignari per anno uno et quilli tali non nexino mastri ne lavoranti et perdino lu tempo’ (Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.162; statutes of Palermo shearers (1529-30)).

¹⁸ Ibidem, p.220; statutes of Palermo silk sock-makers (1620). The statutes specify that the trainee has to be well trained, properly fed and dressed, but also that the master should teach with patience, and that the apprentice could claim his rights with the Praetor, who could revoke the master’s licence.

¹⁹ ‘Che quello che si ha da esaminare per fare l’offitio et arte di confitteri sappia leggere e scrivere accio possi non solo notare li cosi conditi sopra li burnij, ma ancora fare con piu abilita ed efficienza ditto offitio’ (Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.191; statutes of Palermo confectioners (1622)).

²⁰ BF, ASSTp, Atti, unnumbered fos. (4 August 1618), statutes of Trapani tailors, ch.2 (1618). See also A.M. Precopi Lombardo, *L’artigianato trapanese dal XIV al XIX secolo* (Trapani, 1987), p.81.

²¹ See for example G. Di Marzo, *I Gagini e la scultura in Sicilia nei secoli XV e XVI*, 3 vols (Palermo, 1880-83), vol.I, pp.251-53.

examples of Palermo and Trapani show that the concentration of skilled masters coincided with the best production of luxury goods and bigger workshops. The most skilled masters attracted more clients and had more successful workshops, which in turn meant higher demand for trainees and journeymen.

Apprentices and journeymen (who had already completed a period of apprenticeship) were both members of the guild and participated in its activities, although they could not be elected to guild offices and were excluded from decision making. They paid fees, which were half of those paid by masters, and they could benefit from the guild's financial assistance. They received medicines and a doctor in case of sickness, and were paid a funeral if their family could not afford it. Furthermore, some guilds created dowry funds for daughters of apprentices and journeymen.

Contracts for craft labour appeared in Sicily from the end of the fourteenth century and the hierarchy of master, journeyman, and apprentice was already referred to a half century before the institutional recognition of guilds. There were two sorts of apprenticeship contracts, the traditional contract between master and journeyman, in which a sum of money was given for the journeyman's work, and the contract of apprenticeship, which established that the master would teach the craft in exchange for the apprentice's work in the workshop.²² The first characteristic of the latter contract was the young age of the apprentice. Usually, the father or a close relative of the boy signed the document and transferred paternal rights to the master. The apprentice moved into his master's home and promised to obey him in everything in exchange for daily meals, clothing, teaching, and the tools of the trade when the contract expired. The relative of the minor guaranteed the contract, and promised to pay a fine to the master if the boy escaped.

Early guild statutes contain detailed norms on apprenticeship. The first set of statutes for Palermo's silver- and goldsmiths, the *Tavula di li Capituli di lo Officio di li Arginteri*, confirmed by Alfonso I on 12 May 1447,²³ already contains

²² P. Corrao, 'L'apprendista nella bottega palermitana (secoli V-XVII)', in E. Marchetta (ed.) *I Mestieri, tecniche, linguaggi* (Palermo, 1984), p.137-38.

²³ BCPa, ms.2Qq F 197; Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.23.

an attempt to prevent the offence of poaching: 'About the prohibition to hire another master's apprentice'.²⁴ A master could not hire an apprentice already working in a workshop; neither could the apprentice leave his master.

By the fifteenth century training contracts and guild regulations organised the apprenticeship and promoted a system of licences assigned by the consuls to attest apprentices' and masters' qualifications; sometimes, the statutes required that after a maximum period of six months a trainee had to be publicly registered as an apprentice.²⁵ According to the statutes, the length of the apprenticeship ranged from a minimum of three years to a maximum of seven years (Table 5.1). The statutes of the Palermo shearers state that a three-year period of apprenticeship was suitable for apprentices above fifteen, but recommended a minimum of six years for younger apprentices.²⁶ Since apprentices usually started very young, between ten and fourteen years old, they could expect to be between seventeen and twenty-one years old when they ended their training, adult enough to manage a workshop on their own. This matches rules concerning the offspring of existing masters, who could not inherit a workshop before the age of sixteen or eighteen; in the meantime, a child's tutor, or his mother, was appointed to run the workshop.²⁷

²⁴ 'Di non raccogliari li juvini di altri mastri' (Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.29).

²⁵ Lioni, *Statuti inediti*, p.57; statutes of Palermo playing card makers (1633-34).

²⁶ 'Chi nullo mastro non pocza pigliari garzuni ad insignari la dicta arti di anni quindichi in suso manco di anni tri et mezo et si fussi di anni quindichi in yosu manco di anni sey' (Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.162, statutes of Palermo shearers (1529-30)).

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p.183, statutes of Palermo confectioners (1586).

Table 5.1 Statutory length of apprenticeship

Town	Guild	Length of Apprenticeship	Length of Journeymanhip	Foreign master	Year
Messina	Masons	4			1559
Palermo	Silversmiths ^{a)}	7	3		1649
Palermo	Shearers ^{a)}	6 or 3.5 (if older than 15)		1	1621 1629
Palermo	Soapmakers ^{b)}	6			1636
Palermo	Tin plater ^{a)}	6	2		1636
Palermo	Silver and Gold platers ^{c)}	6			1645
Palermo	Water masters ^{d)}	6			1694
Palermo	Tin platers ^{a)}	5.5			1771-72
Palermo	Confectioners ^{a)}	5			1530
Palermo	Cooks and cake makers ^{a)}	5	2		1585
Palermo	Embroiderers ^{e)}	5	1		1619
Palermo	Playing card makers ^{d)}	5			1634
Palermo	Tailors ^{a)}	5	2		1641
Palermo	Masons and water masters ^{d)}	5			1644
Palermo	Cooks and cake makers ^{a)}	5			1739
Palermo	Playing card makers ^{d)}	4			1610
Palermo	Ropers ^{a)}	4	2		1620
Palermo	Silk sock weavers ^{a)}	4			1641
Palermo	Sword makers ^{a)}		2		1649
Salemi	Shoemakers	7	3		1676
Trapani	Masons ^{a)}	5			1598
Trapani	Silversmiths ^{b)}	4			1612
Trapani	Silk, wool, linen weavers ^{c)}	3			1645
Trapani	Butchers ^{d)}	3			1656

* Sources: Messina: Novarese, 'Statuti';

Palermo: a) Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*; b) ACPa, *Provviste 671*; c) ACPa, *Provviste 654*; d) Lioni, *Statuti inediti*; e) D'Amico, *Maestranza palermitana*.

Salemi: La Colla, *Statuti inediti*

Trapani: a) Denaro, 'Capitoli'; b) ASTp, Notai, not. F.Gioemi (1612); c) BF, ASSTp, Atti (1645-46); d) Denaro, 'Capitoli dei bucceri'.

Nonetheless, the length of the training set by the statutes was only an approximate benchmark, which individual contracts could easily evade. Guild statutes could only establish general norms suitable for the majority of the apprentices, whereas notarial contracts could be drafted according to the specific circumstances of each individual. Individual contracts took into consideration the age of the apprentice, his origins, his personal status – single, or married with children – and his previous experience, including any previous informal relationship with a trade or a master.

Contracts of apprenticeship for Palermo masons ranged from one year,²⁸ to three years and two months,²⁹ to six years.³⁰ The main variable determining the length of the contract seems to have been the apprentice's age. In the contracts of apprenticeship of four cobblers in Palermo, two sixteenth-years old boys were engaged for four and five years respectively,³¹ whereas a younger boy of twelve had a contract for six years.³² Another apprentice, or possibly journeyman, who was probably an adult as he presented himself alone, engaged himself for one year promising to keep the workshop and manage it in the absence of the master.³³ An apprentice of a marble sculptor had a contract for nine years, presumably because he was only nine years old.³⁴ But the length of the apprenticeship also varied according to personal contacts and family ties. Almost all the statutes state that the masters' sons did not have to undertake the final ability test to become a master, and the length of their apprenticeship was not fixed but depended on their ability to replace their fathers in the management of the workshop. Apprentices or journeymen who married into the master's family benefited from the same privilege.³⁵ The rationale of this apparent inequity was presumably that members

²⁸ ASPa, Notai, not. Antonino Galasso, 5188, c.110rv (1538-39).

²⁹ ASTp, Notai, not. Vito Vitale, 9908, unnumbered fos. (29 January 1600 and 8 November 1600).

³⁰ ASPa, Notai, not. Giovanni Paolo De Monte, 2892, c.373rv (1538-39).

³¹ ASPa, Notai, not. Giovanni Paolo De Monte, 2900, unnumbered fos. (1546-47); not. G. De Marchisio, 3799, unnumbered fos. (1545).

³² ASPa, Notai, not. Giovanni Paolo De Monte, 2900, unnumbered fos. (1546-47).

³³ *Ibidem*.

³⁴ ASPa, Notai, not G. De Marchisio, 3798, unnumbered fos. (1537-42).

³⁵ See, for example, the statutes of Palermo sword makers regarding the benefits of marrying the master's daughter: 'Casandosi alcuna figlia d'alcuno de' nostri mastri passati con qualche lavorante della nostr'arte, volemo che tal lavorante non sia obligato a far examine ...' (Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.265).

of the family were exposed to craftwork from an early age, and were also more likely to be confided the craftsman's technical 'secrets'.

Some contracts of apprenticeship in Palermo and Trapani established a salary, which was not mentioned in the statutes,³⁶ perhaps because the labour market was unusually tight. Two apprenticeship contracts with master tailors in Trapani stated that during the three years of training, the boys had to receive 1.10 *onze* in the first year, 2 *onze* in the second, and 3 *onze* in the third year; and 2 *onze* in the first year, 2.12 *onze* in the second, and 3 *onze* in the last year, respectively.³⁷ A similar pattern existed for Palermo tailors, where a fourteen-year old boy was engaged for three years and received 2 *onze* and 3 *onze* in the second and third years respectively.³⁸ Thus, the salary increased in relation to the apprentice's increased ability over time.³⁹ Only fully trained journeymen were paid more: an artisan from Termini, who had a two year contract with a master tailor, received a total of 11 *onze* (5 *onze* in the first year),⁴⁰ and a journeyman cobbler received a salary of 20 *onze* for one year managing the workshop.⁴¹

A contract drafted in Syracuse demonstrates the existence of different incentives for training. Nunzio agreed to train with a silversmith for three years; however, if by the end of the period he was still unable to produce good quality jewellery, the master would keep him at a reduced salary of 2 *tari* per day or less.⁴² Though it is not known how much Nunzio received during his apprenticeship, it is conceivable that silversmith apprentices could earn much more than others: Nunzio's reduced salary corresponded to half of the salary of a master carpenter. Be that as it may, the reduction in salary for an apprentice who was unable to become a master suggests that masters remunerated their

³⁶ The statutes of the Trapani coral workers (1633) state that the workers had to receive a minimum wage of 3 *tari* per day in cash and not coral. See L. Cocco, *I consolati della città di Trapani* (Thesis University of Palermo, 1934-35), pp.98-99.

³⁷ ASTp, Notai, not. Vito Vitale, 9908, unnumbered fos. (29 January 1600, and 8 November 1600).

³⁸ ASPa, Notai, not. G.P. De Monte, 2896, cc.680v-681r (1542-43).

³⁹ Giacomo Campaniolo sent his son Francesco to the workshop of master Didaco. The apprentice was to stay in the workshop even during the holidays. At the end of the apprenticeship, the master was to give a pair of scissors to the aspiring master. Benedetto Migliorino signed a contract with Master Antonio Cavarretta for training his son for three years in tailoring. The apprentice had the duty to remain in the workshop during the holidays. See ASTp, Notai, not Vito Vitale, 9908, unnumbered fos. (29 January 1600, and 8 November 1600).

⁴⁰ ASPa, Notai, not G.P. De Monte, 2892, c.331v-2r. (1538-39).

⁴¹ ASPa, Notai, not. G.P. De Monte, 2900, unnumbered fos. (1546-47).

⁴² ASSr, Notai, not. Sebastiano Innorta, 11367, c.537 (1753-54).

apprentices according to their productivity. The salary increased as long as the apprentice improved his skills, and decreased if he could not reach his master's expectations. At the same time, the payment of a salary along a moving scale worked as an incentive to remain with the master even when the apprentice was fully trained, as the previously mentioned contracts with the master tailor in Trapani show.⁴³

By the seventeenth century, some guilds imposed a period of further practice following the apprenticeship, during which the journeyman could produce directly for the master's clients.⁴⁴ The period was usually shorter than a full apprenticeship, lasting between one and three years, and it seems to have been regarded as a sort of promotion within the workshop. Furthermore, the time spent as a journeyman was likely to help the young artisan find ready employment just after his training, by building up his own clientele.⁴⁵

The local council could interfere with the criteria of proficiency set by the masterpiece. Local authorities could question the concession of a mastership, even when an apprentice had passed his ability test. Although Andrea Bellagamba passed the mastership of the embroiderers' guild, the Palermo senate initially refused to allow him to practise. The council did finally grant him a licence, though the document does not say under what conditions.⁴⁶ By the second half of the seventeenth century, the tables were being turned, as guilds themselves passed a number of provisions for concessions of the mastership without examination on grounds of family need; thus, Mariano Rametta became master before his apprenticeship had formally ended.⁴⁷ More often the masters themselves sought the licence of mastership for children, who had not yet turned eighteen. In 1654, the journeymen of the barbers' guild asked to be recognised as masters, on the grounds that they were quite able to work in a workshop, and not only in private

⁴³ D. Degrassi, *L'economia artigiana nell' Italia medievale* (Rome, 1996), p 56; Epstein, 'Craft Guilds', p.691.

⁴⁴ Precopi Lombardo, *Artigianato trapanese*, p.86, statutes of Trapani tailors, ch.12 (1618) suggests that only masters and journeymen could produce for clients.

⁴⁵ 'Quarto: che sapendo non haver commodità di travagliare finiscono il tempo conforme all'obblighi loro' (Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.135, statutes of Palermo tailors, ch.4 (1612)).

⁴⁶ ACPa, Atti Bandi Provviste, 173, c.160 (1568-69). See also ASPa, Notai, not. Francesco Grappo, unnumbered fos. (20 October 1568) for the licence.

⁴⁷ ACPa, Atti Bandi Provviste, 173, c.44v (1658-59).

houses as wage-earners.⁴⁸ On the other hand, some guilds were also attempting to uphold the ability tests, and to maintain the distribution between masters and journeymen. In 1619, the guild of embroiderers claimed that some journeymen worked in their clients' houses without a licence,⁴⁹ but the city council decided that the journeymen were free to practise the craft wherever they wanted, either in a master's workshop or in private houses, on condition that they could prove that they had finished their apprenticeship with a licence from their master.⁵⁰ In 1661, a provision of the guild of gunsmiths formally required a compulsory mastership for the practice of their trade, as an effective test that restrained unskilled producers.⁵¹

By the late fourteenth century, almost everywhere in Europe, groups of journeymen started to organise semi-secret associations that spanned one or more large regions.⁵² According to Epstein, journeymen's associations developed to overcome asymmetric information in skilled labour markets in regions comparatively underpopulated or politically fragmented, where information flowed less intensively; the presence of journeymen associations was lesser in densely urbanised regions where information flowed more intensively.⁵³ In Sicily, there are very few examples of journeymen organisations, probably because the island was quite densely populated and highly urbanised, so skilled labourers could acquire information quite easily and did not require journeymen's associations.⁵⁴ One of the few possible examples of journeymen associations is a set of statutes drafted in 1645 by the skilled mason labourers ('manovali') in Trapani, which included a formal exam for trained apprentices wishing to join the group.⁵⁵ Whether this was in fact an autonomous association of journeymen or a

⁴⁸ ACPa, Provviste, 693, cc.7-8 (1660-61).

⁴⁹ D'Amico, *Maestranza palermitana*, p.13, n.6; see ACPa, Provviste, 653, c.34 (1618-19).

⁵⁰ Idem, n.8; see ACPa, Atti del Senato, 234, cc.48v-49r (1619-20).

⁵¹ ACPa, Provviste, 693, c.297 (12 August 1661).

⁵² For a chronology of these associations see C.M. Truant, *The Rites of Labor: Brotherhoods of Compagnonnages in Old and New Regime France* (Ithaca, 1994).

⁵³ 'As commodity markets increased in size and supply shocks intensified, however, more sophisticated arrangements to pool information and improve labour mobility emerged' (Epstein, 'Craft Guilds', pp.692-93). The author indicates two phases when these conditions occurred: after the demographic downturn following the Black Death and during by the seventeenth century.

⁵⁴ See Epstein, 'Craft Guilds', p.693. See also Truant, *Rites of Labor*; C. Lis and H.Soly, ' "An Irresistible Phalanx:" Journeymen Associations in Western Europe, 1300-1800', *International Review of Social History* 39 (1994): 22-35.

⁵⁵ ASTp, Notai, not. Antonio Felice, unnumbered fos. (19 February 1645).

sub-section of the masters' guild is difficult to determine. The 'manovali' were probably specialised in particular tasks rather than just a lower level of master masons.

The only certain instance of a journeymen guild dates from 1591, when fifty-eight members signed statutes of Palermo's journeymen tailor association. They closely recall the statutes of master guilds, apart from the payment of fees, which were not linked to the mastership graduation,⁵⁶ and were formally approved and confirmed as such by the Senate. Their main purpose seems to have been to ensure that the journeymen could administer a separate system of welfare support; they made no reference to labour relations or to competition with the masters. It is possible that the guild of tailors in Palermo did not approve these statutes, because they resulted in the masters' no longer administering the journeymen's fees; however, I have found no further documentation of relations between master and journeyman tailors, and these statutes remain an isolated case.

The existence of craft guilds hinged on the transmission and development of skills. Towns where guilds were better established appear to have had larger and more numerous workshops. During the seventeenth century Palermo and Trapani proved to have the liveliest luxury manufacture production compared to other places where artisans also existed, but were not organised in guilds.⁵⁷

c) Mastership and licences

Techniques for producing a particular good could only be learnt at the master's workshop. Apprentices had to pass a test of ability, the mastership (*prova d'arte*), which led them to become masters with the consuls' approval. The statutes occasionally stated only what an apprentice had to produce to pass this test of ability, and consuls judged *a posteriori* the quality of the products.⁵⁸ The production of a masterpiece then was an indispensable step for practising a trade

⁵⁶ ACPa, Provviste, 633, cc.241-47v (1590-91).

⁵⁷ See, for example, A. Ragona, *La maiolica siciliana dalle origini all'Ottocento* (Palermo, 1975). He finds that the best quality production came from potters organised in guilds.

⁵⁸ See for example Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.150, statutes of Palermo pan makers (1488); and D'Amico, *Maestranza palermitana*, p.26, statutes of Palermo embroiderers (1629-30).

and for the formal recognition of a 'master'. It marked the end of a long period of practice as apprentice. The culmination of this process of qualification was obviously of the greatest importance to the young artisan and to the corporation alike. The former depended on its successful outcome for the possibility of earning his livelihood, whilst for the latter, a number of contradictory pressures were involved. Professional pride led guilds to seek to verify the competence of petitioners for admission. In addition, it was in a craft's interest that goods be produced and services rendered in accordance with accepted formulae and norms of artisanship. Aesthetic and economic values were both enhanced when work was carried out 'by an examined master', as was frequently stated in the documents.⁵⁹ Masterpieces were executed by goldsmiths and tapestry weavers, to whose handiwork we would readily ascribe an 'artistic' quality or intention, but also by masons, carpenters, rope makers, and other professions, which we do not usually associate with aesthetic concerns. The implication is thus that the request for a masterpiece was intended to test the candidate's general skills and craftsmanship, rather than simply a means for excluding competitors from the masterpiece.

The production of a masterpiece was not, however, among the original features of guild statutes. Early regulations did not include any compulsory test of ability, but demographic and economic expansion from the second half of the fifteenth century gave rise to the need for a more formal qualification. In 1487, the guild of Palermo's builders and marble workers introduced a compulsory examination for foreign masters wishing to open a workshop or practise their trade in town. In 1488, the statutes of Palermo's pan makers set a compulsory test of ability for both citizens and foreigners, who until then had simply paid higher mastership fees.⁶⁰

The guild of tailors may have been among the first guilds of Palermo to introduce a compulsory mastership, since the statutes dated 1505 are a copy of an

⁵⁹ Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.154, statutes of Palermo belt makers, ch.2 (1488). Almost all the statutes stated in the first few articles that whoever practised the craft had to be examined by the consul; less often statutes described what the apprentice had to do for this test.

⁶⁰ 'Item ki tanto citatini como foresteri ki volissi mettiri putiga in quista citati di la dicta arti di caudarari non la pocza mectiri ki prima non sia diligenter examinato da li dicti counsulo et consilieri' (Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.150, statutes of Palermo pan makers (1488)).

original set dated 1485.⁶¹ The first article stated that an artisan could neither open a workshop nor undertake any tailoring work unless the consuls and four elder masters had examined his ability. Only journeymen were allowed to work as tailors under the strict control of a master; even the guild officials could not grant a mastership without a successful examination. An apprentice (Jew, Christian or foreigner) who was examined by the elder masters, had to pay 1 *onza* half to the patron church of Saint Oliva, and half towards the construction of the Palermo cathedral. A master who owned his own shop and who left the town for a certain period of time did not have to be examined on his return, suggesting that the masterpiece was a way to exclude unqualified outsiders, rather than simply a barrier to entry in the local market.

Although the masterpiece was already included in some statutes of the fifteenth century, the practice was enforced by a public ban in Palermo on 20 August 1512,⁶² which forbade anyone from practising craft, unless he had been examined by the guild consuls or the elder masters.⁶³ As mentioned before, only the masters' sons and sons-in-law were exonerated from producing a masterpiece.⁶⁴ In a few cases foreign apprentices paid higher fees; more often there was no difference between citizens and foreigners producing a masterpiece.⁶⁵

Information on the production of masterpieces is uneven in its scope, especially because the documentation is exclusively of a legal character. It presents the masterpiece as a compulsory requirement and briefly sets forth the

⁶¹ BCPa, ms.2Qq B92.and Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.127ss. Being a copy of a previous version dated 1485, the statutes of 1505 still mention prescriptions for Jewish artisans, even though Jews had been expelled from the island in 1492.

⁶² ACPa, Atti Bandi Provviste, 118, c.23 (1511-12). G. Scherma, *Delle maestranze in Sicilia* (Palermo, 1896), p.73; S. Barraja, 'La maestranza degli orafi e argentieri di Palermo', in M.C. Di Natale (ed.) *Ori e argenti di Sicilia dal Quattrocento al Settecento* (Trapani, 1989), p.373.

⁶³ As far as I know, there are no detailed studies of these tests, except from a general perspective. See for example W. Cahn, *Masterpieces. Chapters on the History of an Idea* (Princeton, 1979). In Naples masterpieces required within the wool and silk guilds from the sixteenth century, although the guilds were established in the fifteenth century. A. Dell'Orefice, 'The Decline of the Silk and Wool Guilds in Naples in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century', in A. Guenzi, P. Massa, and F. Piola Caselli (eds.) *Guilds, Markets and Work Regulations in Italy, Sixteenth-Nineteenth Centuries* (Ashgate, 1998), pp.117-31.

⁶⁴ Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.265, statutes of Palermo sword makers, ch.10 (1649).

⁶⁵ A.M. Precopi Lombardo, 'Documenti inediti e poco noti degli argentieri trapanesi', in Di Natale (ed.) *Ori e Argenti di Sicilia*, p.388 n.65; B. Patera, 'Marmorari e muratori nel privilegio del 1487', in Marchetta (ed.) *Mestieri*, p.77.

manner in which it must be carried out. It gives details about the length of time to be spent on the preparation of the work, and the place and conditions under which it must be executed;⁶⁶ sometimes, the statutes describe the kind of project assigned to the aspiring master.⁶⁷ But the records leave us in the dark about the techniques used and the standards and expectations of the judges, because neither of these could be easily defined in writing.

This absence of technical specification points to the fact that technical knowledge was largely tacit, and techniques were not standardised. Thus, during the searches that the consuls used to make in the workshops to enforce quality controls, attention centred on the finished product, rather than on the procedure by which it was made. The statutes of silver- and goldsmiths required the destruction of the products that did not conform to basic criteria of fineness and weight, but there was no attempt to investigate or define the techniques used for making them.⁶⁸

During the seventeenth century, as craft specialisation increased, the masterpiece became more complex, particularly for those crafts that had more than one sub-group of specialised artisans. Evidence suggests that within a broad 'umbrella denomination',⁶⁹ craft apprentices would have learned some common basic skills, followed by a significant degree of specialisation. Masters who formed independent groups, even within the same guild, elected representatives in

⁶⁶ A masterpiece could be undertaken in a variable length of time between a few hours and fifteen days. These ability tests could be carried out in the consuls' workshop, or sometimes in the workshop where the apprentices were practising. See for example the statutes of Trapani wool, linen and silk weavers in which the mastership was carried out in front of the consuls (ASTp, Notai, not. Martino Corso, unnumbered (13 January 1645); BF, ASST, Copia Lettere, c.62v (1644-45)); and the statutes of Palermo embroiderers, which stated that the test took place in the church and the aspiring masters had fifteen days to study the requirements of the consuls for their masterpieces (D'Amico, *Maestranza palermitana*, p.27).

⁶⁷ 'La quali examina serrá supra li infrascritti cose videlicet. Si sapera ben fundiri lo rami et spachiarelu di mano suadi al incuya. Item si sapera fari una quartara et fari unu cutinuu ad uno peczo e ki siano maystrivolementi facti' (Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.150, statutes of Palermo pan makers (1488)).

⁶⁸ 'Vogliamo che il consolo et consigliere, che parendogli labbiano da pigliarsi con loro uno o piú maestri in compagnia et labbiano di andare lor in uno et in un'altra bottega a lor ben vista, per rivedere li lavori che fanno e che han fatti nelli cassetti, e trovando qualche frode o mancamento contrario all presenti capitoli possono rompere le opere e far pagare li peni' (ASTp, Notai, not Francesco Gioemi, unnumbered fos. (8 April 1612), Trapani silver- and goldsmiths statutes). See also M. Berlin, ' "Broken All in Pieces:" Artisans and the Regulation of Workmanship in Early Modern London', in Crossick (ed.) *Artisan and European Town*, pp.75-91.

⁶⁹ See above, chapter 4.3.

each group, and aspiring masters could attend their exams with the representative of a particular specialisation, who was better qualified to supervise the specific test.

This is the case of Palermo's guild of embroiderers, which in its new statutes of 1629 granted a degree of autonomy to the trimmers (*frinzari*), who nonetheless continued to belong to the mother guild. The implication is that aspiring masters in trimming and embroidering would be asked to make different masterpieces. On the day of the examination, the elder masters decided what goods the aspiring master had to produce. Three masters, appointed by the consul, prepared three products as models, and the apprentice had fifteen days to accomplish all of them.⁷⁰ The 1676 statutes of the Palermo guild of cooks and cake makers stated that the confectioner had to prepare three kinds of pastries according to the judges' wishes, whilst the cooks had to prepare eight different dishes according to the consuls' tastes.⁷¹ Judges voted secretly on the result of the masterpiece; a system of coloured balls in a box revealed whether or not the apprentice had passed his test. A fine was applied in the case that the vote was revealed, while a master could lose his right to vote in the consul elections if he helped an apprentice to prepare the masterpiece.⁷²

Some guilds requested two or more masterpieces if the aspiring master wanted to exercise more than one trade within the same guild. The carpenters of Trapani, who belonged to one of the most specialised guilds in the town (they had four main groups with consuls and five sub-groups) were one such group. The statutes of 1614 specified that an apprentice wishing to practise as a walnut carpenter and as a 'master of the axe' had to be examined by both consuls in two separate exams.⁷³ The fees for the mastership did not increase with the number of

⁷⁰ D'Amico, *Maestranza palermitana*, pp.27-28.

⁷¹ Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.306, statutes of Palermo cooks and cake makers, ch.31 (1676).

⁷² *Ibidem*, p.307.

⁷³ 'E perché talvota succede che uno vuole esercitare due o tre o tutte le dette arti, ... per tanto si determina che in tal caso s'habbia da esaminare et approbare cossi dal consolo delli carrozzieri come dal consolo di qualsivoglia sia di queste arti ...' (S. Corso, ' "Fabri lignarij:" la maestranza a Trapani nei secoli XVII-XVIII', *La Fardelliana* 8-9 (1989-90): 80).

tests undertaken, indicating that the test truly aimed to verify the apprentice's skills.⁷⁴

A verbal licence from the consul, which certified the completion of a certain stage, marked every step from apprenticeship to mastership;⁷⁵ however, some statutes stated that a notary must draft the licence in a public act.⁷⁶ Written licences were granting the level of craftsmanship of a master. As we saw, the city council also had the ability to concede licences to masters, and to admit to the mastership someone with an incomplete apprenticeship. In Palermo, the statutes of the carpenters stated that if an apprentice did not pass the craft ability test, he could appeal to 'expert' urban officials, who were authorised to give him the licence.⁷⁷ Salvatore Pittaluca, son of master Giuseppe, but not yet eighteen, as required by the statutes of confectioners, petitioned the senate of Palermo for the licence of master.⁷⁸ Pietro Caltagirone, apprentice in a barber workshop, asked the Praetor for a master's licence even though he had not completed the four years of apprenticeship; he also promised to pay 20 *onze* to the church.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, it seems that in both cases the Senate did not accede to the requests, suggesting that they respected the guilds' jurisdiction over apprenticeship more than that over general practice and production control.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ 'Con pagare però sempre solamente detta onza una e tari uno' (Corso, '“Fabri lignarij”', pp.80-81).

⁷⁵ The passage from apprentice to journeyman, and then to master, represented the ideal training for artisans. Only some of the apprentices actually became masters, whereas journeymen often remained in the workshop as semi-skilled labourers. As Garden has written 'masters in waiting' are recorded throughout Europe. M. Garden, 'Ouvriers et artisans au XVIIIe siècle. L'exemple lyonnais et les problèmes de classification', *Revue d'histoire économique et sociale* 48 (1970), pp.41-42. See also the examples of numerous transient journeymen with few hopes of progress in Farr's research on Dijon between 1550-1650. J.R. Farr, *Hands of Honor. Artisans and Their World in Dijon, 1550-1650* (Ithaca-London, 1988), pp.138-40.

⁷⁶ 'Facendoli atto per mano di notar puplico di detta licenza' (Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.180, statutes of Palermo confectioners, ch.10 (1585-86)). Similar licences can be found elsewhere in Europe. See for example the brewers of London who stipulated that no journeyman could be hired without a 'passport' from his former master certifying his 'lawful departure'. S. Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth-Century London* (Cambridge, 1989), p.239.

⁷⁷ 'Chi li examinandi per ditti Consuli et consiglieri non fossero pati pir mastri et quilli pretendissiro indobitamenti non essiri passati chi poczano aviri ricorso ad ipsi spettabili signori offittiali, como personi experti pozzano quilli disgravari e darli licentia retrovandoli sufficienti in ditta arti' (F. Lioni, *Statuti inediti delle maestranze della città di Palermo*, DSSS ser.2, 3 (Palermo, 1883): 10-11, statutes of Palermo carpenters (1573)).

⁷⁸ ACPa, Provviste, 693, c.277 (1660-61).

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, c.326.

⁸⁰ See below, chapter 6.

d) Women

Female labour has an important role in the study of pre-industrial societies and represents a vexed question in the historiographical literature, a critical discussion of which will be developed in the final chapter. According to the literature on female craft employment, women's position in the labour market differed widely according to circumstances.

In some northern European countries women acquired full membership in local guilds, whilst some corporate groups admitted only female members.⁸¹ In some German cities, women worked in organised corporate groups, or side-by-side with guild masters, and the procedure of entry into the group did not differ from that for male members.⁸² More often, female workers emerged as employees of the craft, either as subcontracted labourers, or as part of the master's family and therefore as members of the workshop.⁸³ Finally, women could work in competition with guild artisans, particularly in the textile industry, and in other trades, such as cake making and tailoring. In such cases, guilds attempted either to regulate women's work or to prevent women's access to the labour market. In Sicily, on the other hand, they often had secondary roles, but they were not prevented from participating in guild activities. Above all, female labour became more widespread during the seventeenth century when a process of specialisation was taking place in the crafts of few demanial towns.

Before the seventeenth century, women artisans are hardly mentioned. Fifteenth-century statutes referred to membership in very generic terms, irrespective of law,

⁸¹ M. Wiesner, *Women in Renaissance Germany* (New Brunswick and New Jersey, 1986), p.158; M. Howell, *Women and Patriarchy in Late Medieval Cities* (Chicago and London, 1986), pp.43-44.

⁸² In fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Cologne, though women were restricted to certain guilds, they dominated four textile trades. Each of these guilds had its own statutes, which established the length and terms of apprenticeship, admission to the trade, workshop searches, quality controls and so on. Female masters had their own shops, took on apprentices, purchased raw materials and marketed their products. See M. Wensky, 'Women's Guilds in Cologne in the Later Middle Ages', *Journal of European Economic History* 11 (1982): 631-50.

⁸³ Particularly in the late sixteenth century, women's roles were circumscribed and confined to certain aspects of the trade. However, in eighteenth-century Nantes women still worked mostly in the textile, food, and female clothing crafts. For example tailors opened their guild to women because the demand for female clothing was outstripping the male tailors' ability to meet it. See J.R. Farr, *Artisans in Europe, 1300-1914* (Cambridge, 2000), pp.40-41.

status, sex, and economic circumstances; anyone wanting to practise the craft could be enrolled by paying the relevant fees; this generic clause appears in the statutes of the gold- and silversmiths, which was doubtless one of the most important crafts in Palermo throughout the early modern period.⁸⁴ In 1502 the statutes of embroiderers allowed women to practise their trade freely; only in case of fraud did women come under consular jurisdiction.⁸⁵ Up to the second half of the sixteenth century, therefore almost none of the statutes limited women's work, and none of them specifically excluded female work from craft business.

Under these conditions, we might presume that women's work was widespread and that numerous female masters existed in the workshops. Nevertheless, the Sicilian sources do not reveal a large-scale presence of female workers; there is no mention of independent female masters or of workshops with only female artisans. The rare references to female masters refer not to women who obtained their mastership by means of a masterpiece, but to widows who had inherited and managed the workshop of their deceased husbands.

From the middle of the sixteenth century, the statutes begin to pay more attention to the role of women, who however appear mainly as daughters and wives, as potential recipients of dowries from the guilds' dowry fund. The latter, which appears to have become a common feature of all Sicilian crafts from the late sixteenth century, was gradually extended to the daughters of apprentices and journeymen. The standard provision gives a dowry (*legato di maritaggio*) to the virgin daughters of the guild's members. They had to be poor, orphans, and sixteen years of age, and their deceased fathers had to have paid their fees regularly to the guild, every year.⁸⁶ When by the seventeenth century, the daughters of apprentices were also authorised to receive dowries, they were granted less money than the master's daughters.⁸⁷ Even the daughters of foreign masters could have access to this money on condition that their father had worked

⁸⁴ 'Tutti persuni di qualsivogli ligi, statu, sexu e condiconi siano li quali di cza (qua) innanti vorranno usari e fari lo dicto officio digiano aomni anno che quisto officio eligeranno e vorranno fari pagari et dari a la dicta caxa 4 carlini ...' (Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.24, statutes of Palermo silver- and goldsmiths, ch.2 (1447)).

⁸⁵ D'Amico, *Maestranza palermitana*, p.20.

⁸⁶ See for example Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, pp.177-79, statutes of Palermo confectioners, ch.5 (1622).

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, p.177. Master's daughter: 30 *onze*; apprentice's daughter: 20 *onze*.

in town for at least ten years.⁸⁸ In the guild of coachmen, even young women whose fathers were still alive received a dowry of about 15 *onze*; the officials also named four girls for a smaller contribution of 4 *onze* four times a year.⁸⁹ Payments by smaller and less wealthy guilds were less frequent, and the dowries less generous.

The purpose of the dowry system was to provide a sum of money to young women who were likely to marry an apprentice or a young master, who in turn would set up a new workshop. It also worked as an incentive to members to regularly pay their fees.⁹⁰ Sometimes, the dowry of a young woman and the mastership fees could be traded against each other, a fact that helps explain the large proportion of in-marrying within the guild and the frequent coincidence between marriage and setting up shops.⁹¹ Between 1620 and 1704, the silver- and goldsmiths set mastership fees of 18 *onze*, but exempted the sons of existing masters from the ability test and payment of mastership fee; journeymen who married the daughter of a master were also exempted from the exam, and if the bride received a guild dowry, had only to pay a fee of 3 *onze* to the Church.⁹²

Although the artisans' wives clearly became involved in their husbands' business and acquired some skills informally, guild statutes tried to restrict widows' involvement in the administration of the workshop. A widow was only allowed to hold a workshop for a limited period of time until a young son could take his father's place. She could sell the output to maintain herself and her family, but she could not start a new partnership with a master or a journeyman; neither could she sell the workshop, nor inherit it completely. If she remained, she was not allowed to keep the workshop, unless her new husband was another master of the same guild.

Nevertheless, the statutes of the embroiderers of 1629 suggest that women did in fact participate in the production system, but produced cheaper goods using

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, p.265, statutes of Palermo sword makers, ch.10 (1649).

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, p.244-45, statutes of Palermo coachmen, ch.11 (1636).

⁹⁰ The bride's dowry frequently brought resources essential for setting up a workshop. See E. Musgrave, 'Women in the Male World of Work: The Building Industries of the Eighteenth-Century Brittany', *French History* 7 (1993): 37.

⁹¹ G. Crossick, ed., *The Artisan and the European Town, 1500-1900* (Aldershot, 1997), p.10.

⁹² Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, pp.79-80, statutes of Palermo silver- and goldsmiths, ch.3 (1704).

a mixture of old and new materials, which masters tried to prevent by forbidding unregulated labour and the making of mixed quality goods.⁹³ In 1628-29, the consuls of the silk guild in Palermo petitioned the city council to force a group of female silk-makers to pay the standard guild fees and regularise their position. By putting the women under guild control.⁹⁴ However, the female silk weavers successfully argued that since their gender excluded them from guild membership, they could not be forced to pay the membership fees.⁹⁵ Another common excuse was that women worked only for their families and relatives using old cloth and no new materials.⁹⁶ Women were thus adept at manipulating their inferior legal status to their advantage. Their exclusion from the guild allowed women to work without respecting quality standards, and exempted them from guild controls.⁹⁷

Legally, only the male head of the family was required to pay fees for the family workshop; women were exempted because they were dependent, on a par with other members of the labour unit. Women in fact paid fees when, as widows, they managed the workshop on their own, and by the mid-seventeenth century guild regulations also stated that the wife of a master had to pay fees if she managed the workshop in her husband's absence, even though only the master was entitled to guild membership. A wife could keep the workshop running with an apprentice until the return of the master, only if she paid her husband's annual fees.⁹⁸

By the beginning of the seventeenth century, female workers are mentioned by the Trapani coral workers and tailors and the Palermo confectioners. In Trapani, tailors hired women for finishing the manufacture of a dress or a man's suit, after the master had cut the cloth. In case of dispute over quality between a

⁹³ D'Amico, *Maestranza palermitana*, p.29, statutes of Palermo embroiderers (1629).

⁹⁴ ACPa, *Provviste*, 663, c.194 rv (1628-29).

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, c.195 rv.

⁹⁶ Often artisans who did not belong to a guild could work old materials, repairing or producing second hand goods. There are several investigations relating to the use of the categories 'old' and 'new' in the early modern manufacturing industry. See F. Giusberti, *Multiprodotto contro monoprodotto: il mercato degli abiti usati in una città di Antico Regime* (Florence, 1991).

⁹⁷ Sicilian female artisans did not have apprentices, and their activity was less formal. However, in other European regions women could formally teach a craft – as in Germany (Wiesner, *Women*, pp.43-44), or in Cologne (Wensky, 'Women's Guilds', pp.631-50). Therefore the recruitment of apprentices is not the key distinction between male and female labour.

⁹⁸ See Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.269, statutes of Palermo sword makers, ch.18 (1649).

tailor and his customer, the master was not held responsible for the work done by women, who were represented as subcontractors.⁹⁹

During the seventeenth century, the manufacturing sector expanded in two directions. First, the spread of skills offered more opportunities for informal training and for practising a craft outside the confines of the guild. Second, new production niches were established which male labour could not or did not wish to fill. While the master coral workers specialised in sculpture and engraving, women were hired to bead rosaries in the coral workers' shops.¹⁰⁰

e) Foreigners

During the early sixteenth century, numerous silver- and goldsmiths moved to Palermo. They came from other demanial towns within the island, but also from Spain and from other parts of Italy such as Rome and Genoa. According to the contracts, they came because the conditions of Palermo's silversmith statutes were particularly favourable, and they paid a deposit (*malleveria*) of 25 *onze* in order to work in town.¹⁰¹ This bond aimed to protect the local masters and customers against foreign masters leaving with the gold and silver entrusted to them.

The condition of foreign artisans seems to be very similar to that of women. Statutes do not mention any restrictions on the access of foreign masters to the guilds; indeed numerous guilds seem to have encouraged the integration of foreigners. Masters did not need to undertake a further period of apprenticeship if they could prove to have obtained a mastership elsewhere,¹⁰² and they paid the same mastership and membership fees as local guild members. In one case, the statutes offered a temporary subsidy for foreign masters who could not find a

⁹⁹ A.M. Precopi Lombardo, *Artigianato trapanese*, p.81, statutes of Trapani tailors, ch.12 (1618).

¹⁰⁰ I. Navarra, 'I coralli dei corallari di Trapani fra i gioielli di Isabella De Vega e Luna Duchessa di Bivona', *Libera Università Trapani* 19 (1988): 151-69.

¹⁰¹ ACPa, Provviste, 118, c.151 (1512-13).

¹⁰² 'Vinendo in questa città alcuno mastro forastiero della ditta arte chi volesse mettere bottega di confitteri non li sia ammesso che prima non prova haver stato alla detta arte anni cinque continoi e completi' (Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.182, statutes of Palermo confectioners, ch.19 (1585-86)).

workshop in which to work soon after their arrival in Palermo.¹⁰³ Furthermore, exceptions were made in case they infringed specific regulations they did not know about, and no fine was charged. The children of a foreign master or apprentice could enjoy similar rights as the local masters' children if their fathers worked in a local shop for a few years.¹⁰⁴

5.2 Fees

Participation in the guild entailed costs, which included the compulsory payment of a mastership fee on graduation, and the annual membership fee. Fines and monetary sanctions were applied to infractions of the regulations; these are the subject of the following chapter. The collection of fees financed the maintenance of the organisation and in particular circumstances (sickness, dowries, old age, and death) constituted an assistance fund. Although fees were clearly central to the purpose of craft guilds, their aim is the subject of great controversy and has produced two opposite interpretations. On the one hand, the classical thesis represents fees as the main obstacle to free entry to the labour market, imposed by organised lobbies of masters.¹⁰⁵ On the other hand, Epstein has suggested that fees were the main means to hold the guild together, through a combination of 'stick' (regulations and fines) and 'carrot' (financial benefits).¹⁰⁶ Entry fees would raise the cost of default for the trainee, which made apprenticeship easier to establish; 'analogously, the entry fee to the guild was a "mortgage on trust", which was used to deter lesser-known masters from exploiting the guild for short-term advantage'.¹⁰⁷ In this view, fees were a kind of bond needed to acquire other members' trust and to prevent new members' early departure from the guild, and

¹⁰³ Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.158, statutes of Palermo hat makers (1509).

¹⁰⁴ Foreign masters' or apprentices' children had to be born in Palermo, their father had to have worked in a local workshop for a few years, and to have regularly paid his fees for guild membership. See Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.281, new statutes of Palermo sword makers, ch.12 (1688).

¹⁰⁵ S. Ogilvie, *State Corporatism and Proto-Industry. The Württemberg Black Forest, 1580-1797* (Cambridge, 1997), p.139; J. Mokyr, 'Growing-Up and the Industrial Revolution in Europe', *Explorations in Economic History* 31 (1976): 374.

¹⁰⁶ Epstein, 'Craft Guilds', p.691.

would explain why foreigners sometimes paid higher fees than citizens did, and why local masters' children (who were least likely to break collective rules, because they were most easily monitored) were usually exempt.

a) Membership fees

Membership fees were imposed on all members – masters and apprentices, and in every guild. According to the statutes, they were imposed in order to guarantee the main duties of the guilds: for mutual assistance, for masters in need, for dowries, and for the maintenance of the church, including processions and festivities.¹⁰⁸ They also exempted the guild masters' sons from the mastership, and entitled the daughters of masters, and sometimes of apprentices, to benefit from the dowry fund. Everybody was subject to the payment of an annual quota, which could be paid in weekly or monthly instalments. Membership fees were also required from a master or apprentice, who, though citizen of Palermo, lived and married elsewhere, but returned to open a workshop in town.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, after payment of the fees, a master's child would enjoy the same rights as the child of every other legitimate master in town.¹¹⁰ There were only few exceptions, such as the tailors of Trapani, who ruled that the children of master tailors who were not brought up in the town had to produce the masterpiece.¹¹¹

The money from the fees was collected by the guild officials, who in Palermo were allowed to administer only a limited certain amount, usually 5 *onze*. The rest was deposited in the *Tavola*, Palermo's deposit bank where the money

¹⁰⁷ Idem.

¹⁰⁸ See for example ACPa, Provviste, 650, c.440 (1616-17), Palermo, the statutes of the marble cutters. See also 'Si farà della somma riscossa come un monte e atteso prima il bisogno del Cilio, secondariamente si potrà spendere per aggiunto di qualche povero mastro infermo, carcerato, o d'altra maniera bisognoso' (R. Daidone, *Un maiolicaro trapanese del XVI secolo e la corporazione dei vasai del 1645* (Palermo, 1992), p.73, Trapani statutes of potters, ch.5 (1645)).

¹⁰⁹ Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.268, Palermo statutes of sword makers, ch.18 (1649).

¹¹⁰ Ibidem, p.269.

¹¹¹ Precopi Lombardo, *Artigianato trapanese*, p.84, Trapani statutes of tailors, ch.7 (1618).

accrued interest and was available for larger expenditures.¹¹² The money administered directly by the consuls was used for charitable purposes and for religious duties. Church maintenance was the most onerous part, and it increased progressively throughout the early modern period.¹¹³

The payment of the membership fees had a further unspoken function: membership fees helped strengthen respect for the statutes, since they represented a master's investment in the guild structure and a commitment to the system's efficient operation. The quota raised the costs of default, since leaving the guild would result in losing any benefit that had been acquired. These fees worked as constraints and incentives for the members, rather than as obstacles for their recruitment.¹¹⁴

The evidence suggests that the amount of fees paid depended largely on location and specialisation. Different fees were paid in different towns; more specialised guilds also tended to pay higher fees, reflecting the fact that the costs of free riding and the benefits of co-operation were also higher (Table 5.2).¹¹⁵

The following tables have been compiled using data from a number of craft statutes in different Sicilian towns (mainly Trapani and Palermo) over a period of two centuries.

Table 5.2a Membership fees, 1400-99 (*tari*)

Town	Guild	Master	Apprentice
Palermo	Pan makers ^{a)}	2.6	1.3
Palermo	Belt makers ^{a)}	2.6	1.3
Palermo	Marble cutters ^{b)}	2	0.5
Palermo	Tailors ^{a)}	1	0.5

*Sources: Palermo: a) Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*; b) ACPa, *Provviste* 650.

¹¹² F. Benigno, 'Fra Cinque e Seicento: l'evoluzione del sistema bancario e l'istituzione delle tavole di Palermo e Messina', in F. Pillitteri (ed.) *Banche e banchieri di Sicilia* (Palermo, 1992), pp.59-74.

¹¹³ Precopi Lombardo, *Artigianato trapanese*, pp.85 and 101-5. See the two audits of the guild of tailors, ch.11 (1618) and 1773 where all the expenditures registered are used for religious functions and events.

¹¹⁴ See Daidone, *Un maiolicaro trapanese*, p.73. The statutes of Trapani potters stated that only the masters who remained faithfully members of the craft could enjoy the money collected.

¹¹⁵ Epstein, 'Craft Guilds', p.691.

Table 5.2b Membership fees, 1500-99 (*tari*)

Town	Guilds	Master	Apprentice
Palermo	Embroiderers ^{a)}	10	1
Palermo	Shoemakers ^{b)}	3	1.6
Palermo	Blanket makers ^{c)}	2	1
Palermo	Confectioners ^{c)}	1	0.25
Palermo	Tailors ^{c)}	1	0.5
Palermo	Carpenters ^{b)}	1	-
Syracuse	Masons	0.05	-
Trapani	Masons	4	1

*Sources: Palermo: a)D'Amico *La maestranze palermitana*; b)Lionti *Statuti inediti*; c) Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*;
Syracuse: Carpinteri, 'Capitoli';
Trapani: Denaro, "Capitoli".

Table 5.2c Membership fees 1600-99 (*tari*)

Town	Guilds	Master	Apprentice
Palermo	Silversmiths ^{a)}	60	30
Palermo	Playing card makers ^{b)}	36	18
Palermo	Soapmakers ^{d)}	24	-
Palermo	Silk sock makers ^{a)}	12	6
Palermo	Cooks and cake makers ^{a)}	12	6
Palermo	Coachmen ^{a)}	12	-
Palermo	Water masters ^{b)}	9	-
Palermo	Sword makers ^{a)}	6	3
Palermo	Ropers ^{a)}	6	-
Palermo	Gold platers ^{c)}	6	3
Palermo	Masons ^{b)}	4	-
Palermo	Tailors ^{a)}	3	2
Syracuse	Leather workers	3	1.5
Trapani	Silversmiths ^{a)}	30	12
Trapani	Carpenters ^{b)}	6	3
Trapani	Marble cutter ^{c)}	4	-
Trapani	Silk, wool, linen weavers ^{d)}	3	2.5
Trapani	Coral workers ^{e)}	3	1.5
Trapani	Tailors ^{f)}	3	1.5
Trapani	Blacksmiths ^{g)}	2.6	1.3
Trapani	Potters ^{h)}	2	

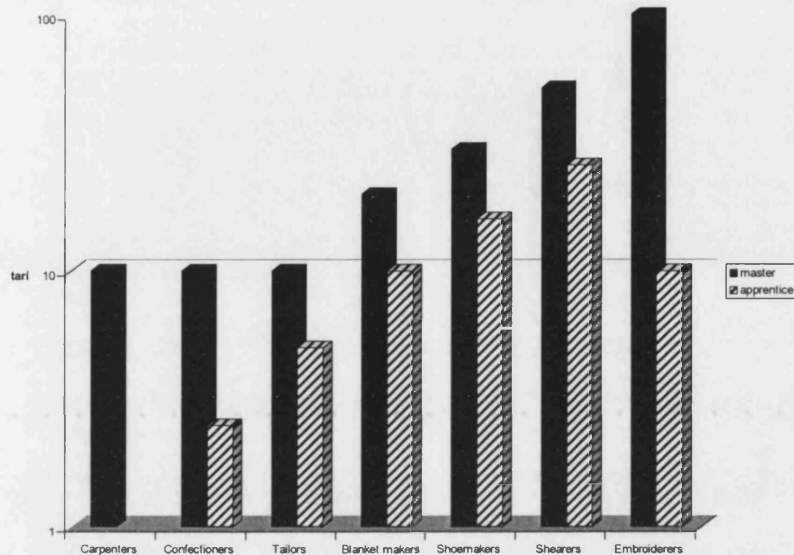
*Sources: Palermo: a) Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*; b) Lionti, *Statuti inediti*; c) ACPa, *Provvisive 654*; d) ACPa, *Provvisive 653, 664, 671*.

Syracuse: Carpinteri, 'Capitoli'.

Trapani: a) ASTp, Notai, not. F. Gioemi (1612); b) Corso, '“Fabri Lignarij”'; c) Precopi Lombardo, 'Artigianato e arte'; d) BF, ASSTp, Atti (1645-46); e) Cocco, *Consolati*; f) ASTp, Notai, not. P. Adamo (1645); g) ASTp, Notai, not. G.A. Mastrangelo (1608-11); h) Ragona, 'Statuti', and Daidone, 'Maiolicaro'.

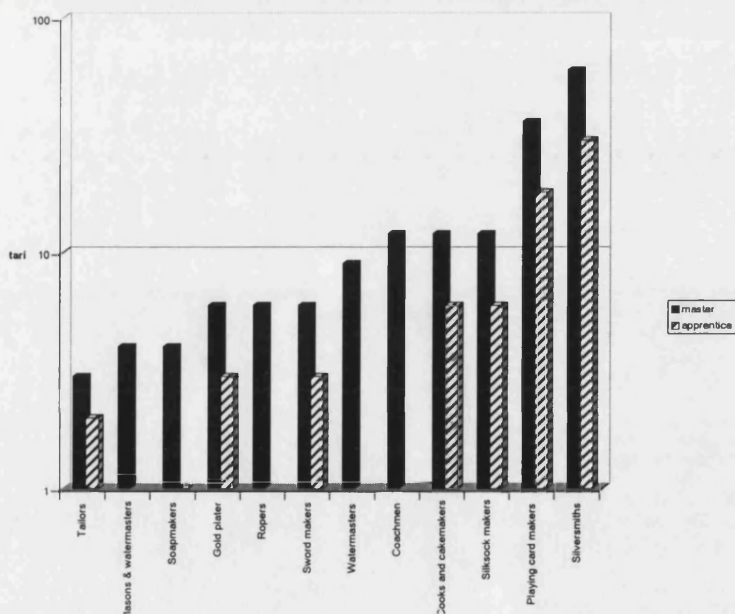
Masters generally paid about twice as much as the apprentices; sometimes masters anticipated their apprentices' fees, recovering the money from their work.

Fig.5.1 Membership fees for masters and apprentices in Palermo, 1500-99



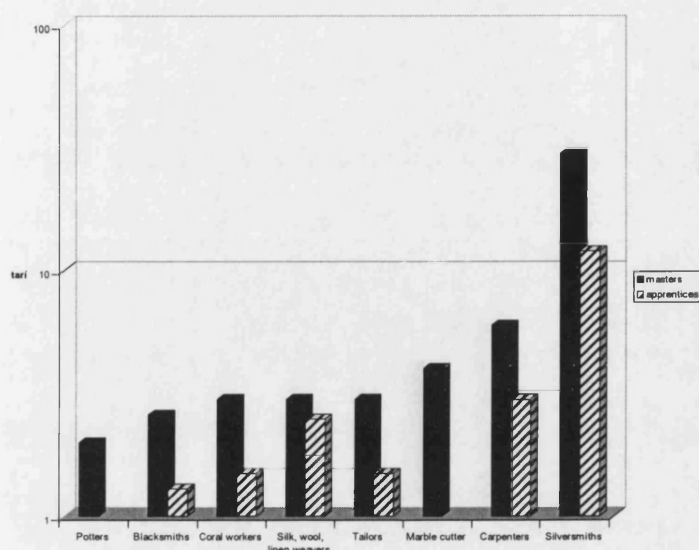
* Sources: See Table 5.2b.

Fig.5.2 Membership fees for masters and apprentices in Palermo, 1600-99



*Sources: See Table 5.2c.

Fig. 5.3 Membership fees for masters and apprentices in Trapani, 1600-99



* Sources: See Table 5.2c.

Some guilds also required the payment of trademark fees (*raggioni di bulla*). Every object in silver had to be marked by the consuls who controlled the alloy of the metal and the good quality of the piece. Lists specified the trademark fee for each kind of product, which had to be marked. In mid-seventeenth century Palermo, the *raggioni di bulla* for silver goods varied according to weight and manufacture. A minimum of 3-5 *grani* was paid for small works weighing up to half a pound, such as bowls with or without a lid, small vases, some cutlery, and objects of everyday use like bells for babies. A vast range of objects carried a trademark fee of between 10 *grani*/lb. (including jugs, spittoons, and church accessories of daily use) and 15 *grani*/lb. (oil lamps, trays with or without engraving, and crowns for saints and sculptures). Objects heavier than 1.5lb. were charged from 1 *tari* and over. A dozen small silver plates were taxed about 6 *tari*; for more elaborate objects as well as sword blades the tax was between 1 *tari*/lb. (up to 5lb.) and 10 *grani*/lb. (anything over 5lb.).¹¹⁶ We would expect the *raggioni di bulla* to be recovered in the sale price.

¹¹⁶ Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, pp.64-71.

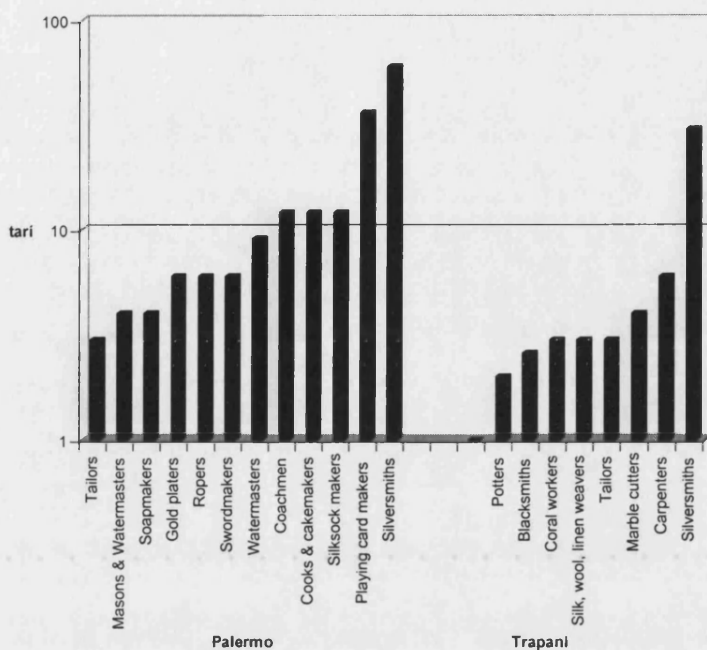
The figures in Table 5.2c suggest that silver- and goldsmiths paid higher fees everywhere; in Palermo silk sock makers paid more than gold platers; and in Trapani carpenters paid twice as much as coral workers. In general, more guilds required membership fees in the seventeenth century. Palermo guild masters seem always to have paid higher fees than elsewhere, and guilds producing luxury goods paid higher fees than these with lower levels of specialisation.

During the seventeenth century, guilds in Palermo strengthened their regulation and raised fees substantially, by more than three times; Trapani artisans, who did not seem to pay any fees in the sixteenth century, paid a modest quota a century later. However, the fees mentioned in the statutes did not always correspond to the fees actually paid. The figures in tables 5.2 a, b, and c refer to the figures fixed in the statutes, which changed little over long periods, while the actual payment could be more variable, particularly in smaller guilds. Several variables could alter the fixed amount specified in the statutes. In Trapani, the fee fixed by carpenters' statutes was 4 *tari*, but later statutes mentioned that the quota actually paid was 2 *tari*.¹¹⁷ However, guild officials could increase annual payments through extra collections for the church, or other specific needs made on an *ad hoc* basis. Sometimes guilds asked for some extra offering as alms for the church, or for processions or other needs;¹¹⁸ sometimes artisans paid in kind, for example with candle wax.

¹¹⁷ Corso, '“Fabri lignarij”', pp.59, statutes of Trapani carpenters (1614).

¹¹⁸ This is the case of the wool, silk, and linen weavers in Trapani. The statutes mention the payment of some extraordinary fees for charity. See BFTp, ASSTp, Copia Lettere, cc.58ss. (1644-45), Trapani statutes of wool, silk, and linen weavers.

Fig.5.4 Masters' fees in Trapani and Palermo, 1600-99



* Sources: See Table 5.2c.

The increase in membership fees during the seventeenth century, at a time of growing demand, might indicate that guilds were trying to keep new members out to increase their profits. But guilds, as we have seen, had no power of exclusion; masters could easily by-pass them by appearing to the urban authorities. Nor is there any evidence that high fees were holding production back; on the contrary, women workers – always an index of the overall health of the labour market – were finding increasing opportunities for employment. We must conclude that guild fees were being raised to make the guilds' service more, rather than less attractive.

b) Mastership fees

One-off fees were requested for undertaking the masterpiece. Sometimes, apprentices paid after the exam; at other times, they could pay during the year in which they took the exam, in order to have enough time to collect the money.¹¹⁹ If the apprentice did not pass the test, the money paid in advance was returned to him.¹²⁰

Table 5.3a Mastership fees, 1500-99 (*tari*)

Town	Guild	Citizen	Son	Foreign
Messina	Masons	3	-	-
Palermo	Confectioners ^{a)}	45	-	75
Palermo	Shoemakers ^{b)}	43	-	-
Palermo	Carpenters ^{b)}	30	-	-
Palermo	Blanket makers ^{a)}	30	-	-
Palermo	Embroiderers ^{c)}	30	-	-
Palermo	Hat makers ^{a)}	30	-	-
Palermo	Shearers ^{a)}	30	-	-
Palermo	Masons ^{b)}	10	-	-
Syracuse	Masons	4	-	-
Trapani	Masons	15	-	15

* Sources: Messina: Novarese, 'Statuti';
 Palermo: a) Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*; b) Lioni, *Statuti inediti*; c)
 D'Amico, *Maestranza*;
 Syracuse: Carpinteri, 'Capitoli';
 Trapani: Denaro, 'Capitoli'.

¹¹⁹ See BF, ASSTp, Atti, unnumbered fos. (1645-46), statutes of Trapani wool, linen and silk weavers.

¹²⁰ See Lioni, *Statuti inediti*, p.29, Palermo statutes of shoemakers, ch.20 (1580).

Table 5.3b Mastership fees, 1600-99 (*tari*)

Town	Guild	Citizen	Son	Foreign
Palermo	Ropers ^{a)}	150	15	-
Palermo	Embroiderers ^{b)}	102	-	-
Palermo	Playing card makers ^{c)}	90	45	-
Palermo	Cooks and cake makers ^{a)}	90	15	-
Palermo	Water masters ^{c)}	90	15	-
Palermo	Sword makers ^{a)}	60	60	120
Palermo	Coachmen ^{a)}	60	15	-
Palermo	Silversmiths ^{a)}	60	-	-
Palermo	Confectioners ^{a)}	45	-	75
Palermo	Silk sock makers ^{a)}	30	12	60
Palermo	Tailors ^{a)}	30	-	-
Palermo	Masons and water masters ^{c)}	-	4	-
Syracuse	Leather workers	18	-	-
Trapani	Sculptors ^{a)}	60	-	-
Trapani	Silk, wool, linen weavers ^{b)}	34	10	66
Trapani	Tailors ^{c)}	31	31	64
Trapani	Butchers ^{d)}	31	-	60
Trapani	Carpenters ^{e)}	31	-	60
Trapani	Coral workers ^{f)}	31	-	31
Trapani	Marble cutters ^{a)}	31	-	-
Trapani	Potters ^{g)}	31	-	-
Trapani	Silversmiths ^{h)}	30	-	120
Trapani	Blacksmiths ⁱ⁾	19	-	19

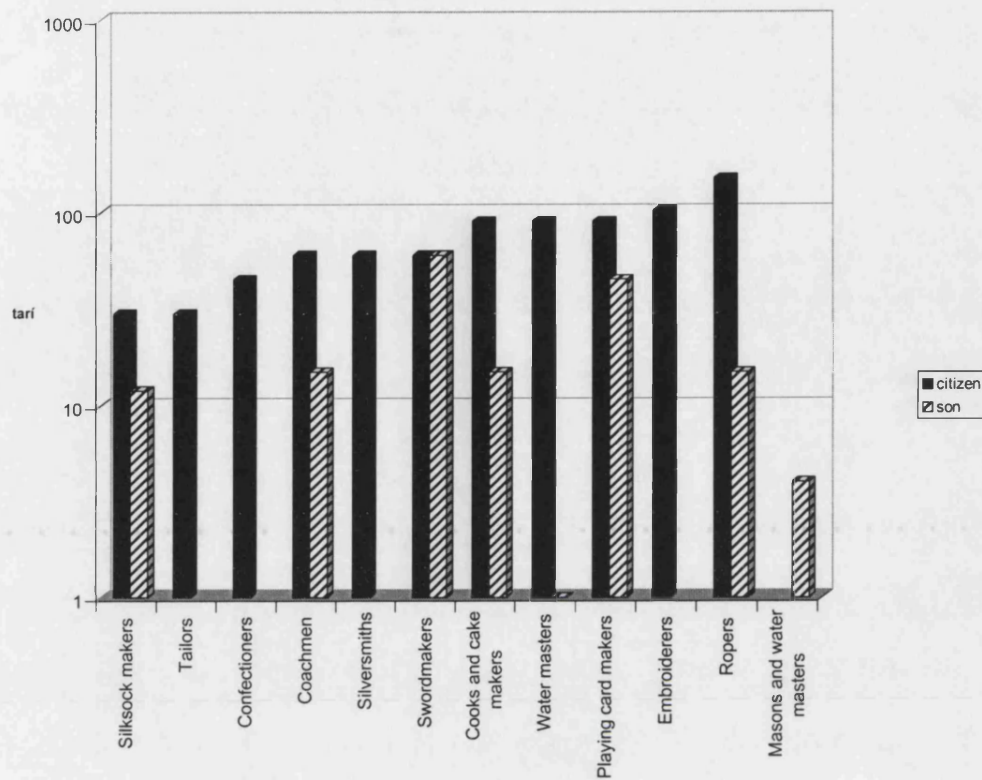
*Sources: Palermo: a) Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*; b) D'Amico, *Maestranza*; c) Lioni, *Statuti inediti*;

Syracuse: Carpinteri, 'Consolati';

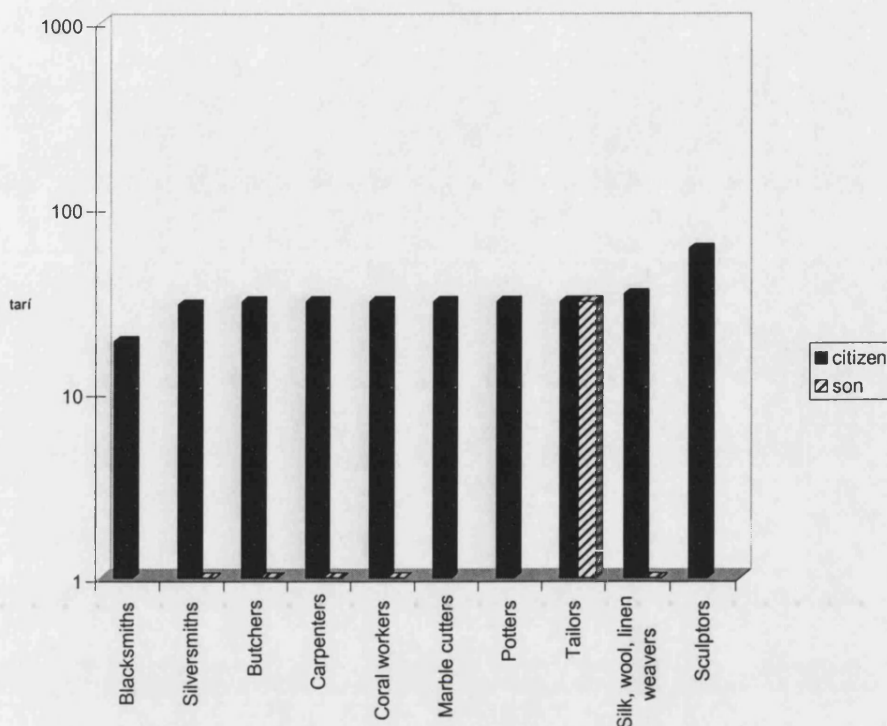
Trapani: a) Precopi Lombardo, 'Artigianato e arte'; b) BF, ASSTp, Atti (1645-46); c) ASTp, Notai, not. P. Adamo (1645); d) Denaro, 'Capitoli'; e) Corso, ' "Fabri lignarij" '; f) Cocco, *Consolati*; g) Ragona, 'Statuti'; h) ASTp, Notai, not.F. Gioemi (1612); i) ASTp, Notai, not. G.A. Mastrangelo (1608-11).

The average fee paid in Palermo was higher than the average paid in Trapani, Messina and Syracuse, although the latter two cities offer only a few examples and are therefore less reliable. This suggests the not surprising conclusion that Palermo's guilds were more specialised than elsewhere and that the labour market was more skilled, and that consequently, Palermo artisans were willing to pay more to be a member of a guild (Figs. 5.5 and 5.6).

Fig.5.5 Mastership fees for citizens and masters' sons in Palermo, 1600-99 (*tari*)



*Sources: See Table 5.3b

Fig.5.6 Mastership fees for citizens and masters' sons in Trapani, 1600-99 (*tari*)

*Sources: See Table 5.3b.

c) Foreign masters

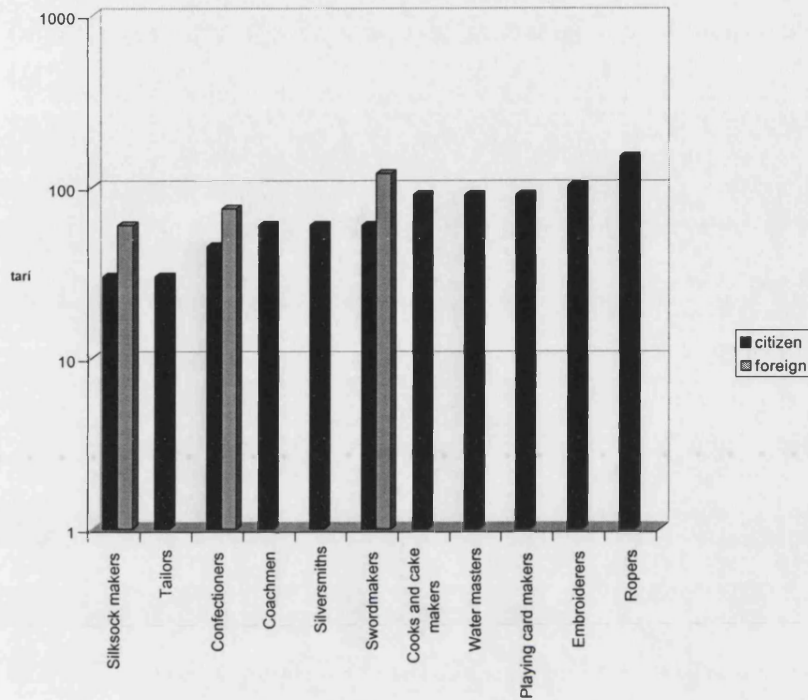
Foreign guild masters, who could prove they had passed their masterpiece elsewhere, were exempted from undertaking a further period of apprenticeship,¹²¹ although they sometimes paid a fee for producing a masterpiece in the new town.¹²² In Trapani, numerous guilds required higher mastership fees from foreign than from local masters; while in Palermo the phenomenon seems less widespread, even though Palermo had bigger and generally wealthier guilds. This might confirm the hypothesis that smaller markets tended to be more conservative and less open than bigger ones to the recruitment of skilled labour. It also

¹²¹ See above, n.101

¹²² 'Et fatta tal prova habbia di far l' esamina ... et trovandolo abile et sufficiente se li dara la licenza per atto puplico pagando prima tari 15 alla maggior panhormitana ecclesia et unzi due alla detta congregazione'. Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.182, statutes of Palermo confectioners, ch.19 (1585-86).

confirms Epstein's hypothesis that mastership fees were a kind of bond needed to acquire other members' trust ('mortgage on trust').¹²³

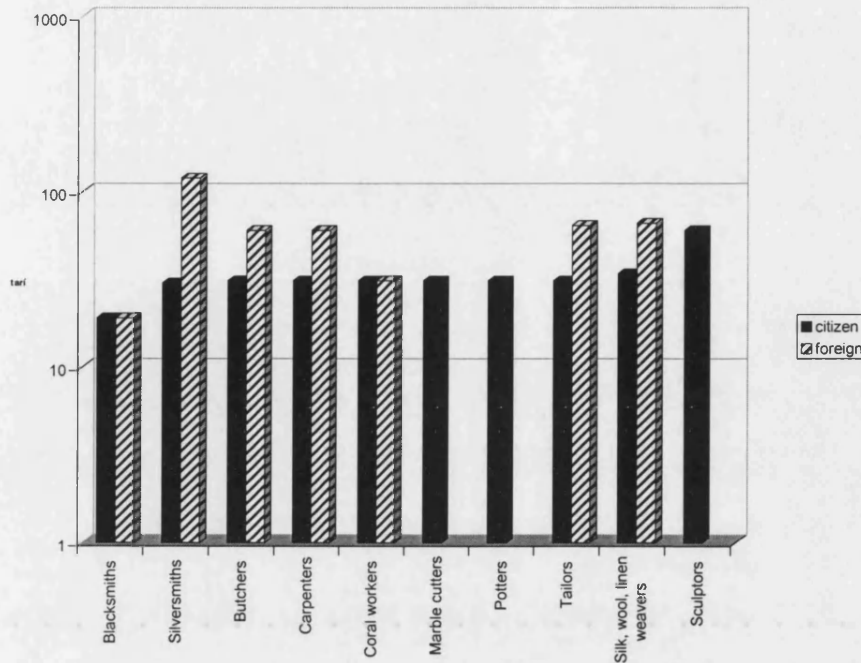
Fig.5.7 Mastership fees for natives and foreigners in Palermo, 1600-99 (*tari*)



* Sources: See Table 5.3b.

¹²³ Epstein, 'Craft Guilds', p.691.

Fig.5.8 Mastership fees for natives and foreigners in Trapani, 1600-99 (*tari*)



* Sources: see Table 5.3b.

However, foreign masters usually paid the same membership fees as locals. The only two cases when foreign masters had to pay higher membership fees concerned the guild of silver- and goldsmiths in Trapani and Palermo (Table 5.4). The theory that the membership fees were meant to exclude access to the guild by outsider competitors is not supported by the evidence.

Table 5.4 Membership fees for citizens and foreigners, 1600-99 (*tari*)

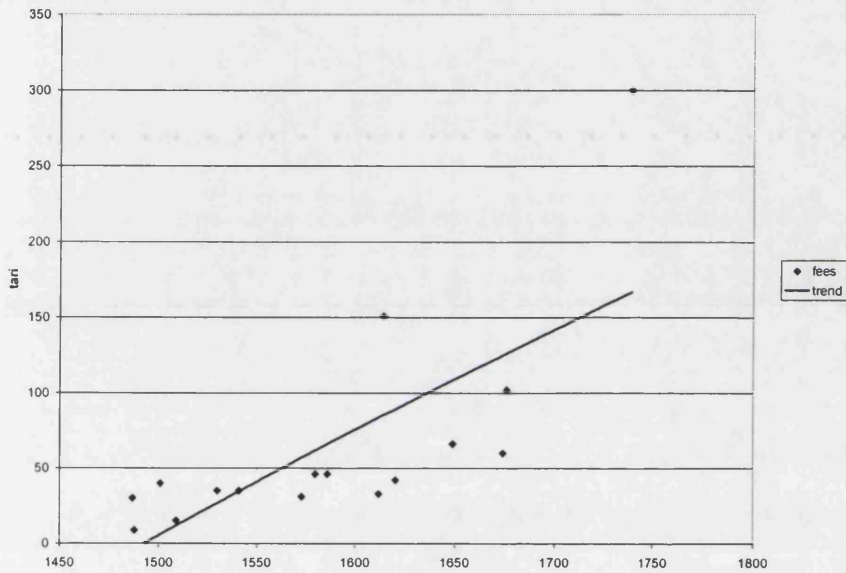
Silver and goldsmiths	Citizens	Foreigners
Palermo	60	120
Trapani	31	60

* Sources: Palermo: Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*;
Trapani: ASTp, Notai, not. F.Gioemi (1612).

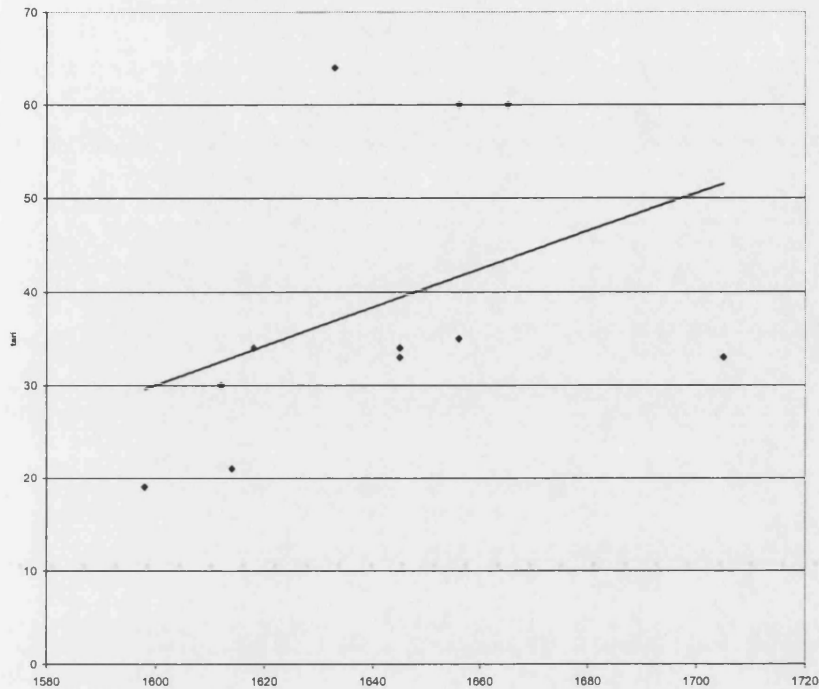
d) Two centuries of fees

In Palermo and Trapani, fees paid by guild members gradually increased from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century (Figs. 5.9 and 5.10).

Fig. 5.9 Guild fees in Palermo, 1450-1799 (*tari*)



* Sources: See Tables 5.2 and 5.3.

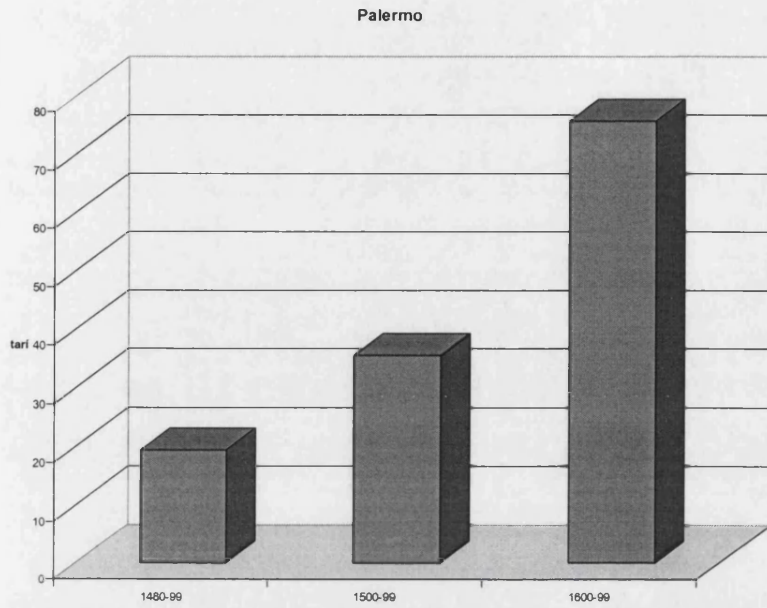
Fig. 5.10 Guild fees in Trapani 1580-1705 (*tari*)

* Sources: See Tables 5.2 and 5.3.

The percentage increase of fee paid between the sixteenth and the seventeenth century is similar in Palermo and Trapani. Palermo guilds paid an average of 35 *tari* in the sixteenth century and 75 *tari* in the seventeenth century, an increase of 114.2 per cent (Fig. 5.11);¹²⁴ Trapani guilds paid an average of 19 *tari* in the sixteenth century and 41 *tari* in the seventeenth century, an increase of 115.8 per cent (Fig. 5.12). Unfortunately similar data are not available for the eastern part of the island, where guilds declined from the late sixteenth century.

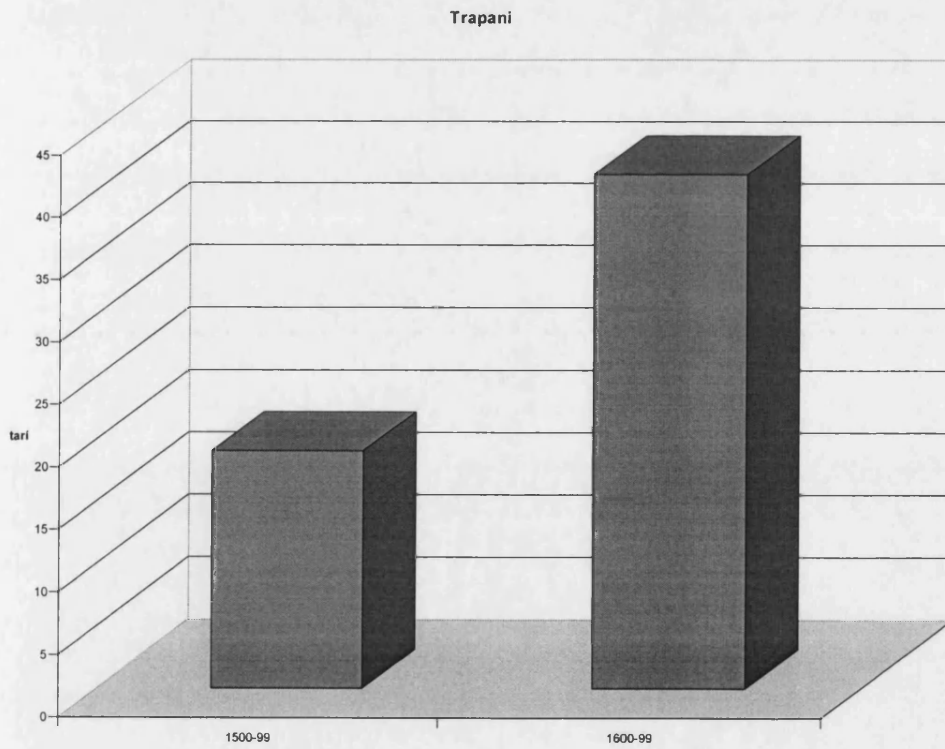
¹²⁴ The average fees paid in Palermo between the fifteenth and sixteenth century increased by 84 per cent.

Fig.5.11 Average fees in Palermo, 1480-1699 (*tari*)



*Sources: See Tables 5.2 and 5.3.

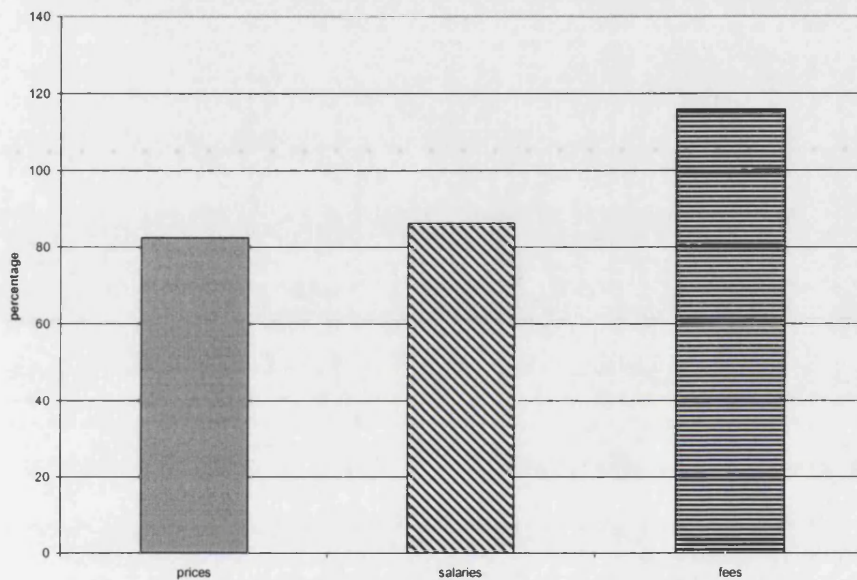
Fig. 5.12 Average fees in Trapani, 1500-1699 (*tari*)



* Sources: See Tables 5.2 and 5.3.

The gradual increase of fees in Trapani followed price inflation over the same period. As mentioned in chapter 3, between the sixteenth and the seventeenth century the price of foodstuffs, such as wine and cheese, increased by 40 per cent, and grain prices by 51 per cent. It seems that other prices increased more rapidly, such as the price of manufacture goods, and on average, during that period prices appear to have increased by 82 per cent. Salaries seem to have increased by 86 per cent (Fig. 5.13).¹²⁵

Fig. 5.13 Percentage increases in Trapani prices, salaries, and guild fees in comparison, 1500-1699



*Sources: Cancila, *Aspetti di un mercato* (prices and salaries). Prices are inclusive of grain prices (in 1562 and 1662). See Figs. 5.11 and 5.12 (fees).

The very similar increase in the average fees paid in the two western towns and a comparable rate of inflation show that similar economic forces were at work. Between the sixteenth and the seventeenth century most Mediterranean countries suffered from population decline and economic contraction. Sicily, by contrast, maintained a stable economy driven by agricultural exports and by a growing manufacturing sector. Guild fees increased slightly faster than salaries and prices, suggesting that these fees were not arbitrarily imposed, but responded to

¹²⁵ See Cancila *Aspetti di un mercato siciliano. Trapani nei secoli XVII-XIX* (Caltanissetta and

economic changes, and that over time masters tended to invest marginally increasing amounts of money to maintain their membership.

e) The impact of fees on living standards

The question remains as to whether membership and mastership fees posed significant financial barriers to entry. The answer is problematic because there are very few available data about living costs and artisan incomes. A master's income depended on several variables, including production costs, the time needed to accomplish the work, supply and demand for labour and the master's own ability. Differences of wealth among masters of the same craft could be enormous and depended on many factors: the master's specialisation, the size of the workshop, and the nature of his clients all made a significant difference. Furthermore, a master's economic status could easily change. There are some provisions about masters who could not afford the expenses of a workshop,¹²⁶ or who after opening a workshop had to close it, probably to return to their own masters' place and with the risk of losing the master's qualification.¹²⁷ Sometimes, masters left their crafts temporarily, possibly because they were unable to keep their shops open; some statutes tried to prevent the readmission of former masters to the craft, forcing them to remain in 'low' activities, that had not acquired guild status.¹²⁸

The only available artisan wages refer to carpenters, masons, and coral workers in Trapani. According to Cancila, a daily wage of 2.10 *tari* in 1512-13, and 4-5 *tari* at the end of the sixteenth century, was paid to carpenters and masons

Rome, 1972), p.177. See also chapter 3 in this thesis.

¹²⁶ The transition from apprentice to master represents the ideal experience of an artisan. According to Garden, in Lyon the ratio of journeymen to masters was about two to one, which meant that most journeymen could realistically be seen as 'masters in waiting'. Where the ratio was much less favourable, he found it difficult to see them as other than workers. Garden, 'Ouvriers et artisans', pp.41-42.

¹²⁷ ACPa, Provviste, 693, c.83 (1660-61). Francesco Mancuso had to sell his workshop in 1648, he changed activity and later a ban forbade all the needy master pharmacists who were engaged in other activity to return to their previous activity. Numerous appeals to the Praetor resulted in changing the ban and needy masters were only excluded from the elections of the officials.

¹²⁸ ACPa, Provviste, 693, c.83 (1660-61). See also previous chapter (4.3).

at the first level of skilled labour (*manovali*).¹²⁹ They could earn around 900 *tari* (30 *onze*) in a year of 200 working days.¹³⁰ The statutes of the coral workers (1633) stated that a daily salary could not be less than 3 *tari* for unskilled workers in the workshop. Silversmiths earned a fixed amount of money per *libra* of silver worked, which between 1723 and 1793 varied between 16 *tari* and 2.4 *onze* per *libra* according to the complexity of the work.¹³¹

The samples of carpenters, masons, and shoemakers in the tables show that the amount of money required for the membership and mastership fees was not very high. In seventeenth-century Trapani, the masons' membership fees represented 0.4 per cent, and the mastership fees 1.6 per cent of their estimated annual income. Among carpenters the membership fees represented 0.3 per cent, and the mastership fees 3.3 per cent of estimated annual income.

Table 5.5 Membership fees, 1500-1799 (*tari* per year)

Carpenters	1500-99	1600-99	1700-99
Palermo	1		1
Salemi		6	4
Trapani masters		3	2
Trapani apprentices		3	2
Masons	1500-99	1600-99	1700-99
Messina	3		
Palermo masters	2		
Palermo apprentices	0.05		
Syracuse	1		1
Trapani masters		4	
Trapani apprentices		1	
Shoemakers	1500-99	1600-99	1700-99
Palermo	3		
Salemi		2	

* Sources: See Table 5.2.

¹²⁹ This data concerns masons and carpenters working in the salina of Jesuits in Trapani. Cancila, *Aspetti di un mercato siciliano*, p.180.

¹³⁰ I believe that the number of days estimated by Cancila is quite small. Though these artisans used to respect religious holidays, such as Sunday and other saints' celebrations, they often used to work when the workshop was closed (see also the section on fines). Moreover, the artisans were not dependent on weather conditions, as agricultural workers were. The working days in a year were probably closer to 300.

¹³¹ S. Barraja, *I marchi degli argentieri e orafi di Palermo* (Palermo, 1996), p.97.

Mastership fees were more expensive, but these were paid only once in lifetime and sometimes in instalments.

Table 5.6 Mastership fees, 1500-1799 (*tari* per year)

Carpenters	1500-99	1600-99	1700-99
Palermo	30		
Salemi apprentices			15
Salemi foreigners			30
Trapani apprentices		30	31
Trapani journeymen		12	
Masons			
Messina	3		
Palermo	10		
Syracuse	4		4
Trapani		15	
Shoemakers			
Palermo	3		
Salemi			2

*Sources: figures from Table 5.3.

In sum fees in Sicily remained low. They had a marginal impact on members' income, and they did not prevent access to either the guild or the labour market. Rather than barriers to entry, low fees may reflect the poor incentives that guilds provided for membership.

Chapter 6

Implementation of guild regulations

Guild statutes aimed to regulate the activities of guild members. Although these regulations have generally been studied as formal rules, their actual effectiveness is still an open question, as the previous two chapters have suggested. In Sicilian statutes almost every rule had a fine attached to it, in case it was breached. This set of monetary fines and punishments offers a key to understanding their implementation and forms the subject of this chapter. The presence of fines does not necessarily imply the widespread respect of the regulations, since the enforcement of guild regulations depended on institutional and legal backing of the consuls' authority and on the guilds' willingness to prosecute their members. Fines do, however, provide an ordinal scale of what guildsmen considered central to their activities and to the guilds' purpose. The incidence and nature of the fines provide further insight into the effectiveness of craft guilds, as well as their purposes. The following analysis of the statutes of Sicilian guilds is a first attempt to verify how regulations could be enforced and whether rules reflect an overall strategy for implementation.¹

The following range of fines and punishments were administered to guild members mainly in Trapani and Palermo between the late fifteenth and the seventeenth century. A comparison of fines in different guild statutes over a long period of time offers the first significant observation. Not only are most regulations found in the majority of statutes, but their infringement had generally similar consequences. Some categories of offences had particularly severe consequence; others seem to have resulted in quite small fines, whilst some of the offences did not have a substantial penalty attached.

The mechanism for detecting and punishing infringements of guild regulations combined the force of guild officials and of urban authority. After approving a set of statutes, the city council would publish bans recognising guild regulations as public laws. Guild officials, consul and councillors were in charge

¹ Despite the rich literatures on guilds, it seems that there are no studies that specifically consider the importance of the fines and punishment included in guild statutes.

of enforcing guild rules, imposing fines, and occasionally condemning to imprisonment with the support of the civil authority. The consuls' authority was itself upheld by the city council and was subjected to revision by guild members. Guild offices lasted only one year; at the end of their duties, the officers had to subject their activities to audit by the newly elected officials.² The numerous fines for the officials who refused a guild office itself suggest that the offices were frequently considered a waste of time.

The system of enforcement was therefore based on a dual authority. However, the statutes make clear that the consul and his councillors were unable to control all the members of a guild and all the artisans and retailers who worked at the fringes of the guild system, and that the system relied to a great extent on self-enforcement. Masters monitored each other, partly in order to defend their own business, and partly because a proportion of the fines, usually one third or one quarter, would go to the person who denounced the offence.³ Although this system seems to have risked members' solidarity, it was an effective way of reducing monitoring costs within the community.

I have grouped the various offences for which statutory fines could be imposed into six categories: fee evasion, evading quality control regulations, breaking the labour market rules, failure of officials to accomplish their duties, breaking competition rules, and evasion of the guild's social and religious duties. Each category includes a number of different offences, which are commonly cited in Sicilian guild statutes:

a) Fees

- Refusal or late payment of fees
- Refusal to pay trademark fees
- Refusal to pay fees for the material bought for working
- Refusal to pay product tax
- Refusal to accept the consul's valuations of goods

² See for example S. Denaro, 'I capitoli dei maestri muratori, marmorari e cavatori di pietra nella città di Trapani', *La Fardelliana* 14 (1995): 150, statutes of Trapani masons (1598).

³ See for example F.L. Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze di Palermo nei secoli XV-XVIII* (Trapani 1991), p.270, statutes of Palermo sword makers, chs.20-21 (1649).

b) Quality control

Producing poor quality or unmarked goods
Use of bad material
Use of non-standard size or material (e.g. metal alloy, length of a rope)
Mixing old and new material together
Selling of poor quality goods
Selling of goods without trademark
Unauthorised selling of goods produced by guild members
Selling on the street
Providing goods to authorised traders
Buying material from unauthorised traders on the street
Buying a workshop without the consul's valuation (e.g. private transaction)

c) Labour control

Masters working without licence
Apprentice working without licence
Partnership with a non-master
Recruitment of slaves or of others who practise unskilled jobs
Recruitment of apprentices by journeymen
Recruitment of foreign without deposit
Widow holding workshop for longer than permitted or after marrying a master of another craft
Widow for society with someone who is not a master
Poaching
Apprentice leaving the master without finishing his apprenticeship
Master allowing apprentices to perform master's duties (e.g. tailors: cutting) or to finish the apprenticeship early
Apprentice working outside the workshop

d) Control over competition

Having two workshops or workshops too close to one another
Breaking the rules for buying raw material
Master allowing a non-master to run a workshop
Valuation without a licence
Selling at excessively high prices

e) Officials' duties

Failure to produce an audit
Having unbalanced books
Refusal to collect fees, value goods and inspect workshops
Issuing illegal licences
Applying for offices before the approved term
Officials holding other offices

f) Participation in guild activities

Disobedience to the consuls or statutes
Refusal to inspect workshops with the consul
Refusal to attend the religious celebrations (e.g. processions, patron's day)

Refusal to attend assemblies, elections or exams
Refusal to accept appointment as consul or councillor
Working during public holidays
Working during mourning for a master
Shaming the guild (practising the craft dishonourably)

In the following sections each category of offence is discussed in turn, and the different fines levied by different guilds in various towns is presented in a series of tables. Since fines did not change significantly over time, the different periods in which the statutes were drafted have not been distinguished. The date of the first set of statutes where the norm appears is given next to the guild name; when the fine changed over time there is more than one entry. Sometimes the date recorded is that of the only set of statutes known for certain guilds. All financial penalties have been converted to *tari*, including penalties paid in wax, where one *rotolo* (793 g.) of wax was worth about *tari* 1.5.

a) Fees

Although membership and masterpieces fees were not very high, evasion appears to have been widespread. The statutes invariably mention the collection of fees and the regular monitoring of the guild audit and accounts among the consuls' duties.⁴

The system of fee enforcement was based on a combination of penalties against masters and of consular responsibility. A master who failed to pay membership fees would lose his voting rights, namely the right to vote for his representatives and to be elected as consul or councillor.⁵ The consul was directly responsible for those who would not pay the fees, and could force payment by confiscating the master's tools and goods; otherwise the consul would be personally liable for any amount missing in the final report (Table 6.1).

The consequences of refusing to pay fees were particularly serious if the master had children. His sons would lose the right to become masters without undertaking the exam and paying the mastership fees; his daughters were debarred

⁴ See Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.226, statutes of Palermo silk sock makers (1621).

⁵ See for example S. Corso, "Fabri lignarij:" la maestranza a Trapani nei secoli XVII-XVIII". *La Fardelliana* 8-9 (1989-90): 61, statutes of Trapani carpenters (1614). Other examples and consequences for fees evasion in Table 6.1.

from receiving guild dowries. Non-payment also led to the loss of financial assistance for the master and his family in case of sickness or need, which could threaten the whole family with indigence. However, a master in arrears did not lose any rights if he paid his outstanding fees within a certain period,⁶ and some guilds exempted extremely poor masters from payment of fees and other occasional contributions.⁷

Certain guilds, among them silver- and goldsmiths and leather workers, introduced a trademark that acted as a guarantee of quality. Artisans had to pay a fee proportional to the value of the object endorsed; this fee could then be added to the final price. Payment need not be immediate; but refusal to pay resulted in confiscation of the goods, a considerable threat particularly for silversmiths and goldsmiths.

Other fees were paid on raw materials, particularly if bought with the consul's intermediation, but only in very few cases do the statutes mention any sort of fine for refusing to pay these fees. Another fee was occasionally paid as a proportion of the value of the produced goods, which seems to have corresponded to the silversmith trademark fee and to have been connected with quality controls; yet again, however, it was often mentioned, but there are few references to fines for non-payment.

Local urban councils tended to give limited support to restrictions that regulated and enforced membership and production. Consequently, refusal to pay the fee, although frequently mentioned in the statutes, was not severely punished and gave rise to several exemptions (Table 6.1).

Table 6.1 Fines for fee evasion (*tari*)

Guild	Refusal to pay annual fees	Refusal to pay trademark fees	Refusal to pay the raw material fees	Refusal to pay product tax	Refusal to accept consul's estimation

⁶ F. Lioni, *Statuti inediti delle antiche maestranze delle città di Sicilia*, DSSS ser. 2, 3 (1883): 124, statutes of Palermo forgers (1771-72). They were allowed to pay their fees up to three months later.

⁷ Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, pp.218-19, statutes of Palermo silk sock makers (1621); and ASTp, Notai, not G. A. Mastrangelo unnumbered fos. (1608-11), statutes of Trapani blacksmiths (1610).

Carpenters (Pa) 1573 ^{a)}	Pay double fees				
Shoemakers (Pa) 1580 ^{a)}	Confiscation				
Tailors (Pa) 1612 ^{b)}	Confiscation + 1 rot. wax				
Ropers (Pa) 1614 ^{b)}			90		
Soapmakers (Pa) 1617 ^{c)}				300	
Silk sock makers (Pa) 1620 ^{b)}	Confiscation				
Confectioners (Pa) 1622 ^{b)}	No voting rights + 1 rot. wax		30		
Embroiderers (Pa) 1630 ^{d)}	1 rot. wax				
Silversmiths (Pa) 1631 ^{b)}	Confiscation + no voting rights	Confiscation			
Tailors (Pa) 1641 ^{b)}	no rights				
Sword-makers (Pa) 1649 ^{b)}	Confiscation + Exclusion from the guild			180+No statutory rights for children	
Cooks and cake- makers (Pa) 1676 ^{b)}	Confiscation			60 or confiscation	
Water masters (Pa) 1694 ^{a)}	Confiscation		120		
Silversmiths (Pa) 1704 ^{b)}	Confiscation + no voting rights	Confiscation			

Pa = Palermo

* Sources: Palermo: a) Lioni, *Statuti inediti*; b) Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*; c) ACPa, *Provviste 650*; d) D'Amico, *Maestranza palermitana*.

Table 6.1 —Continued

Guild	Refusal to pay annual fees	Refusal to pay trademark fees	Refusal to pay the raw material fees	Refusal to pay product tax	Refusal to accept consul's estimation
Masons (Tp) 1598 ^{a)}	Confiscation				
Blacksmiths (Tp) 1610 ^{b)}	Confiscation (unless very poor)				
Silversmiths (Tp) 1612 ^{c)}					60
Carpenters (Tp) 1614 ^{d)}	No rights				
Coral workers (Tp) 1633 ^{e)}	Forced to pay				
Shoemakers (Salemi) 1783	Consul pays				
Masons (Me) 1559				Confiscation of goods	
Coopers (Sr) 1747	Confiscation				

Tp = Trapani; Me = Messina

* Sources: Trapani: a) Denaro, 'Capitoli dei maestri muratori'; b) ASTp, Notai, not G. A. Mastrangelo (1608-11); c) ASTp, Notai, not F. Gioemi (1612); d) Corso, '“Fabri lignarij”'; e) Cocco, *Consolati*;
Salemi: La Colla, *Statuti inediti*;
Messina: Novarese, 'Statuti';
Syracuse: Carpinteri, 'Capitoli'.

b) Quality control

Fines concerning the quality of goods were more severe, although exceptions might be made for foreigners who might not be aware of the local statutes. Regulations concerning the quality of goods were enforced by the urban officials and monitored by the consuls of the crafts (Table 6.2). These were divided into two categories: fines for the production of bad quality goods, and for the retailing of such goods. Goods could be considered poor quality because of the use of low quality materials, the combined use of new and old materials (which could affect durability), or because of non-standard sizes and materials. For example, the coral makers of

Trapani had to use a consistent quality of coral,⁸ and the length of the residual pieces of coral they used could not be less than 1.5 *palmi* (ca. mm. 44). The problem of using mixed materials, which first emerged during the second quarter of the seventeenth century, did not seem to affect many craft activities. The fines for mixing materials in the shoemakers' guilds of Trapani, Palermo, and Salemi seem to be addressed to artisans who repaired shoes rather than producing new ones, and who mixed new and old leather.⁹

Table 6.2 Fines for quality-related offences (*tari*)

Guilds	Production of poor quality or unmarked goods	Use of bad material	Use of non-standard sizes or material	Mixing old and new materials
Silversmiths (Pa) 1447 ^{a)}	60			
Pan makers (Pa) 1488 ^{a)}		30		
Hat makers (Pa) 1509 ^{a)}	0.25			
Carpenters (Pa) 1573 ^{b)}				120
Shoemakers (Pa) 1580 ^{b)}	300		300 (for non-regular workshop)	90 +loss of goods
Ropers (Pa) 1614 ^{a)}			90	
Silk sock makers (Pa) 1620 ^{a)}	120			
Hat sellers (Pa) 1621 ^{a)}		60+requisition of the goods		
Confectioners (Pa) 1622 ^{a)}	30-60	30		
Embroiderers (Pa) 1630 ^{c)}				120 (300 for old silk)
Cooks and Cake-makers (Pa) 1676 ^{b)}	1 st offence, warning, 2 nd offence, 7.5, 3 rd offence suspension of licence			
Silversmiths (Pa) 1704 ^{a)}	120	60	60	

* Sources: Palermo: a) Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*; b) Lioni, *Statuti inediti*; c) D'Amico, *Maestranza palermitana*.

⁸ There were four main qualities of coral available in Trapani. The quality of coral was recognisable from the colour, which in turn depended on the depth of sea from where the coral was retrieved. S. Cocco, *I consolati della città di Trapani* (Thesis, University of Palermo, 1934-35), p.106, Trapani statutes of coral workers (1633).

⁹ The phenomenon was very common in many other European regions. See for example C. Poni, 'Norms and Disputes: The Shoemakers Guild in Eighteenth-Century Bologna', *Past and Present* 123 (1989): 80-108.

Table 6.2 — Continued

Guilds	Production of poor quality or unmarked goods	Use of bad material	Use of non-standard sizes or material	Mixing old and new materials
Silversmiths (Tp) 1612 ^{a)}	30		60	
Tailors (Tp) 1618 ^{b)}	Under consul judgement			
Coral workers (Tp) 1633 ^{c)}			30	30
Silversmiths (Tp) 1726 ^{d)}	60		120+exclusion	
Shoemakers (Salemi) 1783			60 + confiscation of the goods	31 + confiscation of the goods
Shoemakers (Sr) 1612				6
Tailors (Sr) 1730	6			
Silversmiths (Sr) 1758			Confiscation of the goods and loss of licence	

* Sources: Trapani: a) ASTp, Notai, not. F. Gioemi (1612); b) Starrabba, 'Capitoli dei sartori'; c) Cocco, *Consolati*; d) BF, ASSTp, Atti (1726); Salemi: La Colla, *Statuti inediti*; Syracuse: Carpinteri, 'Capitoli'.

The analysis of quality-related fines suggests that few Sicilian guilds were concerned about protecting product quality, and that these were usually crafts which used high-value materials as gold or silver, leather and silk. Moreover, the level of the fines was commensurate to the potential damage to consumers, with silversmiths, silk sock makers and confectioners imposing higher fines. Thus, although the literature on north Italian guilds in particular has considered quality control to be a central feature and justification for the guild system,¹⁰ it was neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for Sicilian guilds.

Buying and selling

Another form of quality control was related to the retailing of manufactured goods by authorised artisans, retailers, and shopkeepers, who were not members of the

¹⁰ C. Poni, 'Local Market Rules and Practices. Three Guilds in the Same Line of Production in Early Modern Bologna', in S. Woolf (ed.) *Domestic Strategies: Work and Family in France and Italy, 1600-1800* (Cambridge and New York, 1991).

guilds. Guild members could not buy raw materials from unauthorised personnel and could not supply their goods to unauthorised resellers or sell bad quality and unmarked goods directly. Selling on the street was generally forbidden for high quality products, but was sometimes allowed for masters' sons. The retailing market developed significantly in the early 1600s. The group of *mezzani* in Palermo, who had existed since the fifteenth century as intermediaries in transactions for land and grain, changed the nature of their business. When a slow-down of the grain market occurred, some of them started to deal more regularly with local market goods and particularly in the resale market. In 1605-06, the *mezzani* presented a petition to be recognised as sellers of second-hand goods, and in 1618 they drafted their first set of statutes.¹¹

Unlicensed retailers were not permitted to sell goods within the jurisdiction of the relevant craft guild. However, it was difficult to monitor such attempts, even in small local markets, and by the seventeenth century increasing demand and specialisation had created levels of intermediary producers who found it easier to evade craft restrictions. Poorer artisans, or more often apprentices, could stock up with cheap raw material newly arrived in town and sell it on as below quality goods. For example, in 1613 the statutes of Palermo ropers set a fine of 90 *tari* against any journeyman who practised with people not enrolled in the guild.¹² In cases like this, the mutual monitoring of masters could be very effective in preventing frauds; since the informer received part of the fine, poorer masters (who were probably most likely to cut corners) had an incentive to remain within the guild system. As the number of producers who had learnt a craft informally increased, more regulations were introduced in an attempt to control informal workers.¹³

Nevertheless, fines for illegal buying and selling appeared only in a few statutes of some of the better organised guilds (Table 6.3). The problem was almost non-existent in smaller markets such as Trapani compared with larger towns like Palermo, as the number of unqualified artisans who lived and worked at the edge of

¹¹ ACPa, *Provviste*, 652, c.171 (1618).

¹² Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.209-10, statutes of Palermo ropers, ch.4 (1614).

¹³ *Ibidem*, p.307, statutes of Palermo cooks and cake makers, ch.35 (1676).

the guild system was directly proportional to the size of the manufacturing sector, and smaller markets also faced lower monitoring costs.

Table 6.3a Fines for illegal selling (*tari*)

Guild	Selling of poor quality goods	Selling of unmarked goods	Unauthorised selling of goods produced by guild members	Selling on the street	Providing goods to unauthorised traders
Silversmiths (Pa) 1447 ^{a)}	Destruction of goods	Confiscation			
Shoemakers (Pa) 1580 ^{b)}		90		30 + confiscation of goods, if minor	
Ropers (Pa) 1614 ^{a)}	90		15-90		
Silversmiths (Pa) 1617 ^{a)}	60				
Soapmakers (Pa) 1617 ^{c)}	60		300	300	
Silk sock makers (Pa) 1620 ^{a)}			120		
Confectioners (Pa) 1622 ^{a)}			150		
Embroiderers (Pa) 1630 ^{d)}	120				
Playing card makers (Pa) 1633 ^{b)}			120		
Tin plater (Pa) 1636 ^{a)}				150	150
Sword makers (Pa) 1649 ^{a)}				60	60
Cooks and cake-makers (Pa) 1676 ^{a)}			60-300	180 (ex.Thursday)	
Silversmiths (Tp) 1612 ^{a)}		Confiscation			
Coral workers (Tp) 1633 ^{b)}	30	6			
Tailors (Sr) 1730	15				
Shoemakers (Sr) 1612				6	
Silversmiths (Sr) 1758		Confiscation of the goods			

* Sources: Palermo: a) Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*; b) Lioni, *Statuti inediti*; c) ACPa, *Provvisite* 650 (1616-17); d) D'Amico *La maestranza*;
 Trapani: a) ASTp, Notai, not. F. Gioemi (1612); b) Cocco, *Consolati*;
 Syracuse: Carpinteri, 'Capitoli'.

Table 6.3b Fines for illegal buying (*tari*)

Guild	Buying material from unauthorised sources	Buying a workshop without consul's valuation
Shoemakers (Pa) 1580 ^{a)}		180
Silk sock makers (Pa) 1620 ^{b)}	120	

* Sources: a) Lioni, *Statuti inediti*; b) Oddo, *Statuti delle meastranze*

c) Labour control

Problems relating to the labour market are the basis for understanding craft guild performance. In the classical view, labour control exerted a negative effect on manufacturing because it stifled competition and innovation. The alternative view, that the guilds were the sole institution providing training for aspiring masters in medieval and early modern Europe, suggests a different interpretation of guild regulations of labour. In the first interpretation, craft regulations should focus on restricting access to the labour market; in the second, they should centre on the provision of training to unskilled labour force. Which interpretation does the Sicilian evidence support?

Craft structures addressed two features of the relation between master and apprentice: the quality of the training being imparted, and the potential for 'poaching' trained labour, which as we saw previously, threatened to undermine the entire apprenticeship system (because no-one would be willing to train new labour if they could not recover their costs). About the quality of training, Sicilian statutes show that the guilds backed the recruitment of young free workers willing to invest their time to acquire the necessary skills to become a master. The guild therefore prevented the teaching of slaves, because the reputation of the guild's free members was at stake. Also, some statutes prohibited journeymen from recruiting their own apprentices, unless these were their brothers or sons. It is not clear how often this occurred, but journeymen were also prohibited from training anyone else until they

became masters, because they were not considered to be fully qualified.¹⁴ Finally, masters were not allowed to hold more than one workshop, because apprentices in the second workshop would receive insufficient teaching and supervision.¹⁵

During the seventeenth century, some guilds introduced a second qualification between the status of apprentice and journeyman, perhaps (as with modern 'grade inflation') in response to the influx of large numbers of new recruits who demanded easier qualifications. The recruitment of a married apprentice was prohibited in only one of the statutes analysed.¹⁶ There is usually no specification of marital status of apprentices and journeymen in the statutes, although in the apprenticeship contracts marital status is one of the factors affecting the length of the apprenticeship, and sometimes the salary.¹⁷

As mentioned previously, foreign masters could easily participate in the guilds. Exceptionally, Palermo's silver- and goldsmiths required a deposit from foreigners before accepting them in their workshops, and fined anyone who recruited a foreign master without requiring this deposit. Such entry fees were mainly a 'mortgage on trust', which protected the guild's reputation against the fraudsters (Table 6.4).¹⁸

The statutes indicate that there existed written mastership licences, which however have left no visible documentary trace. Apprentices who completed their training, and masters who passed their examinations, received a licence that was also a precondition for opening a workshop (almost all the statutes mention a fine for working without an appropriate licence).¹⁹

¹⁴ 'Si prohibixe che li lavoranti della predetta mastranza non possino tenere garzone per impararle la arte predetta appoi che non si fosse frate o parente stritto sotto la pena di onza una...' (Lionti, *Statuti inediti*, p.33, statutes of Palermo shoemakers (1580)).

¹⁵ 'Perchi alcuni... voli teniri dui putighi e non li ponno gubernari et mettino uno scanzacani a la potiga e non sa quillo chi si fa et cussi guastano la opera' (Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.163, statutes of Palermo shearers (1530)).

¹⁶ This is the case of silver and gold platers in 1620 and the fine was 120 *tari* (ACPa, *Provvisive* 650 (1619-20)).

¹⁷ See above, chapter 5.1.

¹⁸ Epstein, 'Craft Guilds', p.684.

¹⁹ See above chapter 5 for interventions by the local council in granting licences; see for a similar use of licensing in London, S. Rappaport, *Worlds Within the Worlds. Structures of Life in Sixteenth-Century London* (Cambridge, 1989), p.239.

A licence was also a condition for exercising a trade and guilds were mainly concerned with preventing unlicensed work. There are two main reasons why licensed work was at the core of the guild organisation: unlicensed work made it possible to evade regulations on apprenticeship which enabled exploitation and threatened the system itself; and unlicensed work made it harder to identify and screen well qualified apprentices and journeymen. The consequences for practising as an apprentice without a licence were therefore far more severe (Table 6.4) than those for finishing the apprenticeship before the terms of the contract (Table 6.6), indicating a concern for supplying well-trained artisans, rather than retaining them for a long time.

In the interest of consumers and to incentivise appropriate training, some guilds did not allow apprentices to practise all the master's duties; for example, master tailors could cut cloth for a client, while the apprentice could only cut cloth for his relatives or for himself; however, such restrictions were not very frequent. Apprentices were often forbidden from working outside the workshops in someone else's house; nevertheless, in this case also it was not a widespread rule and there were exceptions. For example, embroiderers tended to prevent apprentices from working outside the master's workshop; however, in 1629, after a petition from apprentice embroiderers, the city council of Palermo authorised them to work in private houses in order to support their families.²⁰

Another important aspect of the relationship between master and apprentice was the formal management of the workshops. Apprentices, particularly qualified ones, often shared craft duties with their masters. Although journeymen could not open a workshop independently, they could manage a workshop when the master was away, or when engaged to do so by a widow who inherited her husband's activity.²¹ However, they were not allowed to become partners of masters. This regulation was important for apprentices working in a widow's workshop. Widows could often keep their husband's workshop for a certain period, but only if there was another master or sometimes an able apprentice to work in it. However, the apprentice in this case could not own the workshop as a partner. The only exception

²⁰ D'Amico, *Maestranza palermitana*, p.7.

²¹ ASPa, Notai, not. G.P. De Monte, 2900, unnumbered fos. (1546-47). A journeyman cobbler, able to manage the workshop received a year salary of 20 onze.

was through marrying the widow, which was also a way of gaining a mastership without taking the exam; even in this case there are only few examples of fines for widows and concentrated in the statutes of Palermo guilds. (Tables 6.4 and 6.5).

Table 6.4 Fines for unlicensed labour (*tari*)

Guild	Master without licence	Apprentice without licence	Partnership with a non-master	Recruitment of slaves or those who practice a lower job	Recruitment of apprentices by journeymen	Recruitment of foreign without deposit
Silversmiths (Pa) 1447 ^{a)}				150		300
Belt makers (Pa) 1488 ^{a)}	Closure of workshop and confiscation of the material					
Pan makers (Pa) 1488 ^{a)}	Prison	Prison				
Embroiderers (Pa) 1502 ^{b)}	30					
Shearers (Pa) 1530 ^{a)}			30			
Blanket makers (Pa) 1541 ^{a)}	60	60				
Carpenters (Pa) 1573 ^{c)}	60-120					
Shoemakers (Pa) 1580 ^{c)}	300	30	300-120 (for the appr.) confiscation of goods		30	
Ropers (Pa) 1614 ^{a)}		90				
Soapmakers (Pa) 1619 ^{d)}	30					
Silk sock makers (Pa) 1620 ^{a)}	90 + closure of workshop	30				
Confectioners (Pa) 1622 ^{a)}		150	150			
Embroiderers (Pa) 1629 ^{b)}	300	30 (app. without journeyman period)	300			
Playing card makers (Pa) 1630 ^{c)}	300		120-300			
Soapmakers (Pa) 1636 ^{e)}	300		30			
Tailors (Pa) 1641 ^{a)}	90					
Sword makers (Pa) 1649 ^{a)}	180	300	180	30		
Cooks and cake-makers (Pa) 1676 ^{a)}		150	Closure of workshop + fine for no licence			
Water masters (Pa) 1694 ^{b)}	120					

* Sources: Palermo: a) Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*; b) D'Amico, *Maestranza palermitana*; c) Lioni, *Statuti inediti*; d) ACPa, Provviste 640; e) ACPa, Provviste 671.

Table 6.4 — Continued

Guild	Master without licence	Apprentice without licence	Partnership with a non-master	Recruitment of slaves or those who practice a lower job	Recruitment of apprentices by journeymen	Recruitment of foreign without deposit
Masons (Tp) 1598 ^{a)}	15	15, (7.5 manovale)				
Blacksmiths (Tp) 1610 ^{b)}	150					
Silversmiths (Tp) 1612 ^{c)}	120	300		150		
Carpenters (Tp) 1614 ^{d)}		60				
Tailors (Tp) 1618 ^{e)}	120					
Butchers (Tp) 1633 ^{f)}	60		300			
Coral workers (Tp) 1633 ^{g)}				31		
Wool, linen, silk weavers (Tp) 1645 ^{h)}	30					
Sculptors (Tp) 1665 ⁱ⁾	120 or confiscation					
Carpenters (Salemi) 1761	60					
Shoemakers (Salemi) 1783		30	60		30	
Masons (Me) 1559	Prison or other					
Shoemakers (Sr) 1612						
Coopers (Sr) 1747	60					
Tailors (Sr) 1769						

*Sources: Trapani: a) Denaro, 'I capitoli dei maestri muratori'; b) ASTp, Notai, not G. A. Mastrangelo (1608-11); c) ASTp, Notai, not. F. Gioemi (1612); d) Corso, 'Fabri lignarij'; e) Starrabba, 'Capitoli dei sartori'; f) Denaro, 'Capitoli'; g) Cocco, *Consolati*; h) BF ASSTp, Atti (1645-46); i) Precopi Lombardo, 'Artigianato e arte';

Salemi: La Colla *Statuti inediti*;

Messina: Novarese, 'Statuti';

Syracuse: Carpinteri, 'Capitoli'.

Table 6.5 Fines for widows (*tari*)

Guilds	Widow with workshop over the terms or after marrying a master of another craft	Widow for society with someone who is not a master
Shoemakers (Pa) 1580 ^{a)}		120 (90 apprentice)
Soapmakers (Pa) 1619 ^{b)}	300	
Confectioners (Pa) 1622 ^{c)}	300	
Playing card makers (Pa) 1633 ^{a)}	300	
Sword-makers (Pa) 1649 ^{c)}	Confiscation	
Wool, linen, silk weavers (Tp) 1645	60 (30 apprentice)	

* Sources: Palermo: a) Lioni, *Statuti inediti*; b) ACPa, *Provvisive* 640 (1619-20); c) Oddo, *Statuti delle meastranze*;
Trapani: BF ASSTp, *Atti* (1645-46).

The illegal recruitment of another master's apprentices ('poaching') is one of the major offences mentioned in the statutes. The regulations about poaching established fines for both the offending masters and apprentices. Masters would incur relatively high pecuniary fines, while the apprentice who left his master without a licence could be prevented from becoming a master. The infraction is recorded in almost all the statutes examined, both in Palermo and in Trapani. Sometimes, the fine was recorded together with explanations why the infraction should never occur and how poaching affected the integrity of the guild, the reputation of the master and the future of the apprentice. The emphasis on this point remains high over a long period of time, as much in the first statutes as in the last, and the severity of the fines suggests that poaching was an important issue and that the fines were intended to be an effective deterrent (Table 6.6).²²

²² However, evidence prove that the norms for long periods of apprenticeship were far from being unbreakable laws and the need to enforce the institution of the apprenticeship with high fines show that terms fixed in the statutes were only guidelines for guild masters. See previous chapter (5.1).

Table 6.6 Fines for illegal employment conditions (*tari*)

Guild	Poaching	Apprentice leaving without finishing his apprenticeship	Master allowing apprentice to carry out master's duties or to finish apprenticeship early	Apprentice working outside the workshop
Silversmiths (Pa) 1447 ^{a)}	150			
Tailors (Pa) 1485 ^{a)}	60			
Belt makers (Pa) 1488 ^{a)}	6			
Hat makers (Pa) 1509 ^{a)}	15	No recruitment		
Shearers (Pa) 1530 ^{a)}	6	30 no licence		
Blanket makers (Pa) 1541 ^{a)}	30			
Carpenters (Pa) 1573 ^{b)}	120			
Shoemakers (Pa) 1580 ^{b)}	120			
Confectioners (Pa) 1586 ^{a)}	300			
Playing card makers (Pa) 1610 ^{b)}	300	60		
Ropers (Pa) 1614 ^{a)}				90
Silk sock makers (Pa) 1620 ^{a)}	60			
Silver and gold platers (Pa) 1620 ^{c)}	120			
Confectioners (Pa) 1622 ^{a)}			30 (shorter appr.)	120
Embroiderers (Pa) 1629 ^{d)}	120		120	
Tin platers (Pa) 1636 ^{a)}			30 (illegal licence)	
Tailors (Pa) 1641 ^{a)}			15	
Sword makers (Pa) 1649 ^{a)}	120			180+confiscation
Cooks and cake-makers (Pa) 1676 ^{a)}	60			
Water masters (Pa) 1694 ^{b)}	120			

* Sources: Palermo: a) Oddo, *Statuti delle meastranze*; b) Lioni, *Statuti inediti*; c) ACPa, *Provviste 654 (1619-20)*; d) D'Amico, *Maestranza palermitana*.

Table 6.6 — Continued

Guild	Poaching	Apprentice leaving without finishing his apprenticeship	Master allowing apprentice to carry out master's duties or to finish apprenticeship early	Apprentice working outside the workshop
Silversmiths (Tp) 1612 ^{a)}	150			
Carpenters (Tp) 1614 ^{b)}	120			
Wool, linen, silk weavers (Tp) 1645 ^{c)}	60			
Blacksmiths (Tp) 1610 ^{d)}	15			
Coral workers (Tp) 1633 ^{e)}			12	
Shoemakers (Salemi) 1783	30 – 60			

* Sources: Trapani: a) ASTp, Notai, not. F. Gioemi (1612); b) Corso, ‘ “Fabri lignarij” ’; c) BF, ASSTp, Atti (1645-46); d) ASTp, Notai, not G. A. Mastrangelo (1608-11); e) Cocco, *Consolati*; Salemi: La Colla, *Statuti inediti*.

What then can we infer from the statutes about the purpose of labour regulations? First, upholding the quality of training was clearly important, but – as suggested by the previous discussion of the length of apprenticeship²³ and by the absence of restrictions on consensual termination of the training contract – the actual practise of training was very flexible and capable of responding to individual circumstances. A similarly pragmatic approach was taken with regard to apprentices’ and journeymen’s duties. Second, unlicensed training and poaching labour were invariably condemned, indicating the centrality of training to the guild as a group of producers. Third, there is no evidence of restrictions to apprenticeship, in terms of numbers employed, of skills, or of social or geographical background. Contrary to the traditional argument, access to the labour market was to all intents and purposes unregulated.

²³ See above, chapter 5.1b.

d) Restrictions on competition

Historians have traditionally emphasised the guild's acquisition of a monopolistic position through strict control of competition. For example, Mokyr argues that through the management of three main aspects of production – control over prices, procedures, and participation – guilds could impose a technological status quo.

The consuls' duty to value the goods produced by guild members has already been mentioned; however, prices were based on the public *mete* imposed by the city council,²⁴ and even goods with a trademark responded to a price list, which had to be approved by the city council to be in force.²⁵ The guild officials had the exclusive right to value goods, for which they were paid. No one else could do this, unless a master was appointed by the consul and licensed to do so. Often on the basis of the consul's estimation, a price was established for a certain product; but the statutes rarely mention prices for goods, which were usually set by local authorities.

Control by the guilds over procedures was also scarce. No fines for infringement of specific procedures have been found in any of the statutes that form the base of this research. The only circumstances when some sort of prescription was given for the production process relate to the description of the masterpieces, which however never specified any details, but simply stated that the procedure had to meet the requirements for good quality.²⁶ Although consuls performed workshop inspections which could have been a means of controlling production procedures, the lack of any specific fine against procedural offences leads one to suspect that the control of techniques was in fact not among the aims of the 'searches', which were generally known by the artisans well in advance.²⁷

²⁴ F. Maggiore Perni, *La popolazione di Palermo dal X al XVIII secolo* (Palermo, 1892), p.374. See on this topic E. Merlo, *Le corporazioni conflitti e soppressioni. Milano tra Sei e Settecento* (Milan, 1996), p.68; C.R. Hickson, and E.A. Thompson, 'A New Theory of Guilds and European Economic Development', *Explorations in Economic History* 28 (1991): 128-31.

²⁵ 'Consolo e consigliere delli aurifici et arginteri per la conferma di un atto da essi fatto circa le raggioni di bolla' (ACPa, Provviste, 694, c.81 (1661-62)).

²⁶ See above, chapter 5.1c.

²⁷ Consuls had to inspect the workshops regularly. The day of the inspection could be fixed according to the statutes (e.g. every four months) or at the consul's discretion. See for example 'Che i consoli e consiglieri possano rivedere li lavori dell'arte ... vogliamo che il consolo et consigliere, che parendogli labbiano da pigliarsi con loro uno o più maestri in compagnia e

As mentioned previously, guilds condemned masters who owned more than one workshop. The constant presence of the master in his workshop was considered indispensable for training and quality control; therefore, a master could be responsible for only one workshop and apprentices and journeymen were not entitled to open their own workshops. Only by the early eighteenth century, some statutes mention a limit of two apprentices per master, and local councils also published bans against the excessive number of workshops, but there were no financial penalties attached to this rule.²⁸

Table 6.7 Fines for illegal competition (*tari*)

Guild	Having two or too close workshops	Breaking the rules for buying raw material	Master allowing a non-master to run a workshop	Valuations without licence	Selling at excessively high prices
Belt makers (Pa) 1488 ^{a)}	6				
Shearers (Pa) 1530 ^{a)}	30				
Shoemakers (Pa) 1580 ^{b)}				300	
Ropers (Pa) 1614 ^{a)}			300		
Soapmakers (Pa) 1619 ^{c)}	300 + closure of 2 nd workshop	300			
Confectioners (Pa) 1622 ^{a)}			1,500		
Sword makers (Pa) 1649 ^{a)}	60+ closure of 2 nd workshop	60			

*Sources: Palermo: a) Oddo, *Statuti delle meastranze*; b) Lioni, *Statuti inediti*; c) ACPa, *Provviste* 650.

l'abbiano di andare lor in uno et in un'altra bottega a loro ben viste, per rivedere li lavori che fanno et che han fatti nelli cassetti' (ASTp, Notai, not. F. Gioemi, unnumbered fos. (6 aprile 1612), Trapani statutes of silversmiths, ch. 14 (1612)).

²⁸ In Trapani, the guild of silversmiths set a limit of 50 workshops for a population of 10,000 people. See AM. Precopi Lombardo and L. Novara, *Argenti in Processione* (Marsala, 1992), p.27.

Table 6.7 — Continued

Guild	Having two or too close workshops	Breaking the rules for buying raw material	Master allowing a non-master to run a workshop	Valuations without licence	Selling at excessively high prices
Tailors (Tp) 1618 ^{a)}				7.5	
Coral workers (Tp) 1633 ^{b)}		300			31
Wool, linen, silk weavers (Tp) 1645 ^{c)}				7	
Carpenters (Salemi) 1761				7.2-15	
Masons (Me) 1559				At consul's discretion	
Masons (Sr) 1505				30	
Tailors (Sr) 1730				15	

* Sources: Trapani: a) Starrabba, 'Capitoli'; b) Cocco, *Consolati*; c) BF ASSTp, Atti (1645-46).
Salemi: La Colla, *Statuti inediti*;
Messina: Novarese, 'Statuti';
Syracuse: Carpinteri, 'Capitoli'.

e) Officials' duties

The consulate was the highest office for a guild member. Consuls and councillors exercised control over the members, but they were themselves subject to the same statutes, and there were many claims about the untrustworthiness of the consuls and about the problems caused by their dishonest behaviour. Although a consul could not hold an office for more than one year and could not stand again for several years (usually three), there is substantial evidence that lobbies of masters within the same guild often attempted to retain offices for longer terms.²⁹ The short-term nature of the office was meant to ensure control over the consuls and councillors; at the beginning of the year newly elected officials often had to deal with the actions of their predecessors.

The statutes mention a number of punishable offences occurring among the consuls, which were probably very common and which included refusing to provide

²⁹ See for example the elections of Palermo shoemakers and soapmakers (ACPa, *Provviste*, 693, cc.3, 51, 77 (1660-61)).

an audit to the incoming officials, irregularities in the balance books which they had to make good with their own money, refusal to collect fees or inspect workshops or perform valuations, and the illegal concession of licences to practise as an apprentice or master. Not surprising, in the light of the previous discussion, the concessions of illegal licences or quality trademarks were considered the most serious offences against the guild. Such offences, which sowed uncertainty among consumers, were also of great interest to the citizens, and the city council monitored them closely (Table 6.8).

Table 6.8 Fines for refusing official duties (*tari*)

Guild	Missing audit or refusal to do it	Having unbalanced books	Refusal to collect fees, value goods and inspect workshops	Issuing illegal licences or trademarks	Standing for consul before fixed terms	Consuls holding other offices
Tailors (Pa) 1485 ^{a)}	60					
Belt makers (Pa) 1488 ^{a)}				10		
Sword makers (Pa) 1489 ^{a)}		Consul pays		30		
Embroiderers (Pa) 1502 ^{b)}			Consul pays			
Shearers (Pa) 1530 ^{a)}	90					
Carpenters (Pa) 1573 ^{c)}				300	120	
Shoemakers (Pa) 1580 ^{c)}	60			90		
Confectioners (Pa) 1586 ^{a)}	120					
Playing card makers (Pa) 1610 ^{c)}	60		300	90		
Soapmakers (Pa) 1619 ^{d)}		Consuls pay	300	300		
Hat sellers (Pa) 1620 ^{a)}				60		
Silk sock makers (Pa) 1620 ^{a)}	120					60+4 years suspension
Silver and gold platers (Pa) 1620 ^{c)}			Consuls pay double of the fees			
Tin plater (Pa) 1620 ^{a)}				60	60	
Cooks and cake-makers (Pa) 1676 ^{a)}	120		120			
Water masters (Pa) 1694 ^{c)}		Treasurer pays 180				

* Sources: Palermo: a) Oddo, *Statuti delle meastranze*; b) D'Amico, *Maestranza palermitana*; c) Lioni, *Statuti inediti*; d) ACPa, *Provvisive 650 (1619-20)*.

Table 6.8 — Continued

Guild	Missing audit or refusal to do it	Having unbalanced books	Refusal to collect fees, value goods and inspect the workshops	Issuing illegal licences or trademarks	Standing for consul before fixed terms	Consuls holding other offices
Masons (Tp) 1598 ^{a)}		Consul pays				
Blacksmiths (Tp) 1610 ^{b)}	150					
Tailors (Tp) 1618 ^{c)}	31			120		
Coral workers (Tp) 1633 ^{d)}	12					
Wool, linen, silk weavers (Tp) 1645 ^{e)}				30		
Carpenters (Salemi) 1761				Consul pays mastership fees		
Shoemakers (Salemi) 1783	60					
Shoemakers (Sr) 1612			1			
Tailors (Sr) 1730			Consul pays			
Coopers (Sr) 1747		Officials pay				
Silversmiths (Sr) 1758			600 (missing inspections)	Consul pays the goods and he loses his office		

* Sources: Trapani: a) Denaro, 'I capitoli dei maestri muratori'; b) ASTp, Notai, not G. A. Mastrangelo (1608-11); c) Starrabba, 'Capitoli'; d) Cocco, *Consolati*; e) BF ASSTp, Atti (1645-46);
Salemi: La Colla, *Statuti inediti*;
Syracuse: Carpinteri, 'Capitoli'.

f) Participation in guild activities

All guild members would convene annually in a major assembly, usually on the guild saint's day; other assemblies were also held but were less attended.³⁰ One function of guild assemblies was to ensure that ordinary members were aware of the guild's regulations. Assemblies often began by proclaiming the current rules in order to avoid ignorance of the statutes being used as an excuse, although, as previously noted, exceptions were made for foreign masters coming to town. Participation in the social and religious life of the guild was considered no less important than its economic aspects, and fines were imposed on members who did not attend the assemblies.

Fines for refusal to hold offices were far more important, suggesting that the post was considered rather onerous – presumably because it detracted from time available for one's own shop and involved a degree of financial risk. The fact that consuls and councillors were only weakly backed by the civil officials may also have played a part, since the guild consuls' jurisdiction was commonly overridden by urban authorities.³¹

Certain other rules, as for example that artisans were expected to respect the consul's judgement and sell the goods according to his valuation seem to have been more an aspect of members' duty of obedience than a measure to control prices, because they were usually mentioned in the section concerning the authority of the consuls rather than that dealing with product quality (Table 6.9).

³⁰ In the main annual assembly, guild members voted their representatives whereas the other assemblies were convoked by the consul.

³¹ Oddo *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.262, statutes of Palermo sword makers (1649).

Table 6.9 Fines for disobedience to the officials (*tari*)

Guild	Disobedience to the officials or statutes	Refusal to inspect workshops with the consul	Refusal to attend religious ceremonies	Refusal to attend assemblies, elections or exams	Refusal of the office
Belt makers (Pa) 1488 ^{a)}			3 – 6		
Sword makers (Pa) 1489 ^{a)}	Prison		½ - 1 rot. wax		60-30
Hat makers (Pa) 1509 ^{a)}			3 – 6		
Shearers (Pa) 1530 ^{a)}			3 – 6		90
Blanket makers (Pa) 1541 ^{a)}			½ - 1 rot. wax (0.75-1.5)		
Carpenters (Pa) 1573 ^{b)}			1 rot. wax		
Shoemakers (Pa) 1580 ^{b)}			1 rot. wax	1 rot. wax	180
Confectioners (Pa) 1586 ^{a)}				1 rot. wax (1.5)	
Playing card makers (Pa) 1610 ^{b)}	3				120-300
Ropers (Pa) 1614 ^{a)}	300				
Silversmiths (Pa) 1617 ^{a)}	30	30		0.5	
Soapmakers (Pa) 1619 ^{c)}					150
Embroiderers (Pa) 1629 ^{d)}	30 + 1 month prison		1 rot. wax	1 rot. wax	
Cooks and cake-makers (Pa) 1676 ^{a)}	2 rot. wax + no voting rights + no statutory rights for children / 60				120
Water masters (Pa) 1694 ^{b)}			2 rot. wax		

Sources: Palermo: a) Oddo, *Statuti delle meastranze*; b) Lionti, *Statuti inediti*; c) ACPa, *Provviste* 650 (1619-20); d) D'Amico, *Maestranza palermitana*.

Table 6.9 — Continued

Guild	Disobedience to the officials or statutes	Refusal to inspect workshops with the consul	Refusal to attend religious ceremonies	Refusal to attend assemblies, elections or exams	Refusal of the office
Masons (Tp) 1598 ^{a)}	60		2-4 (Cilio 3-7.5)		
Wool, linen, silk weavers (Tp) 1645 ^{b)}	6		6-30 (Cilio)	6	15-30
Carpenters (Salemi) 1761			1 rot..wax		
Masons (Sr) 1505			1		
Tailors (Sr) 1730			1-2		

*Sources: Trapani: a) Denaro, 'Capitoli dei maestri muratori'; b) BF ASSTp, Atti (1645-46); Salemi: La Colla, *Capitoli inediti*; Syracuse: Carpinteri, 'Capitoli'.

Table 6.10 Fines for non-participation in guild events

Guilds	Working during public holidays	Working during mourning for a master	Shaming the guild (practising the craft dishonourably)
Shearers (Pa) 1530 ^{a)}	3-6		30
Sword makers (Pa) 1541 ^{a)}	½ - 1 rot. Wax	1 rot. wax	
Confectioners (Pa) 1586 ^{a)}		1 rot. wax	
Soapmakers (Pa) 1619 ^{b)}	60		
Silk sock makers (Pa) 1620 ^{a)}		6	
Embroiderers (Pa) 1630 ^{c)}	7.5 (Cilio)	1 rot. wax	
Cooks and cake-makers (Pa) 1676 ^{a)}	60		
Masons (Tp) 1598 ^{a)}	15-7.5		
Blacksmiths (Tp) 1610 ^{b)}	1 rot. wax		
Tailors (Tp) 1618 ^{c)}		Hidden work	

* Sources: Palermo: a) Oddo, *Statuti delle meastranze*; b) ACPa, Provviste 650; c) D'Amico, *Maestranza palermitana*;
Trapani: a) Denaro, 'Capitoli dei maestri muratori'; b) ASTp, Notai, not G. A. Mastrangelo; c) Starrabba, 'Capitoli'.

Table 6.10 — Continued

Guilds	Working during public holidays	Working during mourning for a master	Shaming the guild (practising the craft dishonourably)
Carpenters (Salemi) 1761		1-2	
Shoemakers (Salemi) 1783	24		120+ loss of rights
Masons (Sr) 1505	7.5		

* Sources: Salemi: La Colla, *Capitoli inediti*;
Syracuse: Carpinteri, 'Capitoli'

In sum, this chapter has discussed the range of fines and punishments that could be administered to Sicilian guild members according to their statutes. Fines represented the only means of enforcing regulations and therefore can better define the purposes and effectiveness of the craft guilds. The evidence, however, raises a further question, namely whether regulations in Sicily, which did not restrict competition, made guilds weaker than other European organisations, or whether the lack of political backing prevented guilds from enforcing control over competition. In the second case, can be speculated that stronger institutional support would tend to reinforce better guild restrictions over market.

The study of fines and punishments shows that Sicilian regulations aimed to retain guild members to avoid free-riding and upheld apprenticeship. Issues such as compulsory participation in guilds, fee payment, and respect of quality standards were important to the guild because they ensured members with a range of benefits; whereas issues such as training and licences affected more the structure of the organisation itself. It seems that certain categories of offences had particularly severe consequences, because guild were more willing to prosecute their members for these infractions – suggesting that effective functioning of the guild, and therefore the survival of the organisation itself, was dependent on them. Other fines seem to have been relatively small and so not very effective at preventing infringement.

The system of fines and punishments highlights the limited support that Sicilian guilds received for the protection of regulations concerning membership and competition control and other rules protecting masters' interests. This fact

may have resulted in limited membership and consequently undermined the system further. Guild regulations aimed primarily to define and enforce the relation between master and apprentices. The widespread occurrence of fines for poaching from the time of the earliest statutes supports the view that training must have been at the core of the guild system, and shows that even weak guilds tended to strengthen the contractual relation between masters and apprentices in training.

The last three chapters showed in detail the case of a guild system which received only weak institutional support to further individual masters' interests. Nevertheless, guilds did emerge and develop to organise small-scale manufacturing. The following and conclusive chapter analyses the causes and the consequences of Sicilian guild weakness in the light of current theories on the topic of craft guild activity.

Chapter 7

Causes and consequences of Sicilian guild weakness

The study of Sicilian guilds adds a further piece to the puzzle of corporatism, which for the last two centuries has been one of the main interests of European historiography. The last three chapters have presented a picture of the Sicilian guild system that was not in itself different from other European guilds, but which nevertheless manifested certain peculiarities because of the weak political support the Sicilian guilds received. Although guilds in Sicily did not have lesser interest in political and economic claims, they were certainly far 'weaker' than in most European regions.

The tendency of the historiography has been to consider the guild system as an independent variable in early modern society. In most studies, the existence of guilds is taken for granted, and the analysis focuses on the effects that guild regulations had on society. The analysis of corporatism has generally focused on the political role played by the guilds in the process of industrialisation, and on the economic aspects including the organisation of production and the internal structure regulating market relations.¹ These two perspectives are inter-dependent, and both contributed to the success or the failure of the guild system.

In this final chapter, the empirical data are considered in terms of two main theories on guilds in order to determine which theoretical framework offers the better explanation of the evidence. The chapter aims to show that while guilds everywhere had a similar structure and purposes, the practice and the effects of the system are mainly connected with the political and local constraints imposed by historical circumstances. The source of this approach is Epstein's suggestion to construct a regional typology of guilds.²

The thesis argues that the basic features of the Sicilian guild system were similar to those of craft corporations elsewhere in Europe and that they were devised primarily to promote skills training through formal apprenticeship.

¹ D. Degrassi, *L'economia artigiana nell'Italia medievale* (Rome, 1996), p.121.

² S.R. Epstein, 'Craft Guilds, Apprenticeship, and Technological Change in Preindustrial Europe', *Journal of Economic History* 58 (1998): 685.

Differences in guild development across societies were largely a function of the institutional context within which guilds were embedded. In particular, the political support or opposition to guilds offered by local and central authorities helped shape their specific characteristics.

The Sicilian case presents an unusual perspective of a region in which the phenomenon of craft corporatism was well established, but where guilds remained limited in size and number. Two aspects of the guild phenomenon require investigation: the general structure of guilds and the specific case of Sicilian guilds. The Sicilian case seems to prove that the absence of state support could delay the emergence of guilds, both through active repression (as occurred in Sicily until the fourteenth century) and withholding support, which made it hard for guilds to attract and retain their members (as occurred thereafter). This chapter therefore focuses, firstly, on the relationship between regulations and actual practice of guilds, and secondly, on the limits imposed by the Spanish authorities on guild practice in Sicily.

The last section draws some conclusions about the causes and consequences of the limited development of the Sicilian corporate system. An important consequence of weak guilds was to restrict the pool of skilled labour and constrain manufacturing industry. Previous explanations for the lack of Sicilian industrialisation have concentrated on agricultural development based upon Sicily's 'natural' comparative advantage and on the lack of industrial entrepreneurs. However, evidence discussed here suggests that there was in addition a strong causal link between guild weakness and manufacturing failure.

7.1 Empirical finding vis-à-vis with theoretical interpretations

The reasons for the existence of the guild system are still strongly debated. Since the end of the eighteenth century, scholars have investigated the impact of corporate groups on medieval and early modern society in order to understand the consequences of their existence. Theories about the emergence of guilds have generally pointed to the rise of the 'modern state' as a main factor supporting the

establishment of corporate groups. According to Sheilagh Ogilvie, the expanding modern state had a greater impact on society and the economy than the expansion of the market itself. The state appealed to the guilds to manage a ready supply of military personnel, to collect capital taxes, and to provide political support. In exchange, the state offered guilds strong privileges and enforced guild regulations.³ In this model, the acquisition of political and economic rents is both a necessary and sufficient condition to explain the existence and prolonged survival of guilds.

To this argument Mokyr has added the claim that craft guilds acquired privileges and political influence to stifle competition and innovation.⁴ In his view, the main purpose of guild regulations was to control the 'three p's': prices, procedures, and participation. The guild system regulated prices in order to prevent competition, and therefore inhibited technological innovation that by definition would reduce the costs of production.⁵ In this view, the guild system emerged in order to control the labour market and benefit guild members. Guilds imposed long periods of training to limit access to the craft, and masters charged high admission fees to limit the number of qualified members and prevent competition. Moreover, restrictions imposed by the urban guilds on labour supply and on general freedoms to produce and sell, stifled urban industries and pushed them into the countryside.⁶ Guilds regulated labour supply through three orders of constraints: admission regulations, the imposition of output quotas (which increased the costs of production for masters), and the constraints imposed by families and local communities.⁷ Technological innovation was also stifled by controlling manufacturing producers. This interpretation of guilds as rent-seeking, monopolistic and anti-technological has become the most widespread among historians and economic historians alike, and has dominated opinion from the nineteenth century till the present day.

³ S. Ogilvie, *State Corporatism and Proto-Industry* (Cambridge, 1997), p.5.

⁴ J. Mokyr, 'Urbanisation, Technological Progress and Economic Growth', in H. Giersch (ed.) *Urban Agglomeration and Economic Growth* (Berlin and New York, 1995), pp.15 and 10.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p.15.

⁶ J. Mokyr, 'Growing-Up and the Industrial Revolution in Europe', *Explorations in Economic History* 31 (1976): 374.

⁷ Ogilvie, *State Corporatism*, p.139

Alternative explanations suggest that craft guilds were most likely to emerge and succeed within a competitive and dynamic political system. In such contexts, craft guilds could side with one or more power groups to obtain institutional support.⁸ Nevertheless, in most societies the allocation of privileges remained highly unstable and unpredictable, as a result of uncertain institutional equilibria between competing political interests that could easily be reversed.⁹ Therefore, guild behaviour depended mainly on the bargaining power of the masters with local authorities, which could be more or less willing to engage a relationship of *do ut des*, according to particular circumstances. Furthermore, guilds did not constitute a unitary 'interest group'. Each craft had specific claims and interests and even within the same group there could be tensions between wealthier and poorer masters, and between masters, journeymen and apprentices; most masters lacked a clear perception of a collective interest or identity, both within the overall guild system and within their own craft.¹⁰ This more political approach does not deny that guilds sought rents if they were there for the taking, but suggests that they were not invented and did not survive for that purpose.

The classical perspective has only recently been seriously challenged both on theoretical and empirical grounds by Epstein, who has proposed an alternative theory: that the guild system's main, but not unique, function was the transmission

⁸ Degrassi, *Economia artigiana*, p.132.

⁹ 'Privilege income streams could be revoked at any time, as Charles V's abolition of the guilds' political privileges in 27 German free imperial cities between 1548 and 1552 proved to good effect' (Epstein, 'Craft Guilds', p.686), see also C.R. Friedrichs, *Early Modern City, 1450-1750* (London, 1995), p.56. Venice so-called *Serrata* of 1297 excluded guilds from formal political power. 'Their privileges may have been sanctioned by royal authorities, but what would happen to those privileges, indeed, to the corporate system in general, of political authorities embraced a 'rival classificatory system', to reinvoke Kaplan's phrase?' (J.R. Farr, *Artisans in Europe, 1300-1914* (Cambridge 2000), pp.28, 277). See for example the case of Flanders. In 1302 craftsmen obtained corporate privilege by the Count John of Namur for their support in the battle against the French and obtained political shares when the French-allied patricians of Ghent, Ypres and Bruges were overthrown. Also Chevalier claimed the emergence of French guilds in context of political conflicts. B. Chevalier, 'Corporations, conflicts politiques et paix sociale en France aux XIVe et XVe siècle', *Revue Historique* 268 (1982): 813-44. A further example comes from the study of M. Walker on German towns ('home towns') who noted that guilds mainly emerged in towns with a high degree of independence (M. Walker, *German Home Towns: Community State and General Estate, 1648-1871* (Ithaca, 1971)).

¹⁰ C. R. Friedrichs, 'Artisans and Urban Politics in Seventeenth-Century Germany', in Crossick (ed.) *Artisan and the European Town, 1500-1900* (Ashgate, 1997), pp.52-53.

of skills through apprenticeship.¹¹ In this view, skill training represented the main purpose of craft guilds everywhere in Europe, and was the main reason for the guilds' prolonged survival. In the absence of formal and public schooling systems, apprenticeship offered the only systematic source of skill training; it was therefore in the masters' interest as a group to uphold general rules for apprenticeship. However, from an individual master's point of view, investment in training did not make sense if his apprentice could easily be poached; nor would young apprentices have been forthcoming, if they had been subject to bad treatment or unfair dismissal. Without collective rules of behaviour, skill training would simply not have occurred. The craft guild, which could enforce common rules of behaviour, was the solution to this dilemma, but the effectiveness of the craft guild depended also on its members' willingness to comply with its rules.

According to this theory, the collection of privileges and participation in the political arena provided so-called 'non-collective social benefits', which were needed to attract and retain masters in the guild, so as to prevent free-riding. The theory outlines a system that maintained similar structures and purposes for a long period of time and over a vast geographical area, and in which features specific to different countries were due to the institutional and political framework in which they were embedded.¹²

Finally, Epstein argues that guilds had a leading role in the development of pre-industrial manufacture, because they sustained specialised inter-regional labour markets. He also suggests that guilds contributed to technological

¹¹ Epstein, 'Craft Guilds', p.684.

¹² The importance of regional research was highlighted by Silvia Thrupp: 'Regional research ... should before long be able to assess the net influence of guild organisation on medieval economic growth more exactly. Meanwhile it is clear that several of these theses in the field have been too extreme. ... Guild monopoly power was then in general far too weak to be made to account for any features of backwardness in the economy' (Thrupp, 'Gild', pp.279-80). On the gap between guilds' theory and practise see J.R. Farr, 'On the Shop Floor', pp.24-54. The Author refers numerous examples of guilds behaviour, which did not respond to the standard criteria set by the simple reading of the guild regulations. Also local studies show the difficulties of controlling the labour market for the conflictual relations between guilds. See for example J.R. Farr, *Hands of Honor. Artisans and Their World in Dijon, 1550-1650* (Ithaca and London, 1988); S. Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth-Century London* (Cambridge, 1989) and E. Merlo, *Le corporazioni conflitti e soppressioni* (Milan, 1996). Sheilah Ogilvie, proves the co-existence of guilds and pre-industrial activities (Ogilvie, *State Corporatism*) and S. Kaplan showed in the Parisian guilds the gap between rules and practice (*The Bakers of Paris and the Bread Question, 1700-1775* (Durham and London, 1996). Epstein, 'Craft Guilds', p.698; see also J.R.

invention and innovation, albeit as an unintended consequence of their activities, both by stimulating technical diffusion by supporting migrant labour and by providing inventors with temporary monopoly rights.¹³

The Sicilian example suggests that guilds proved to be far weaker where a strong central administration kept corporate groups under control, because crafts were unable to enforce their regulations effectively, making it harder to attract and retain members. If the guilds' main purpose was indeed training in skills, we would expect skilled labour to be rare in Sicily and pre-industrial manufacture poorly developed. A systematic overview of the evidence attempts to test these competing theories.

a) Guilds and regulations

The most evident expression of guild power was their regulations. Statutes were approved by local and central authorities and backed by official bans and urban regulations. Formally, they applied to all guild members, but the assumption that regulations were fully effective, durable and unchangeable seems highly improbable. Firstly, enforcement of the statutes depended on legal authority that was granted by the local urban institutions; second, most regulations were enforced by the membership itself which varied in size over time; and finally, guild regulations were often contradictory, subject to variations, or applied only under highly specific circumstances. Guild rules were changed *ad hoc*, occasionally renewed and abolished, and sometimes were never actually written down.¹⁴ The consuls of each guild could only guarantee the regulatory system with the support of the urban officials, who could back the threat of enforcement with court summonses. In larger cities and more sophisticated markets, regulations were even harder to enforce because more numerous competing

Farr, 'On the Shop Floor: Guilds Artisans and the European Market Economy, 1350-1750', *Journal of Early Modern History* 1 (1997): 24-54.

¹³ Epstein, 'Craft Guilds', pp.688 and 684.

¹⁴ For example the first statutes of the Trapani potters were not written until the mid-seventeenth century, although the guild was organised by the late sixteenth century. Also, Trapani fishermen had a guild since the fifteenth century but did not draft regulations until the eighteenth century.

political and economic interests challenged the guilds' privileges, and because competing interests within the guilds themselves could more frequently neutralise the effects of regulations; consequently, activities that were formally forbidden by the regulations, could be practised nevertheless on a daily basis.¹⁵

Sicilian craft guilds appear economically and organisationally far more flexible than the classical view suggests, and seem to have had an efficient arrangement for training aspiring masters. Nevertheless, the late emergence of political support for guilds appear to have hindered the emergence of craft organisations, undermined the effectiveness of regulations in enforcing apprenticeship, and weakened the training process, limiting the development of local artisan skills. It also appear to have weakened the impact of those elements, including participation in the political arena, which worked as 'non-collective social benefits' to prevent free-riding. The lack of incentives for membership resulted in few guild members, and a small number of organised crafts.¹⁶

Local authorities could reject or ignore new statutes, and could often require numerous further changes to the statutes under discussion.¹⁷ Fees could often be substituted with an offering of wax, or condoned; it was normal to accumulate large arrears. Guild registers were kept poorly or not at all, making it harder to keep track of payments. The fines for fee evasion were weak, and those for low quality standards were not evenly spread across the guilds. In contrast, the fines for poaching apprentices were very high and were mentioned in every set of statutes found so far.¹⁸ Thus, Sicilian guilds expended most effort in enforcing regulations for apprenticeship, but found it difficult to enforce additional rules which might have provided positive incentives for membership and prevented free riding.

¹⁵ Farr, 'On the shop floor', pp.24-54.

¹⁶ See above, ch.4.2 and 6f.

¹⁷ See above, ch.5.

¹⁸ See above, 5.2.

b) Labour relations

The relationship between masters and apprentices is an important feature of both guild theories. According to the classical theory, the long period of apprenticeship reflects the guild's monopolistic position in regulating labour supply. Masters used the apprenticeship terms to control access to guilds and to limit the number of competitors. In addition, the long period of training gave masters a cheap supply of skilled labour, since the apprentice's salary was usually below market wages.

The new theory makes the relation between master and apprentice even more central. Lack of support for the training process, or its poor enforcement, could culminate in a complete absence of training. If the master was not sure that the apprentice would remain with him for the full duration of the contract, he would refuse to teach, since an uncompleted contract would not allow the master to recover the costs incurred in training. Equally, if the master retained the right to break the contract at an early stage, the apprentice could refuse to be trained, since he had no guarantee of obtaining the full training he required. On the other hand, a master could easily be tempted to recruit a part-trained apprentice from another master, if such poaching had not been punished by a well-enforced system. In sum, although apprenticeship contracts were not a novelty introduced by the guild system, an expanding market economy required an institution that could provide a firm foundation for formal training. It was in both the masters' and the apprentices' interests to participate in a system which guaranteed and provided incentives for the institutionalisation of apprenticeship.¹⁹

Although scholars have recognised the important role of the guild system in institutionalising apprenticeship, the length of this training is a source of controversy. The classical view stresses the negative effects of an excessively long period of training. Prolonged apprenticeship allegedly exploited the apprentice by tying him to the master, and limited access to the craft in order to

¹⁹ M. Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action. Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge, 1965), pp.37-38 and 51.

reduce competition and control the number of applicants. The alternative theory argues instead that the formalisation of apprenticeship terms protected both parties from opportunistic behaviour; the mutual interests of master and apprentice supported the relationship.

During the first period of the contract, masters invested money, time, and materials in the training process. Particularly for those crafts dealing with precious materials like coral and silver, the apprentice's mistakes could result in expensive losses. Later, however, when the apprentice was capable of producing reliable work, the master could recover the costs of his investment, and could rely on cheap labour by maintaining the apprentice's salary low. The apprentice was usually employed from an early age and was dedicated to being fully able to exercise a craft. He would acquire most of the skills necessary to practise the craft early on in the contract, while later his ability was used to increase workshop returns and to pay back the master's investments. Guilds accorded to the apprentice specific rights as a trainee; this included defending his position in front of craft officials and urban authorities.²⁰

Guild statutes could not in fact impose the length of the apprenticeship, although many statutes formally stated a fixed number of years. The existence of personal contracts in the most dynamic markets shows that the length of the apprenticeship was established according to different variables. Notaries' contracts considered the age of the apprentice, his previous experience, his family and occasionally, in case of an adult, his marital status.²¹ Thus, the length established by the statutes, usually between three and seven years, worked as a 'negotiable benchmark'.²² The guild of Palermo's tailors for example established a statutory length of apprenticeship of five years in 1530. Only a few years later, in 1542, a contract for a tailor trainee was stipulated at three years.²³

²⁰ For example, in the statutes of 1620, Palermo silk sock-makers stated that an apprentice could accuse his master for ill treatment in front of the Praetor. If the master did not appear in front of the city council, he risked disqualification (F.L. Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze di Palermo* (Palermo, 1991), p.220).

²¹ ASPa, Notai, not. G.P. De Monte 2892, c.331v-2r. (1538-39). The contract concerns an adult apprentices who received an higher salary of 11 onze for two years of apprenticeship because he was married.

²² Epstein, 'Craft Guilds', p.689.

²³ ASPa Notai, not. De Monte 2896 cc.680v-681r. (1542-43)

The inability of the guilds to determine and enforce the duration of apprenticeship demonstrates that this training period could not have been used as an effective means of limiting access to the craft.²⁴ A further argument against such an idea concerns the training requirements for foreigners. If the aim of a long apprenticeship was to limit access to the craft, we should expect to find long training periods for foreign masters. However, guilds barely required any training period for foreigners, although they did insist on a mastership and the payment of fees.

In order to enforce apprenticeship, a system of licences and mastership led to official certification of the period of training. The debate focuses on the formality of this certification, and on whether this mastership was used to enforce the technical status quo.²⁵ The test of ability marked the formal end of the apprenticeship and the full qualification of the trainee in front of the craft representatives. After the mastership, a young master could open his own workshop, but more often entered another master's workshop as a journeyman or junior partner. In the sources, the mastership exam appears to have been meant to verify the abilities of an aspiring master, since mastership fees were returned to trainees who did not pass the examination.²⁶ Sometimes the mastership coincided with the full or partial payment of entry fees; but a licence could also be obtained from the local authorities without a formal exam and against the regulations.²⁷

Finally, enforcement of the mastership could not prevent the introduction of new production techniques because it was virtually impossible to enforce specific production processes. The statutes described a number of requirements relating to the final product, such as the time and the place of production and its main characteristics, but the procedures for production were not specified.²⁸ The final judgement was based on the finished products rather than on the process of production. Similar factors reduced the impact of the craft officials' inspections to the workshops. In Palermo, these inspections aimed to control the quality of the

²⁴ See above, ch. 5.

²⁵ Mokyr, *Lever of Riches*, p.258; Mokyr, 'Urbanisation', p.15.

²⁶ See data in ch. 5.

²⁷ See above, ch. 4.

²⁸ See Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, statutes of Palermo hat makers, cooks and cake makers; E. D'Amico, *La maestranza palerminatana dei ricamatori (1502-1822)* (Palermo, 1984), Statutes of Palermo embroiderers.

workshop output, particularly for those crafts that used hallmarks. Checks were conducted on the final product and only goods that did not meet the required standards could be withheld or destroyed. Often, consuls would rather collect the membership fees during the workshop inspections.

The city council also supported the introduction of foreign techniques against guild regulations. This is the case of soap production. In 1571 the Genoese Simone Merello asked Palermo city council to allow production of hard soap ('*arte della saponeria di sapone duro*'), for which he demanded a monopoly. The city council allowed him to produce soap for six years as long as he made 1,000 *cantara* per year.²⁹ In 1595, Giulio Collodi and Giovanni di Silvestro Lombardo from Lucca opened a workshop to produce 'hard' and 'soft' soap in the Genoese and Venetian styles. The officials in charge of market controls arrested them and De Ballo, judge of the Grand Court, condemned them and closed their workshop. Only a few months later, however the city Praetor granted them a licence to set up a new manufacture.³⁰ This is not an exception. Urban governments often overcame guild regulations, and jurors occasionally introduced new technologies and invited foreign masters to import new means of production.³¹

The high demand for skilled labour encouraged the employment by aristocratic households of apprentices who had not completed their training. The tendency for trainees to leave their masters before the expiry of their contracts forced guilds to introduce further guarantees to retain apprentices in a master's workshop.³² When demand for manufactures started to increase in Palermo and Trapani in the late sixteenth century, apprenticeship contracts began to stipulate a gradually increasing salary for the apprentice; in most cases, the salary was higher than the original contribution for maintenance, and it increased by 100 per cent

²⁹ The soap had to be sold according to the following rates: the red soap for 27 grana per rotolo and the white soap for 30 grana per rotolo. The monopoly contract was transcribed in the acts of the notary Antonio Carrasi (ACPa, Provviste, 177, cc.3v-4r. (1571-72)).

³⁰ 'Licentiam ad hoc per publico beneficio et introductione artis novae' (ACPa, Provviste, 637, c.185 (20 February 1595), and c.295 (28 April 1595)).

³¹ Trapani invited some masters from Messina to import the 'art of silk' in town (A. Baviera, Albanese, *In Sicilia nel secolo XVI: verso una rivoluzione industriale?* (Palermo, 1974), p.81).

³² These practises were common throughout Europe and particularly in the regions with higher concentrations of industrial activities. See Rappaport, *Worlds Within the Worlds*, p.321; Degrassi, *Economia artigiana*, pp.56-57; Epstein, 'Craft Guilds', p.691.

every year in the following years.³³ Higher salaries not only restrained apprentices from leaving, but also attracted more labourers for craft training. In Palermo, the best masters were also able to attract apprentices thanks to their high reputation. There the reputation of fine guild masters turned the workshop of the Gagini's family into a true 'school of art'.³⁴ Having good apprentices attracted more clients and increased the returns of the workshop.

c) Participation

According to orthodox theory, guilds imposed compulsory participation as a means to control the number of masters, and restrict competition and the flow of ideas.³⁵ A number of questions emerge if this theory is to be accepted. For example, how did guilds impose participation? Why did participation have to be imposed if the guild system could provide monopolistic rights and other benefits for guild members? Was participation influenced by other factors? Can it be assumed that all artisans were members of a guild?

Craft masters were the only full members of these associations, so that most scholars refer to guilds as 'lobbies of producers',³⁶ however in some crafts, apprentices, journeymen and their children could also benefit from the welfare system.³⁷ Guild membership seems to have been far more flexible than the statutes and the historiographic tradition suggests.

The evidence also suggests that guilds had to entice members, implying that the individual benefits of membership were not straightforward. Members could leave the craft at the cost of their mastership fees or rejoin the group without penalties, and incentives and benefits were necessary to sustain participation and retain members in the guild.

³³ See for example ASTp, Notai, not. Vito Vitale, 9908, unnumbered fos. (29 January 1600 and 8 November 1600). See also ch. 5.

³⁴ G. Di Marzo, *I Gagini e la scultura in Sicilia nei secoli XV e XVI* (Palermo, 1880-83).

³⁵ Mokyr, 'Urbanisation', p.15.

³⁶ Ogilvie, *State Corporatism*.

³⁷ See for example Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, pp.177-79, statutes of Palermo confectioners (1622).

Masters acquired full membership after passing the mastership examination and paying the relevant fees. Some aspiring masters could not pay these fees at once, so paid instalments during the first period of their practice.³⁸ Poor masters, or artisans whose economic circumstances suddenly changed and were therefore unable to contribute to the maintenance of the guild, could be exempted from payment, or could pay the fees in arrears, being suspended from the voting rights in the meantime.³⁹ However, they could rejoin the guild after paying the fees in arrears, and would then reacquire voting rights.⁴⁰

Furthermore, evidence also show that there were non-guilded artisans who lived and produced side-by-side guild members. The presence of so-called 'false workers',⁴¹ or of women, became far more evident when the size of the manufacturing sector increased. The concentration of guilds and big workshops increased the number of people who could acquire basic skills informally. In fact, statutes of the fifteenth and sixteenth century hardly mention the exclusive nature of production and selling. However, in seventeenth-century Palermo, statutes imposed fines and claimed exclusive rights of production and sale for guild members, suggesting that a more competitive market was emerging. In other towns, rules against non-guild members were very rare, presumably because of the limited number of skilled labourers.⁴²

d) Fees

Theories on guilds have stated that high admission fees prevented artisans from participation, and that only masters who were rich and powerful formed guilds. The implication of this assumption is that guild participation should have been

³⁸ S. Denaro, 'I capitoli dei maestri muratori, marmorari e cavatori di pietra nella città di Trapani', *La Fardelliana* 14 (1995): 152, statutes of Trapani masons (1598).

³⁹ For poor masters exempted from payments see Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, pp.218-19, statutes of Palermo silk sock makers (1620).

⁴⁰ Lioni, *Statuti inediti*, p.124, statutes of Palermo forgers (1771-72). They were allowed to pay their fees up to three months later. Other examples concern masters, who left the town for a certain period. See above, chapter 4.5.

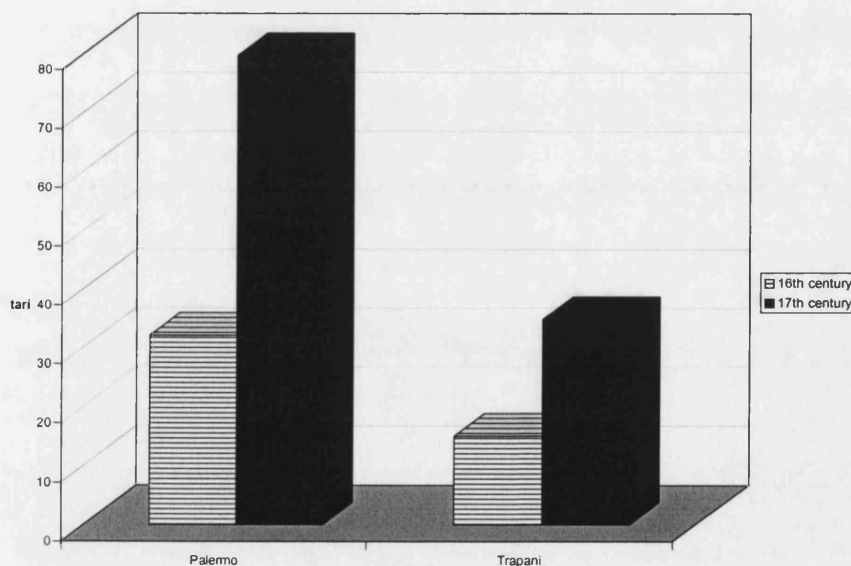
⁴¹ S. Kaplan, 'La lutte pour le contrôle du marché du travail à Paris au XVIIIe siècle', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 36, (1989): 361-412.

⁴² See above, chapter 6.

greater where admission fees were low. However, the evidence suggests that this was not the case. The payment of fees had numerous exceptions, including special conditions in case of difficulties in payment and exemptions in case of poverty. Fines for fee evasion were not heavy, implying that fees were not seriously enforced.

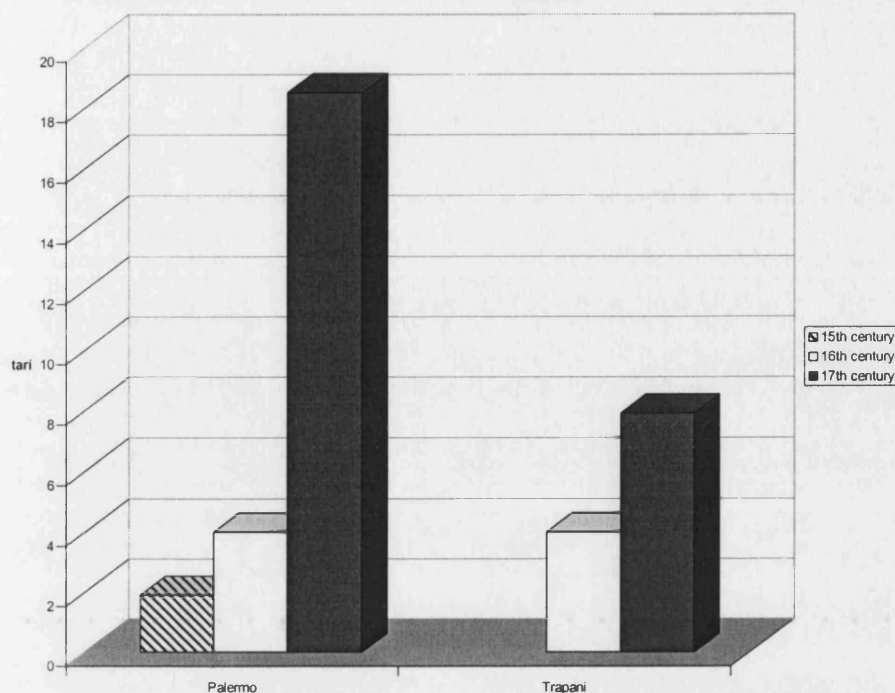
Interesting observations can be made from the tables in chapter 5 concerning the average mastership fees paid in the seventeenth century in both Trapani and Palermo (Table 5.3). There was a big difference in mastership fees between these towns; Trapani masters paid an average of 34.8 *tari* per year, while Palermo guild members paid an average of 79.5 *tari* (Fig.7.1). The masters in Palermo were therefore paying 128 per cent more than Trapani guildsmen, even though Palermo probably had more guild members and crafts than all the other towns of the region. A further confirmation that higher fees did not affect the number of guilds emerges from a record of the annual membership fees. In the seventeenth century, the average membership fee paid in Palermo was greater than that in Trapani by 127 per cent: the annual fee average was 18 *tari* in Palermo and 7.9 *tari* in Trapani (Fig.7.2).

Fig. 7.1 Average mastership fees (*tari*)



* Sources: See Tables 5.3 a and b.

Fig. 7.2 Annual average membership fees (tari)



* Sources: see Tables 5.2 a, b and c

Why was there such a difference in fees between these two towns? If high admission fees were an obstacle to membership, why did guilds with higher fees have more members? The answer is that fees, and entry fees in particular were a kind of bond, a 'mortgage on trust', paid by the masters to gain access to the guild-based apprenticeship system. The bond sustained their promise to abide by the rules and not 'free-ride' or cheat.⁴³ This would explain why masters' children and sons-in-law did not usually have to pay entry fees and why foreigners occasionally paid higher fees, although this was more common in smaller, more conservative, towns (see Table 5.4).⁴⁴

Because entry and membership fees were an investment for the master to gain access to the skilled labour market, the fees that masters were willing to pay were proportional to their expected returns. In larger and more sophisticated labour markets such as Palermo, the expected returns and bonuses for skilled craft

⁴³ Epstein, 'Craft Guilds', p.691.

⁴⁴ Occasionally, the guild required entry fees from the master's sons. See for example Oddo, *Statuti delle maestranze*, p.263, Palermo statutes of sword makers (1649).

masters were higher, so fees were proportionally higher too. This also explains why fees increased over time following the general inflation trends, even though we saw that their economic significance was minimal.⁴⁵

e) Women

The European literature has shown quite clearly that the conditions of women's labour changed during the early modern period. Early work by Alice Clark on England (1919) and Karl Bucher on Germany (1914)⁴⁶ opened the debate. Clark's conclusions became the benchmark for subsequent discussion. She argued that women's involvement in the organisation of production decreased, and she connected this event with the advent of capitalism. Large scale production required larger workshops than the artisan's house, and wage-labour made a distinction between age and sex. Women were paid less than before, and either pulled out of the labour market altogether or relied on their husbands' wages.⁴⁷

More recently this explanation has been challenged. In a detailed study of working women in early modern cities of northern Europe, focused mainly on the relationship between market production and the family production unit, Martha Howell has argued that women's labour status 'depended upon the functions of the family production unit during the development of the market economy'.⁴⁸ Three assumptions form the basis of this hypothesis. First, women gained what the writer calls a 'high-status position' in market production only in the later Middle Ages, because they continued to hold a key position in the family economy during the shift from subsistence economy to market production. Second, the high-status position was obtained mainly by women in high-status families, and by women who were married or widowed. Third, the work, which granted high labour status, was quickly removed from the family production

⁴⁵ See above, chapter 5 and Fig.5.13.

⁴⁶ A. Clark, *Working Life of Women in Seventeenth Century* (London, 1919); K. Bucher, *Die Berufe der Stadt Frankfurt im Mittelalter* (Leipzig, 1914).

⁴⁷ Clark, *Working Life*.

⁴⁸ M. Howell, *Women Production and Patriarchy in Late Medieval Cities* (Chicago and London, 1986), p.43.

unit.⁴⁹ Martha Howell concluded that 'women's work in late medieval cities changed essentially because the patriarchal order required it'.⁵⁰

Other scholars have pursued these hypotheses and have suggested that women's work throughout Europe was gradually considered less skilled than that of men during the early modern period. In France, women's wages fall from three-quarters to two-fifths of a man's earnings between the beginning of the fourteenth and the end of the sixteenth centuries, although they recovered during the seventeenth century.⁵¹ In Germany, Merry Wiesner has described a shift in women's position at work from being integrated in manufacturing production to becoming unskilled labourers.⁵² In Italy, studies of female workers stress that women were unskilled or low-skilled labourers often working for wages.⁵³

The debate about women in pre-industrial society has led to two theories, which give two opposing views of the female presence in manufacturing industry. On the one hand, proto-industrial theory has argued that the expansion of domestic manufacture widened female participation in production.⁵⁴ On the other hand, English historiography has described a strong decrease of women's role in the labour market in the passage to 'capitalist organisation'. Sheilagh Ogilvie has dismissed the proto-industrial perspective and argued that the decreased role of women in the labour market occurred because of 'specific social constraints'.⁵⁵ The specific constraint she refers to is the domination of society by pressure groups and the lack of female corporate organisations that could defend women's labour flexibility from exploitation.⁵⁶

It is important to note, however, that the presence of women at work in early modern Europe was particularly widespread in regions where manufacturing production was well developed. Numerous craftswomen emerged in French

⁴⁹ Ibidem, pp.43-44.

⁵⁰ Ibidem, pp.178-79

⁵¹ M. Howell, *Women Production and Patriarchy*, pp.87-88.

⁵² M. Wiesner, *Working Women in Renaissance Germany* (New Brunswick and New Jersey, 1986) and M. Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1993).

⁵³ D. Herlihy, 'Women's work in the Towns of Traditional Europe', in S. Cavaciocchi (ed.) *La donna nell'economia. Secc.XIII-XVIII* (Florence, 1990).

⁵⁴ S. Ogilvie, 'Women and Proto-Industrialisation in a Corporate Society: Württemberg Woollen Weaving, 1590-1760', in P. Hudson and W.R. Lee, *Women's Work and the Family Economy in Historical Perspective* (Manchester and New York, 1990), p.75.

⁵⁵ Ibidem, p.76.

⁵⁶ Ibidem, pp.96-97.

cities;⁵⁷ in Germany, they often acquired guild membership.⁵⁸ In some towns, especially in weaving and spinning centres, married women and spinsters are recorded as guild members, and in some countries there were guilds composed exclusively of women.⁵⁹ Female workers were recognised in industry and traded independently of their role as wife, mother, and daughter.⁶⁰

The evidence therefore does not support a direct causality between the increasing power of guilds and the decrease in female labour. In Sicily, where guilds were weak and were not a ubiquitous feature, female labour is hardly recorded at all, except in towns where guilds were numerous and better organised, such as Palermo, Messina, and Trapani. Women are mentioned relatively frequently in Palermo's statutes, suggesting that the guilds of this town had to deal more often with female labour. By contrast, other towns where corporate groups were less organised lacked regulations on female work. Women did not manage separate trades and did not generally participate as members in the guild system, even when the regulations did not prevent their participation. However, in the few cases where statutes do mention women at work, the guild tried to regulate them through incorporation, as with the tailors and coral workers of Trapani, or the silk weavers of Palermo.⁶¹

The Sicilian evidence therefore suggests that female industrial participation was positively correlated with higher rates of specialisation. Guilds potentially provided chances for women to be involved in industrial production and at the same time tried to regulate and monitor female work in order to avoid free-riding. If we accept that demand for female labour increased at times of male labour shortages,⁶² it follows that female work will have emerged and developed especially at times of intense industrial production associated with well-developed

⁵⁷ D.M. Hafter, 'Women Who Wove in the Eighteenth-Century Silk Industry of Lyon', in D.M. Hafter (ed.) *European Women and Preindustrial Craft* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1995), pp.42-64; C. Crowston, 'Engendering the Guilds: Seamstresses, Tailors and the Clash of Corporate Identities in Old Regime France', in *French Historical Studies* 23 (2000): 344.

⁵⁸ Wiesner, *Working Women*, p.158; see also Howell, *Women*, pp.43-44.

⁵⁹ S. Shahar, *The Fourth Estate: A History of Women in the Middle Ages* (London, 1983), pp.191-92.

⁶⁰ Hudson and Lee, 'Introduction', in Hudson and Lee, *Women's Work and the Family Economy*, p.12.

⁶¹ See above, chapter 5.

⁶² Ogilvie, 'Women and Proto-Industrialisation', pp.76-77.

guilds, rather than in the absence of corporate groups and regulations. Industrial expansion and specialisation in the urban economy seems to have created niches in the labour market which male labour alone could not fill and which gave women more chances to acquire new manufacturing skills. The lack of a vibrant industrial base would explain why in Sicily, where female labour was not restricted by guild legislation, women were nevertheless largely absent from the labour market.

7.2 Causes and consequences of guild weakness

In Sicily the influence of a strong monarchy hindered the establishment of corporate groups until the fifteenth century. From the 1430s, the increasing financial needs of the Crown encouraged the approval and the acknowledgement of corporate groups. However, a lack of strong support for craft regulations exacerbated by the dual nature (central and urban) of political controls over guild legislation, reduced incentives for guild membership; the number of formally constituted crafts therefore remained far smaller than in most other European regions. Sicilian guilds could not apply intensive pressure on the local authorities; they did not have strong political influence with which to impose their will or defend their members' interests. This does not mean however that they did not try.

After the fifteenth century, when guilds acquired formal recognition, the level of specialisation slowly but steadily increased. Specialised crafts grouped together into larger umbrella groups incorporating metalworkers, builders and others, although the number of sub-specialisations remained limited compared with guilds in other European regions. During the seventeenth century, the guilds underwent a reverse process of fragmentation in which new and more specialised crafts obtained independent statutes and formed separate guilds. This occurred especially in Palermo. In other demanial towns, however, human capital was often spread between artisanship and agricultural production and the level of artisanal

skills remained low: thus Marsala, for example, with a population of around ten thousand inhabitants had only four guilds.⁶³

If we accept the classical theory, which states that guilds hindered industrial development, the weakness of Sicilian crafts, which did not have the means to protect the technological status quo, should have offered ideal conditions for the free flow of ideas, for technological progress and industrial growth. Moreover, the weakness of corporate groups and the lack of formal restrictions on female labour should have offered fertile ground for developing women's economic power. Yet, manufacturing production in Sicily remained small-scale and restricted to the domestic market, unable to compete against the long tradition of high-quality production established in northern Italy and elsewhere in Europe. Sicily did not experience successful industrial growth and technological progress.

The reasons for this failure cannot be simply a lack of native entrepreneurship, as a long historiographical tradition has claimed. The answer seems to lie in Mokyr's suggestion: successful innovation depended equally on original ideas and skills. Sicilian guilds, which were unable to enforce their regulations because of the lack of state support, were equally incapable of enforcing membership and apprenticeship rules and of providing specialised labour to a thriving manufacturing base. On the other hand, the agricultural sector was quite able to support the economy of the island for centuries, even in the seventeenth century when much of the rest of Europe was affected by demographic and economic decline. Sicily seems to have specialised to agriculture for two main reasons. First, it had a highly productive agricultural sector, as the high level of exports in the international markets show. Second, the delay in the establishment of craft guilds resulted in a non-competitive manufacturing sector and a limited supply of skilled labour. The poor development of craft guilds did not support the manufacturing industry, which remained limited to the domestic market.

This new interpretation of guilds permits a more complex explanation for the failure of the manufacturing industry, which avoids simply pointing to the lack of entrepreneurs and the grain monoculture, as postulated in the traditional

⁶³ M.G. Grifo (ed.) *Marsala* (Marsala, 1999).

literature on Sicily. Thus, a strong pattern of path dependency prolonged the effects caused by the lack of skilled labour up to modern times.

Appendix 1

Recorded Sicilian guilds {PRIVATE }

CALTAGIRONE

A. Ragona, *Le maioliche siciliane dalle origini all'Ottocento* (Palermo, 1975)

Ropers (Cordari)
Potters (cannatari)
Pastry-cooks (cubaitari)
Goldsmiths (orefici)

CASTROGIOVANNI (ENNA)

ASPa, Protonotaro del Regno, 40, c.98r (11 May 1448)

Furriers (pellicciaria)
Tailors (custureria)
shoemakers (curbeseria)

CATANIA

P. Carrera, *Delle memorie storiche della città di Catania per Giovanni Rossi*
(Catania 1641) vol.2, p.512

Blacksmiths (ferrari)
Carpenters (mastri d'ascia)
Ropemakers (cordari)
Bronze-founders (lavoratori di stagno e rame)
Shoemakers (calzolai)
Wool-cloth shopkeepers (ambasciari)
Hatters (cappellieri)
Jacket-makers (gipponari)
Tailors (sartori)
Goldsmiths (orefici)
Cutlers and gunmakers (coltellieri e scopettieri)
Sword-makers (spadari)
Dyers (tintori)
Cart-makers (artefici di carri)
Pastry-cook/sweet makers (confettieri)
Baker (panettieri)
Grocers (cavallari)
Barbers (barberi)

MARSALA

A. Genna, *Storia di Marsala* (Trapani, 1994)

Blacksmiths (fabbri)
Carpenters (falegnami)
Smiths (ferrari)
Shoemakers (calzolai)
Tailors (sartori)
Potters (quartarari)

MESSINA

P. Pieri, *La storia di Messina nello sviluppo della sua vita comunale* (Messina, 1939)

Silk weavers (setaioli)
Silver and goldsmiths (orefici e argentieri)
Cake makers (confettieri)
Tailors and jacket makers (sarti e gipponari)
Barbers (barbieri)
Carpenters (falegnami)
Shoemakers (calzolai)
Saddle makers (sellai)
Tanners (conciatori)
Nail makers (tacciari o chiodaioli)
Leather workers (cuoiai)
Ropers (funaioli)
Linen weaver (linaioli)
Pan makers (calderari)
Blacksmiths (ferrai)
Glass makers (vetrai)
Coopers (bottai)
Marble cutter and masons (marmorari, scarpellini e muratori)

G.B. Romano Colonna, *Congiura dei ministri del Viceré contro la nobile città di Messina* (Messina, 1676), vol. I, pp.57-61.

Blacksmiths (ferrai)
Carpenters (mastri d'ascia)
Coopers (bottai)
Tailors (sarti)
Goldsmith and Silversmith (argentieri/orefici)
Sculptors/Marble cutters (scarpellini e marmorari)
Silk-weavers (setaioli)
Bakers (panitteri)
Pan makers (calderari)

MONTE S.GIULIANO

V. Adragna, 'Le "corporazioni" di Monte S.Giuliano', *Trapani 2* (1971): 9-19

Shoemakers (Calzolai e ciabattini)
Carpenters and coopers (falegnami e bottai)
Blacksmiths and silversmiths (fabbrì ferrai e argentieri)
Leather workers (conciatori di pelle o curviseri)

PALERMO

G.M. Amato, *De principe templo panormitano*, (Palermo, 1728), pp.86 (*Rollus or Ordo cerorum* 15 August 1385)

Cart makers (carrozzieri)
Smiths (maniscalchi)
Pan makers (calderari)
Carpenters (carpinteri)
Gun makers (balistreri)
Coopers (buttari)
Masons (muratori)
Sculptors (scultores)
Sailors (marinari)
Boat carpenters (calafati)
Bakers (panitteri)
Scythe makers (Falcenuriori)
Butchers (buccheri)
Sugar makers (cannamelari)
Potters (quartarari)
Ropers (cordari)
Wool weavers (lanarii)
Belt makers (cinturinarii)
Saddle makers (sellari)
Painters (depittores)
Sock makers (calzettari)
Tailors (custureri)
Tanners (conciatori)
Shoemakers (corbiseri)
Slipper makers (planellarii)
Furriers (pelliccerii)
Sword makers (spatari)
Dyers (tintori)
Sailors (mercatores maritimi)
Shop keepers (recapteri o rigattieri)
Tin workers (stagnatari)
Goldsmiths (aurifici)
Barbers (barberi)
delifichoti (?)
Sugar makers (zuccareri)
Bankers (bancheri)

Doctors and pharmacists (medici e speciali)

F. Maggiore Perni, *La popolazione di Sicilia e di Palermo dal X al XVIII secolo* (Palermo, 1892) (fifteenth-century Palermo).

Hat makers (berrettai)

Coachmen (cocchieri)

Cake makers (confettieri)

Blanket makers (cutrari)

Marble cutter (marmorari)

Masons (fabbricatori)

Mattress makers (materassari)

Inn keepers (tavirnari)

Weavers (carieri)

Jacket makers (gipponari)

Embroiderers (frinzari gallonari e passamanari)

Sock makers working old silk (calzettieri di seta vecchia)

Carpenters (falegnami di opera bianca)

Soap makers (saponari)

Trousseau makers (Corredatori)

Leather workers (conzarioti)

Gold platters (tiratori d'oro)

Gold and silver beaters (battioro e argento)

Key makers (chiavitteri)

Gun makers (schioppettieri)

Marble cutters (marmorari)

Blacksmiths, cart makers (fabbrici di opera grossa)

Cutlers (cutillieri)

Velvet workers (vellutari)

Haberdashers (merceri di mercia minuta)

Lime workers (calcinari)

Forgers (forgiatori)

Embroiderers (imburditori)

Sailors and fishermen (marinai e pescatori di Terracina di borgo, di Piedigrotta, di Kalsa)

Carvers (intagliatori)

Carpenters, case makers (casciari)

Silk weavers (maestri di opera piana della seta)

Coach decorators (carrozzieri di opera gentile)

Hairdressers (parrucchieri)

Wax workers (arbitranti di cera)

Pharmacists (aromatari)

G. Scherma, *Delle maestranze in Sicilia* (Palermo, 1896)

Gold and silversmiths (arginteri, orefici)
Tailors for clerical cloths (zimmatori)
Jacket makers (gipponari)
Decorators (frinzari)
Sock makers using old silk (calzettieri di seta vecchia)
Gold platters (addoratori)
Belt makers (cintorari)
Soap makers (saponari)
Tanners (conciatori)
Trousseau makers (corredatori)
Gold beaters (tiratori di oro)
Hat makers (cappellieri)
Saddle makers (sellari)
Key makers (chiavittieri)
Gun makers (scopettieri)
Smiths (frenari)
Stone cutters (perreatori)
Tailors (custureri)
Barbers (barbieri)
Shoemakers (corviseri)
Ropers (cordara)
Turners (tornari)
Masons (muratori)
Marble cutters (marmorari)
Tin workers (stagnatari)
Cake makers (confettieri)
Embroiderers (riccamatori)
Blacksmiths (ferrari d'opera grossa)
Weavers of cloth (tessitori di tela)
Knife makers (cutillieri)
Smiths (maniscalchi)
Sword makers (spatari)
Velvet workers (vellutari)
Haberdashers (mercia minuta)
Sailors and fishermen (marinari e pescatori di Terracina)
Coopers (bottari)
Decorators (guarnamentari)
Embroiderers (passamanara)
Coachmen (cocchieri)
Fishermen (pescatori di porta dei Greci)
Carvers (intagliatori)
Carpenters, case makers (casciari)
Silk consuls (consoli della seta)

ACPa, Provviste, 1561-1650 *passim*

Butchers (bucceri)
Leather workers (consatori)
Sword makers (spatari)
Haberdashers (merceri)
Embroiderers and silk weavers (imborditori e sitalori)
Dyers (tingitori)
Bakers (fornari)
Shoemakers (corviseri)
Barbers (barberi)
Pharmacists (speciali, speciali)
Confectioners (confitteri e zuccharari, aromatarì)
Weavers (carreri e tessitori di tila)
Carpenters (mastri d'ascia)
Marble cutters and sculptors (marmorari e scultori)
Trousseau makers (Corredatori)
Mattress makers (materazzari)
Sock and jacket makers (calcitteri e gipponari)
Tailors (custureri)
Ropers (accimatori)
Tin makers (stagnatari)
Blcksmiths (ferrari, ferrari dell'opera grossa, scopitteri, cortilleri)
Silversmiths (arginteri)
Embroiderers (racamaturì e passamanari)
Carpenters and turners (fabbri lignari e tornatori)
Coopers (buttari)
Cloth makers (panneri)
Inn keepers (tabernari)
Carvers, stone cutters and masons (intagliatori, pirriatori, muratori)
Cake and pasta makers (pastizari, vermicellari, maccaronari)
Cooks (cucineri)
Porters and servants (porteri e serventi)
Button makers (bottonari)
Haberdashers (merceri di robba vecchia)
Ropers (cordari)
Paper makers (cartari)
Linen weavers (linalori)
Hat makers (cappilleri)
Decorators (guarnimentari)
Belt makers (centurari)
Shoemakers (scarpari)
Gold platers (mastri doratori)
Torch makers (torciari)
Decorators for processions (paratori)

SCIACCA

I. Navarra, *Arte e storia a Sciacca, Caltabellotta e Burgio dal XV al XVIII secolo*, (Foggia,1986), p.116, n.300

Potters (quartarari)
Silver- and goldsmiths (aurifabri)
Cake makers (cubatari)
Sword makers (spadari)
Tailors (sutores)

SYRACUSE

BCSr, Libro dei Privilegi, vol.I (1474). *Corpus Domini*

Workers (Li lavoratori)
Sailors (li marinari)
Boat carpenters (li Calafati)
Blacksmiths (li ferrari)
Inn keepers (li tavernari)
Potters (li vasellari)
Crockery makers (li scutellari)
Tanners (li conzaturi)
Carpenters (li mastri d'axia)
Masons (li muraturi)
Ropers (li cordari)
Shoemakers (li corbiseri)
Merchants (li mercanti)
Tailors (custureri)

F. Carpinteri, 'Capitoli dei consolati d'arti e mestieri nel '700 siracusano', *ASSr* 15 (1969), pp.73-129.

Shoemakers and leatherworkers (curviseri e cunzaturi)
Masons and stone cutters (mastri muratori e pirriatori)
Shop and inn keepers (bottegari e tavernari)
Tailors (mastri custureri)
Carpenters (mastri d'ascia)
Coopers (mastri bottari)
Silver and goldsmiths (argentieri e orefici)
Tailors and shoemakers (mastri sartori e calzolai)

TRAPANI

BF. ASST, 11, cc.32r-v (*Festa del Cilio o Cirio*).

Merchants (mercanti)
Sailors (marinari)
Fishermen (piscaturi)
Pharmacists (speciari)
Silversmiths (argenteri)
Tailors (custureri)
Shoemakers (curviseri)
Masons (muraturi)
Barbers (barbieri)
Carpenters (carpinteri)
Key makers (chiavittari)
Coopers (buttari)
Blacksmiths (ferrari)
Innkeepers (tabernari)
Shopkeepers (putegari)
Butchers (buccheri)

C. Guida, *Trapani durante il governo del Viceré De Vega (1547-1557)* (Trapani, rist.1996), p.43. Letter from viceroy De Vega 1555.

Sailors (Li navi)
Fishermen (la barca)
Shopkeepers (li putiari)
Innkeepers (li tavirnari)
Blacksmiths (li firrara)
Masons (li muratura)
Carpenters (li mastrurascia)
Coopers (li bottai)
Boat carpenters (li calafati)
Ropers (li curdara)
Sword makers (li spatari)
Cake makers (li cubbaitari)
Butchers (li carnizzeri)
Tailors (li custureri)
Coral workers (li curallai)
Silversmiths (li arginteri)
Barbers (li barberi)
Merchants (li mircanti)
Pharmacists (li speziali)
Pedlars (li merceri a bando)

BF, ASST, Lettere (1764-65).

Goldsmiths (orefici)
Coopers (bottai)
Ropers (cordari)
Barbers (barberi)
Blacksmiths (ferrari)
Pan makers (calderari)
Carpenters (mastri di Noci)
Tailors (sartori)
Shoemakers (scarpari)
Coral workers (corallai)
Key makers (chiavitteri)
Silk weavers (setaioli)
Tanners (conzarioti)
Stone cutters/Sculptors (scarpellini)
Cart makers (carrozzieri)
Cake makers (cubaitara)
Tailors (sartori)
Shoemakers (scarpara)

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Abbreviations:

ASA: Archivio di Stato, Acireale
ASI: Archivio Storico Italiano.
ASM: Archivio Storico Messinese.
ASSOr: Archivio Storico Sicilia Orientale.
ASPa: Archivio di Stato, Palermo.
ASPa, Notai: Archivio di stato, Palermo. Sez. Notai.
ASS: Archivio Storico Siciliano.
ASSc: Archivio Storico, Sciacca
ASSr: Archivio di stato, Siracusa.
ASTp: Archivio di Stato, Trapani.
ASTp, Notai: Archivio di Stato, Trapani. Sez. Notai
BCPa: Biblioteca Comunale, Palermo.
BCSr: Biblioteca Comunale, Siracusa
BF: Biblioteca Fardelliana.
BF ASSTp: Biblioteca Fardelliana Archivio del Senato di Trapani.
DSSS: Documenti per servire alla storia di Sicilia.

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Ms. Qq E 9: A Mongitore *storia sacra di tutte le chiese, conventi, monasteri, ospedali ed altri luoghi pii della città di Palermo, le Confraternite, le chiese di Nazioni, di artisti e di professioni, le Unioni, le congregazioni e le chiese particolari* [18th century].
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