

# The turn will continue

## Contracting, work, and remuneration in the maritime cargo-handling guilds of Barcelona during liberalization (c. 1760 - 1840)\*

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### ■ ABSTRACT

The objective of this investigation is to relate the modes of contracting, work, and remuneration in the tertiary sub-sector of maritime cargo-handling in the port of Barcelona during the process of the liberalization of the trades (c.1760-1840). The guilds studied were charged with all of the activities of the processes of loading and unloading of goods from merchant ships to and from the beach; the transportation of these goods to and within the Customs House (and supervising their temporary storage here); and the subsequent delivery of goods to the owners, either directly or by transportation to storage facilities, stores, or other locations. These responsibilities were codified in guild ordinances that established monopolistic privileges (and prohibitions against non-guild members). The relationship between the mode of work and the organizational model of the respective guilds is noteworthy: these practices and models were based on customs and traditions, reflected group values, and were given official status in guild charters and the privileges contained therein. These officially recognized practices were challenged by merchants and local authorities and were eventually delegitimized during the process of liberalizing the trades.

**Key terms:** port labor; transportation; maritime cargo; liberalization guilds; labor; trades.

### ■ RESUMEN

El objetivo de esta investigación es llevar a cabo un relato sobre los modos de contratación, trabajo y remuneración en el subsector terciario del manejo de carga marítima en el puerto de Barcelona, durante el proceso de la liberalización de los oficios (entre 1760 y 1840). Los gremios tratados aquí eran responsables de cargar y descargar los bienes de los barcos mercantiles, llevarlos desde la playa hasta la Real Aduana y entregarlos a sus dueños o transportarlos a las bodegas, tiendas u otros sitios. Estas responsabilidades fueron codificadas en las ordenanzas gremiales, que establecieron privativos monopolísticos (y la prohibición del trabajo de los individuos no agremiados).

La relación entre el modo de trabajo y el modelo organizativo de los respectivos gremios es notable: ambos se basaron en costumbres y tradiciones, reflejando los valores de los diferentes grupos, y recibieron estatus oficial en las ordenanzas y en los privilegios contenidos en las mismas. Estas prácticas reconocidas oficialmente fueron cuestionadas por los comerciantes y las autoridades locales y, eventualmente, deslegitimadas durante el proceso de la liberalización de los oficios.

**Palabras clave:** trabajo portuario; transporte; carga marítima; liberalización; gremio; trabajo; oficio.

## ■ INTRODUCTION

Artisan-phase port labor generally receives scant attention – it tends to be a niche in whatever larger field in which it is treated, be that maritime history, labor studies, port history, guild studies, or economic history.<sup>2</sup> Attention to port labor during the artisan phase, however, remains largely underrepresented in maritime history and labor history fields. It has been shown that, while certain themes appear in many cities, the experiences of each group of workers – organized in guilds or otherwise – were sometimes quite different.

The port of Barcelona was a pre-industrial trade hub and intermodal junction for local, regional, Mediterranean, and colonial traffic. With millennial roots in the Mediterranean trade, the influence of Barcelona as a port city grew with the imperial extension of Catalonia and, later, Spain, trading with parts of Europe, Africa, and the colonies in the Americas.<sup>3</sup> Its beaches and warehouses were filled with the raw materials and products of complex, increasingly global trade relationships. It formed a key role in Mediterranean trade; in addition, it was one of a handful of points for exporting goods from throughout Catalonia, especially distilled *aguardiente* alcohol and stamped textiles (calicos, known locally as “*indianas*”) that formed the foundation of Catalan proto-industrialization.<sup>4</sup> Its relationship to the transatlantic, colonial trade had once been indirect, with merchant vessels passing through the city of Cádiz, which had a trade monopoly, on their way to and from the Americas. With the eighteenth century liberalization of this sys-

tem, the merchants of Barcelona could trade directly with the markets in the principal American port cities. A benchmark of this was the creation of the *Real Compañía de Comercio de Barcelona* in 1755, which participated as an important, if perhaps not decisive colonial trade company.<sup>5</sup>

In terms of the infrastructure, it was not substantially changed during the period studied – it remained a largely unprotected, shallow, sandy harbor with a beach for unloading; there was no pier or dock and maritime traffic was exposed to the strong currents of the sea, which affected both the depth of the harbor area over time, and posed immediate dangers to the ships moored therein.<sup>6</sup>

The same can be said for the goods trafficked – while there were quantitative changes during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the incorporation of new goods does not seem to have altered the overall guild paradigm qualitatively. The growth of the textile trade through proto-industrialization resulted in an increase of trafficked goods (both raw materials and finished products), but not an alteration of the guild system (there was no cotton handlers’ guild, for example). With the advent of coal-fed, steam-powered industrial processes, coal became an increasingly important product. That said, the existing system was sufficiently capable of handling the increased volume; the monopoly over transporting coal was not eliminated, although the storage and wholesale commerce of it was liberalized – interestingly, a few years before the first steam-powered industrial facility was installed in Barcelona (as discussed below).<sup>7</sup>

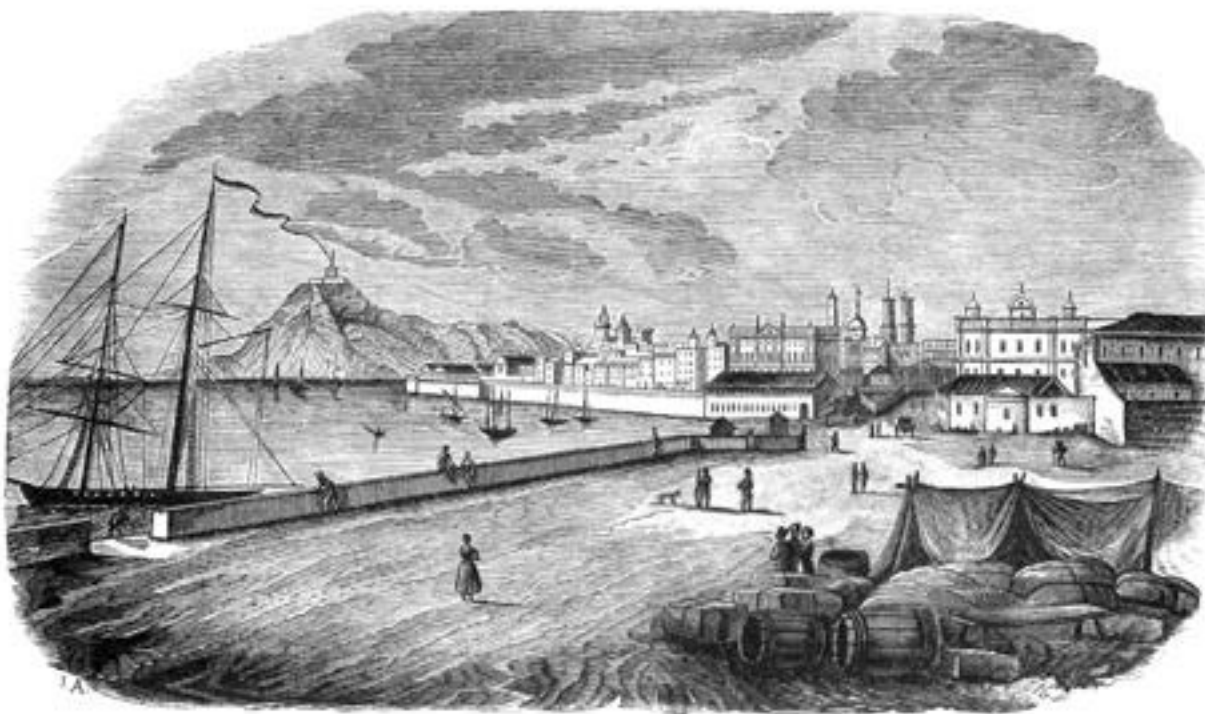
Barcelona trafficked in a great variety of goods: in addition to export goods, the variety of imported goods was considerable, and differed with each arrival: lumber; metal bars; foodstuffs including fish, sugar, cocoa, coffee, and grains; raw cotton and silk for transformation; and miscellaneous goods together constituted the majority at the turn of the nineteenth century. Re-exportation was an important activity as well.<sup>8</sup> While there was no *general* distinction between which guild handled imported or exported goods; there were *specific* distinctions in the cases of some goods. The variety of cargo types is important, as it was the foundation of the goods-based privileges of the highly regulated, multi-guild system.<sup>9</sup>

The growing relevance of the city in trade networks was contemporary to the advance of the political and economic influence of liberalism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This liberalization began with the mid-eighteenth century opening of colonial trade to an increasing number of Spanish ports (including Barcelona),<sup>10</sup> passed to the liberalization of different specific, factory-related economic activities, and eventually contemplated and effectuated the abolition of guild privileges on two short occasions and then, definitively, in 1836.<sup>11</sup> The aim of liberalism, as it dealt with the guilds, was to remove the restrictions that limited the establishment and operation of larger-scale operations (especially by non-guildsmen). That is, the liberal economic tendencies were first present within the political-ideological debates of the Spanish ancien régime, especially – for the sake of this investigation – those regarding commercial liberalization and the liberalization of trades, undermining the auto-regulation of the trades by guilds. These reforms were a significant departure from the highly organized guild system that had created a more-or-less static framework for major and even minor trade relationships through the Middle Ages. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the rise of an increasingly radical, liberal, industrial bourgeoisie advanced and applied an individualist, free-market approach to the socio-economic model.<sup>12</sup> The aims of liberalization as it regarded maritime-cargo handling developed over time from reducing or eliminating monopolistic privileges to abolishing the guilds outright.<sup>13</sup> The context of liberalization of the trades frames the period and determined the challenges to the most salient characteristics of the modalities discussed, as liberalization implicitly promoted a philosophy and practice that was anti-corporative and against the privileges that had defined the self-regulation of labor during centuries. In this way, the behaviors and eventual “survival” of some guilds in the subsector – that is to say, the fact that they did not succumb to the delegitimizing measures of liberalization – may be of interest to researchers of labor, in general, and to those of port and artisan labor in particular.

Research has been based mainly on the analysis of primary documents, which are generally normative in nature: the most significant of these were the different guild ordinances, supported by records of the protective measures (direct action and judicial maneuvers) used by the guilds to defend their privileges from violations by other guilds and individuals. It should be noted that the overwhelming majority of documentation is official in nature. The archives consulted include the rich collection of the *Arxiu General del Museu Marítim de Barcelona* (AGMMB). Papers (including communications) related to the elaboration of new ordinances during the liberalizing period of c.1820-1840 are housed at the *Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Barcelona* (AHCB) and in the *Junta de Comercio* section of the *Biblioteca de Catalunya* (BC). A study of the drafting processes of new ordinances reveals the strategies of liberalization and resistance during this period, when the guild privileges were actively challenged by merchants and their chief instrument, the *Junta de Comercio* (Board of Commerce), which was charged with approving new ordinances in attempts at removing the more monopolistic privileges. That is, one can perceive the efforts by both merchants and guilds to defend and, if possible, improve their relative positions within a framework of institutional change.

The ordinances in effect during the mid- to late eighteenth century serve as benchmarks for showing how the degree of monopoly of the specific privileges changed over time. These changes were a result of external pressures from liberal merchants and of internal pressures within the guilds, by which some masters saw their individual interests perhaps better served by promoting changes in the modes of service provision. While some of these changes are already evident in mid-eighteenth century legal struggles (and even in the preambles of ordinances by way of justifications), the culmination of the gradual advance of liberalism as it relates to the maritime-cargo handling guilds (besides the abolition of 1836) was the 1832 Ordinances for maritime porters, maritime horsecart operators, and maritime teamsters, as rectified by the Board of Commerce.<sup>14</sup> The three-guild ordinances were necessitated by, and based upon, the 2 July 1819

Barcelona's port and city view from  
"l'Andana del port", first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.  
Print of a painting of José Maria Avrial Flores  
(*Museu Marítim* of Barcelona).



dictates of the Royal Supreme Tribunal. This ruling established the liberty of the owners of the goods to select any person - guildsman or otherwise - and use any means of transportation to haul his or her own goods - however, some limitations remained. The passage of over a decade between this ruling and the new ordinances is testament to the chaos caused by the 1820-1823 abolition (during the Liberal Triennial) and to the resistance of the guilds - especially that of the maritime porters - which took the form of delaying tactics, appeals to different forms of authority, and legal struggles in their attempt to protect their ancient customs.

### ■ GUILD CONFIGURATIONS IN THE MARITIME TRANSPORTATION SUB-SECTOR

Generally, each trade was organized in a single guild - there was only one guild for each of the trades; however, this was not a rule, and history shows combinations during the centuries-long development of the guilds. There were likewise different multi-guild configurations of the maritime-cargo handling trades over time. In turn, independent guilds were sometimes organized in larger, multi-guild structures, with or without multi-guild ordinances covering the operations of the component trades. An example of this was the late eighteenth century attempt by the naval authorities to bring the three competing water-based cargo-handling guilds into a representative organization with the aim of resolving their constant disagreements. These guilds were under the control of the naval authorities through a recruitment system called the Matriculate of the Sea [*la Matrícula de Mar*]. In exchange for certain monopolistic privileges, these guilds (along with those of maritime carpenters/shipwrights and caulkers) had to provide sea-worthy men of military age for war.<sup>15</sup> This effort was begun in 1767 by order of King Carlos III by forming a General Guild of Matriculated Guilds.<sup>16</sup> That said, there are no records of any unified meetings until 1772. During the 1770s, the particular guilds are identified as comprising an individual guild and forming part of the General Guild of Matriculated Guilds; this General Guild did not include the non-cargo related trades

under the Matriculate system - it was solely for the three guilds involved in loading and unloading merchant ships in the harbor.<sup>17</sup> This effort at some sort of unification resurfaced in the 1790s, at the same time that the beach was divided into three areas to avoid fights and disagreements [the beach being noted as the area where the majority of struggles occurred between these three guilds]; there is no indication of the success of this effort, or how it may have attempted to regulate or impact the competitive contracting from among the guilds.<sup>18</sup> Despite these attempts, competition between these three guilds seems to have remained largely unresolved.

The maritime porters and maritime horsecart operators were organized in a single guild until 1796.<sup>19</sup> Three decades later, in 1832, these two then-independent guilds were brought under a single, three-guild ordinance along with the maritime teamsters. These three guilds divided goods by specific, exclusionary privileges for transportation throughout the city (and especially between the beach and the Customs House). The liberal 1832 Ordinances were aimed at ending the judicial struggles amongst these guilds, and to bring order to the statutory basis of their operations. Importantly, the opportunity was taken advantage of by some guild leaders to end traditional practices, and by the merchants and liberal-leaning government to end some monopolistic privileges.

There was sometimes a significant membership overlap between the maritime-cargo handling guilds, at least in the case of fishermen and unloaders. There is no clarification of how this was undertaken, or what direct repercussions this had on the ability of an individual to work on any given day (whether or not one could choose to act as a guild member of one guild on one day, and as that of another the next day, for example). Curiously, while at most times the fishermen and unloader guilds clearly operated independently (demonstrated by the records of consecutive guild council meetings on the same day), they seem to have coordinated these meetings. On at least one occasion (in the 1770s) they met together in a single meeting (without the mariners).<sup>20</sup> Two decades later, they were referred to as the Guild of Fishermen, Loaders, and Unloaders of Saint Peter (that is on at least one

Detail Barcelona's view from above the port's entrance, 1853. Alfred Guesdon's print. (*Museu Marítim* of Barcelona).





occasion, though not commonly).<sup>21</sup> However, thereafter, the guilds maintained their independence and overlapping membership, much to the chagrin of the mariners.

There is also evidence of guildsmen being members of more than one guild, belonging to and paying taxes through a corporation that had nothing to do with maritime trade or cargo handling.<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately, little is known of this practice, how it reflected economic strategies, or how a person dedicated time to the different economic and social activities of each guild. However, based on the information encountered, it does not seem that these were memberships for the sake of mere sociability; the diversification may have represented a desire to climb the social ladder, but it is more likely that these were economic decisions related to the ability to participate in different areas of the economy. This relates to pluri-employment, which was a noteworthy and important (but perhaps not dominant) practice.<sup>23</sup>

The remainder of this article is dedicated to the different mechanisms for hiring and contracting, carrying out labor, and remunerating the guilds and individuals responsible for maritime-cargo handling. All of these considerations were largely determined by the modes of service provision: simply put, work was either individual or cooperative. In addition, the use of a “turn” for organizing and regulating opportunities was another important consideration, and one which was directly affected during the economic and political changes of liberalization.

These features are interesting in that the socio-collective modality of cooperative labor and the sharing of income – used by a number of the trades in the subsector – varied substantially from the secondary-sector artisan “norm” defined, in broad terms, by individualism (albeit with workshop groups or sub-contracting networks).<sup>24</sup> The tri-partite structure of craft guilds was generally aimed at transmitting technical skills and norms of production that would allow an individual to satisfactorily complete the entire production process of a given good. While there were certainly examples of outsourcing and sub-contracting in craft guilds, this still resulted in certain tasks executed in an *individual* manner.<sup>25</sup> To a degree, these represented *collective* processes (albeit, comprised

of a series of individual actions); however, in this article I look at tasks that were executed *cooperatively*. By this, I mean that a number of individuals worked together at the same time on a particular given task – one that could, arguably, only be completed by a group (in this case, by work gangs).

The chart below outlines handling areas, the guilds responsible, their respective means of transporting goods, their main privileges (if any) for handling certain goods, and their mode of service provision (individual or cooperative).

## ■ HIRING AND CONTRACTING OF LABOR

Hiring was a determination of which guild, and then which individual or work gang would be employed for a given task. The guild-selection process was generally not done at the freedom of the client (until liberalization reduced the monopolistic privileges of some of the guilds): the specific types of goods and the location of the activity were determined in each guild’s ordinances.

Generally speaking, when a merchant vessel arrived in Barcelona, the person in charge of the merchandise (be that the owner of the ship, the captain, a commercial agent, or the owner of the goods) would either use the sailors already employed and aboard the ship (if previously established by a crew-member contract), or would employ one of the three guilds privileged with transporting cargo to the beach (Guilds of Mariners, of Unloaders, or of Fishermen). The subjective determination of the merchant was between using, or not, the sailors already employed for the voyage (determined either in the hiring contract for the voyage or, perhaps, upon arrival in the port). In this case, the merchant would still have to pay a fee to the harbor-based guilds, that is, he had to pay for the “Right of Anchorage”. The amount was determined by whether or not the merchant used his own lighters, or those of the guild. In the case of the former, the anchorage fee was one-quarter of the full amount for handling cargo; in the case of the latter, it was one-half of the full amount. Similarly, goods moved from one vessel to another (not entering the city in any way) were also includ-

Area	Trade	Guild	Means of Transport	Responsibilities/ Privileges	Individual or Cooperative
Harbor	Stevedores/ Unloaders and Boatmen (three guilds: Fishermen; Mariners; Unloaders)	Yes	Harbor lighters; also floated goods ashore	Load and unload the ships in the harbor; handled all sorts of goods.  * <i>Not</i> xer (loadmaster- sailor)	Cooperative
Beach, Customs House, City	Maritime Porters	Yes	Pole and pillow: suspending goods between teams of 2-8 men	Delicate and higher-value goods (often imported); misc. packaged	Cooperative
Beach and City	Maritime Horsecart Operators	Yes	Small carts hauled by a single horse	Lower-quality/lower- value goods; misc. packaged	Individual
Beach and City	Maritime Teamsters	Yes	Large carts hauled by a team of horses	Large quantities of (non-privileged) goods; packaged or loose	Individual
City and Beyond	Mule Rentors	Yes	On the backs of mules or with medium-sized carts pulled by mules.	No privileges; could handle merchandise leaving the city; misc. packaged	Individual
City	Labourers from the Plains	Yes	Handcart	Very-low value (worthless) goods: rubble, refuse.  * <i>Not</i> maritime cargo	[Individual]
City	Common Porters	No (had assoc)	Lashed to their own backs, using a cord or rope	No privileges;  * <i>Not</i> maritime cargo	[Individual]

Source: Authors' work.



ed in the schedules, as were special considerations for handling from ships anchored beyond the harbor (which was twice the normal amount).

It is interesting to note the centuries-old, traditional, customary practice - at least for Catalans - codified in the *Book of the Consulate of the Sea* was that contracted sailors would carry out this labor in ports in which there were no specialized loaders/unloaders. Based on the located documents, there is no way to determine the frequency of the decision to employ or not sailors from the voyage. However, for voyages leaving Barcelona during the period studied, the apparent majority - from a casual review of the sailor contracts - included the responsibility for loading and unloading cargo. As ships arrived in Barcelona from all over the world (but especially Europe), the customs of other areas are beyond the scope of this investigation. However, the inclusion of a quarter-rate or half-rate fee for anchorage indicates that the practice of using previously contracted mariners for cargo handling was in effect in Barcelona during the period studied.

There was a special position, that of “*notxer*” (a sort of mariner loadmaster), who - in addition to responsibilities when at sea - was in charge of overseeing the proper stowage of goods aboard the ship. This represented an especially skilled individual; however, unlike the norm of the guild system, this hard-skill qualification was not determined by the guild, but was a subjective determination made by the captain. This person was a sailor of some experience who enjoyed the trust of the captain/merchant. His contract and payment were individual, as were his particular responsibilities.

There was no cargo-determined differentiation, nor was there apparently a subjective choice by the merchant as to which guild (or team thereof) would handle the goods. It seems as though it was a first-come, first-hired or turn-based system (although this question is pending definitive conclusion, especially considering the possibility of changes in this system over time). In general terms, the three guilds operating in the harbor were bound to distribute work among their respective guilds; however, there is scant information regarding how this func-

tioned in a practical sense. There were certainly conflicts throughout the period studied, such that the highest officer of the navy responsible for the north-eastern region intervened to impose some sort of order - a process that included placing the three harbor guilds under a single ordinance in a General Guild of Matriculated Guilds (the *Gremio de Matriculados*) and dividing the beach areas of operations (storage of lighters and hiring were conducted at the beach) among the harbor-based guilds.

With the cargo successfully unloaded from harbor lighters onto the beach, the party responsible for the goods (by which it is to be understood, the owner of the goods or his or her commercial agent) would have to hire from among the three terrestrial trades organized in guilds privileged with operating in this area. The mariners, unloaders, or fishermen were not permitted to haul goods beyond the beach (or to the boats in the case of exported goods). That is to say, while all goods still on the water (from the ships to the beach) were handled by any of three unloading guilds without distinction, on land there was a series of considerations for determining which guild would handle a given class of goods. These considerations were encapsulated in the guild ordinances. In the most general terms, there existed an objectively-based relationship between the type of cargo and the means of handling it, and between the way of handling and the guild responsible. However, in other cases, the guild was determined by the value of some goods compared to their homologous, cheaper varieties: iron bars by one guild, steel bars by another; imported fish by one guild, locally caught fish by another (in this latter case, there could also have been a packaging factor that contributed to the guild-determination process, but it is unclear). The defense of these cargo-type privileges was a major part of the guild's responsibility, and there are legal battles that resulted from violations of existing ordinances as well as struggles to determine which guild (if any) would be privileged to handle new varieties of goods (especially since the ordinances were positivist privileges based on highly specified goods in existence at the time of drafting and approving the ordinances).

Cargo that was not subject to tariffs may have been transported directly from the beach to storage facilities or to the final destination of the goods. For goods that were subject to a tariff, these would be taken from the beach to the King's Scale (for weighing) and the Customs House. Within the Customs House and King's Scale, only the maritime porters could handle goods. They were responsible for the security, handling, and distribution of these goods.

From the Customs House, arriving goods could be handled by any of the initial three land-based guilds, or could be transported by mule rentors, or terrestrial teamsters. The Guild of Mule Rentors and the two guilds of teamsters did not generally enjoy monopolistic privileges over any particular sort of goods - their participation was based on the practicality of the mode of transportation and on the absence of a privilege held by another guild (especially those of maritime porters and maritime horsecart operators). Large quantities of loose or packaged goods could be hauled by the teamsters; the mule handlers could only move relatively smaller amounts of loose goods, or goods packaged in boxes or sacks. The final destination of goods was relevant: goods re-exported by land - no matter what type of goods, generally speaking - could be handled by mule rentors or terrestrial teamsters (apparently at the determination of the owner of said goods).

While not organized in a guild, the common porters' brotherhood, the "*Cofradía de Nuestra Señora de la Victoria de la Plaza Nova*", functioned as a workers' organization for centuries. These porters were hired freely in plazas throughout the city. Hiring, work, and remuneration was individual. They enjoyed no privileges (as they had no ordinances). The similarity of their labor placed them in constant competition with the maritime porters, with whom the legal struggles lasted centuries. Generally speaking, the common porters represented an unlawful form of competition if hired to handle maritime cargo outside of the regulations of the guild system.

We see a similar situation in Valencia, where poor, unemployed men were ever-present to haul cargo; however, in Valencia, the attempt to limit the number of legitimate

cargo handlers to fifty guildsmen was not accepted by the authorities (who in 1766 rejected the proposed guild ordinances of the unloaders), as some 150 men regularly went each day in search of work hauling goods from the beach to the horsecarts, by which cargo was transported to Valencia proper.

After determining which guild had a privilege over a particular activity, the next task was to hire the men responsible for actually handling the cargo. In cases of cooperative work, the guild director (*prohombres*) would oversee the coordination of the different work gangs (and of the turn system overall) and guarantee that the work was conducted according to the standards of the guild. In the case of a merchant not using previously contracted sailors, this client would hire one of the harbor-based guilds, and these guilds, in turn, would assign teams for executing the required tasks. This was similarly true of the maritime porters, who worked in gangs. In the case of the individualistic maritime horsecart operators and maritime teamsters - when they used a turn system - the hiring of a given individual was not based on the determination of the client, either. Only when there was no turn system was the merchant free to select from among the guildsmen those which best suited his interests.

It seems that in the individualistic guilds, the guildsman selected (by order of turn) for a certain activity *perhaps* had more leeway in determining the terms of the contract, although this is unlikely, given the official prices and the fact that employment was not conditioned on pricing competition. The use of turn-based hiring opportunities by some guilds would likely have effectively limited the ability or desirability of one guildsman to undercut his peers, even in a context of the possibility of agreeing to lower prices after the fact by some sort of informal system of selection preference in exchange for lower-than-normal fees; however, there would have been no logical justification for this action on the part of the cargo handler, given that there could be no preference in selection. That said, in the guilds that did not have any sort of turn system, competition was apparently open, with the merchant able to hire the guildsman that best suited him.

## ■ THE WORK PROCESS: MEANS AND MODE OF SERVICE PROVISION

While the means of service provision describes the technologies used for handling cargo, the mode of service provision refers to the organizational manner of carrying out the specific tasks of cargo handling. These were somewhat determined by the objective requirements of the goods handled, and also by the traditional practices of the guilds. The labor processes do not appear to have changed at all during the period studied: they basically remained as they had been during the preceding centuries.

By and large, the guilds were defined by the means of handling goods: fishermen, unloaders, and mariners used ropes to lower goods to lighters, which were rowed to the beach; maritime porters generally used a pole to suspend goods between pairs of porters; and the maritime horsecart operators, mule rentors, and maritime teamsters used increasingly larger carts, hauled by either a single horse, mules, or a team of horses, respectively. The common porters (or, literally, “helpers with a rope”) – who did not enjoy any privilege over handling maritime cargo – used a rope to lash goods to their back. The last group – which had a guild, but no privilege over maritime cargo – the laborers of the plains, used handcarts and other means to move rubble and other relatively worthless materials.

There are two major considerations for describing the mode: the individual or cooperative manner of working; and the use of a turn system for distributing opportunities. The first factor depended largely on the material considerations of the cargo, whereas the second was decided within each guild and reflected the values and expectations of members. Changes in the ordinances through liberalization effected only the latter. These modifications were both products of, and contributions to, the changing socio-economic conditions within each guild (internal considerations), and reflected the overall context of economic and political developments on the part of the proto-industrial bourgeoisie (external considerations).

The manner of transporting goods had considerable importance when organizing the necessary workers. The

fragility, form of packing, and weight of an object determined the best means of transporting the goods. This differentiation largely explains the mode of transporting the goods – either individual or collective/cooperative. While individualism requires no clarification, collective work was conducted by more than one person in a hierarchical fashion based on a relationship of employment, sub-contracting, or outsourcing; “cooperative” work was conducted by more than one person, and constituted a horizontal, egalitarian functional relationship.

Work on the water was cooperative: raising or lowering goods from a large merchant vessel to lighters (which were low to the water) was largely impossible to execute individually. The amounts of cargo per lighter – while difficult to ascertain with any precision – were such that a group effort was far more efficient. For this reason, teams consisting of about eight to ten men were employed. These guildsmen did not compete amongst themselves – some sort of turn was employed. There was no system for sub-contracting within these guilds, or of outsourcing these tasks to non-guildsmen. Generally speaking, the work modality was entirely horizontal, carried out cooperatively among masters.

The three harbor-based guilds handled all goods, regardless of any distinction or division among the guilds. The three guilds of unloaders would disembark merchandise from the merchant vessel onto a harbor lighter while other cargo could be floated to the beach; the lighters were either rowed to the shore or hauled by horses. Documentation of this latter practice is evident in a contract between the Mariners’ Guild and two individual maritime horsecart operators. This written contract established the conditions and rates of pay for hauling the lighters. The contract for the “Provision of the service of hauling to land the Lighters of the Guild” (*“Arrendamiento del servicio de arrastre a tierra de las Barcasas del Gremio”*) was dated 9 February 1791, when these horsecart operators were still unified with the maritime porters. The period contracted was one year. The terms were quite detailed, including sections covering payment, work during inclement weather or on holidays, and sanctions for violating the terms. In addition, the contract was valid so long as

[illegible]

the horsecart operators behaved “well” and the “*Prohombres*” [of the Mariners’ Guild] could not remove them nor could [the maritime horsecart operators] sever the contract, under a penalty of one thousand *libras*.

The arrival of goods on the beach resulted in a new moment of hiring, from among the maritime porters, maritime horsecart operators, and the maritime teamsters. The first two had specific privileges for handling goods; the maritime teamsters could compete over the handling of non-privileged goods. The mode of service provision was largely determined by the type, packaging, and quantity of cargo.

In Barcelona, the work of the maritime porters was organized collaboratively around work gangs (*cuadrillas*, also called “*collas*” in Catalan). These work gangs formed the basic unit for executing work tasks. This covered the proper handling of the goods and intangible considerations, like the group dynamics and the creation of a strong collaborative spirit among the workers. This, in turn, created a guild identity that was central to the work life of the members. Not all work was conducted by groups – smaller loads could be handled by a single long-shoreman. However, sub-contracting was not practiced – contracting was conducted by a turn-based system controlled by the guild (which I describe below). These factors meant that the maritime porters’ guild did not experience a process of internal competition – there were no noted attempts within the guild to create a different system to the benefit of more successful members at the expense of others. Their struggles were against outsiders – mainly individuals and guilds who competed illicitly and the merchants who hired them.

It is important to put this in perspective relative to the practice of centralized control, as used in Marseille and London, for example. These both offer comparisons for the systems of hiring. In Marseille, the work-gang leaders would take a larger share of the collective work (in which they may have participated) whereas in London the guildsmen were truly the masters of other men, enjoying considerable control by fully employing gangs in a sub-contracting system. That is, while this work was collective, it does not meet the criteria of collaborative work, as different,

hierarchical employment relationships generally existed. The intra-guild labor relations in Cádiz and Valencia (two Spanish ports) were less clear. In Cádiz there were tiers of workers organized in different guilds, but the relationships between them are not elucidated. In Valencia, it is not clear whether the guildsmen – who unloaded the vessels and hauled the cargo to the beach – operated through the employment of non-guildsmen or physically handled the cargo themselves: the low number of unloader guildsmen seems to suggest the former. In Valencia, the specific operations of the beach-based cartmen are similarly unclear.

None of the other guilds or informal organizations of land-based cargo handlers operated collaboratively. The maritime horsecart operators worked individually – even when they were organized in a common guild with the collaboration-based maritime porters. The common laborers seem to have generally worked individually (or, perhaps collectively); the same was true for the common porters. The maritime teamsters also worked individually (perhaps with a helper, who was privately employed). The mule rentors may have entered into collective contracts (as large amounts of goods to be transported to distant areas would require masters with many mules); however, the guild records show a considerable number of members (over half at one point) who were sub-contracted by other masters. This approximates a collective work process, inasmuch as more than one person was involved in the actual tasks of service provision. However, the guild was modelled on individual, internally competitive work, individual contracting, and sub-contracting.

These considerations highlight the special character of the horizontal, collaborative strategy of the Guild of Maritime Porters of Barcelona – a factor that certainly contributed to a strong sense of group identity and *esprit de corps*, which, in turn, created a more unified guild. This unity was the basis of the collective desire to resist abolition, whereas in more individualistic, fractured guilds, one notes fewer or less passionate efforts at protecting the monopolistic organization of their respective trades.

The last location in the marina area was the Customs House and King’s Scale, both of which were under the dominion of the central, royal authorities represented by

the navy, not local government. Cargo did not necessarily pass through either or both of these locations. Goods that did not require the application of a tariff or weighing could be transported to warehouses along the beach area or enter the city directly. Likewise, goods that required weighing but not a tariff could be transported directly to the King's Scale. The same is true of goods that required a tariff but not weighing, which would pass only through the Customs House.

In any case, all work in both locations was carried out exclusively by the maritime porters. They defended this privilege on every occasion by every means necessary: supplications to various authorities; jailing and sequestering the possessions of violators; and legal cases. There was no direct charge for this work, a fact that the guild used to justify its monopolistic privileges (and their costs) in other areas. To carry out this labor, the guild assigned eight men to the Customs House, and eight to the King's Scale on a rotating basis. The wages of these men were covered by the guild's common fund (although it is not known whether this was by a set wage or a sort of share system). The 1832 Ordinances include numerous specifications of the execution of these duties in the price schedule for the maritime porters. The matter of the honor and trustworthiness of the guildsmen and of the guild was fundamental to this consideration, as a considerable amount of wealth - in cash and in kind - was kept in the Customs House. These guild-subsidized services were supplied to governmental authorities, merchants, and the wider public. While in the short term, this *pro bono* service was an economic burden, the fact that the maritime porters could rightly claim centuries of providing these services at no cost was evidently an important consideration during the period of abolition and thereafter.

Those goods that were to be re-exported would be transported to storage facilities by the maritime porters, maritime horsecart operators, or maritime teamsters - as they had been brought from the beach to the Customs House. Thereafter (and for those goods simply exported without prior storage) these same guilds would take them to the beach as per guild-specific privileges. From the beach, harbor-based guilds would transport them

by lighter back onto the sea-going vessels. There was no guild differentiation between imported or exported goods. This contrasts significantly with other ports, like London, where the origin of goods was an important consideration.

### ***By turn or by selection***

The turn was a mechanism by which the daily work was organized with the aim of making the distribution of available work more orderly, fair, or even egalitarian; otherwise, the lack of a means for establishing some sort of order would have resulted in a competitive scenario, pitting one guildsman (or group thereof) against another, even within the same guild. There were two sorts of "turn" systems employed by the three beach-based guilds: one was a long-term, revolving turn by list; the other, a first-come, first-hired daily turn established each morning by order of appearance. There is no record to explain the turn system employed by the harbor-based guilds. The maritime porters practiced the former; the maritime horsecart operators (at least as a separate guild) and the maritime teamsters practiced the latter until both abandoned their turn systems in 1832. The mule renters apparently did not use a turn system at all.

The different strategies employed by the guilds to auto-regulate the labor market at the functional level reflect diverse socio-economic values: the use or non-use of a turn (or type thereof) represents the most important reflection of these values. This differs significantly from the artisan, craft-guild norm, in which competition within the market was limited only by one's membership in the guild - and sometimes not even then. This ran contrary to the interests of the merchants, who much preferred a competitive system by which they could negotiate prices and select a preferred cargo handler for a given task.

In those cases where a guild maintained a turn, the guild directors were responsible for maintaining the order and for sanctioning violators. Violations included skipping one's place in the order (in the case of a daily turn) or not showing up for work (in the case of a long-term turn). The possible sanctions included fines and, in



some cases - likely for repeat offenders - house arrest. There is no technical reason for the differentiation - the horsecart operators and teamsters *could* have chosen to operate a long-term, revolving turn based on discipline.

This division of private interests within the individualistic guilds would become increasingly important over the period studied here, as more successful members would have seen the guilds not as guarantors of a minimum standard of living, but as impediments to their individual success based on a more capitalistic model of investment and labor-exploiting means of service provision. We see this process come to fruition after the period studied here in the case of the maritime horsecart operators, who formed an owners' association with a mutual aid component for collectively providing insurance benefits to their employees.

## ■ REMUNERATION

Remuneration consists of the amount and form of payment for certain tasks, and determining the distribution of that payment (individual or shared). Upon completion of a cargo-handling activity, the merchant would have had to pay the guild or individual who had undertaken the work. In all of the cases studied here, the guilds charged on a per-task basis. The different ordinances are very clear about this: they include price schedules for handling different goods, of different weights, to different locations. Normatively, there does not seem to have been any legally-recognized flexibility in the negotiation of prices, which were determined by official price schedules. Normative rules aside, it should be kept in mind that the occasional rectification of the price schedules was updated from time to time, due, in part, to the reality that charging higher prices than those authorized was common practice. That is, the *normative* prices did not, in fact, necessarily accurately represent the *actual* prices, which were higher (raised over time). In reality, it seems prices may have been far more flexible - and not only the product of periodic negotiations managed closely by government authorities concerned with balancing monopolistic privileges with economic growth.

While the maritime cargo handlers may have earned relatively high wages for manual laborers (at least according to the self-interested complaints of the merchants!), they were still solidly among the toiling masses. There is absolutely no indication of the maritime porters or other cargo handlers living in any sort of relative extravagance. Quite the contrary, the supplications of a number of the guilds often contained references to the economic hardship of their families, the common practice of pluri-employment, and the provision of collectively managed funds for sick, injured, or elderly masters, or their widows. The principal complicating factor was that commerce was irregular and guild membership was controlled with an eye to balancing a desire to not over-dilute opportunity while still being able to satisfy moments of maximum, not minimum, demand. Compared to the system in place in London - where some of the master porters lived as petty bourgeois employing and exploiting the labor of others - in Barcelona, the image of the dock workers is that of a hard-working laborer - an image supported by the documentary record. Socio-cultural references to the social status of these workers remain unknown (and there is no reason to enter into speculation). What remains in the documentary record is that, while as a body the maritime-cargo handlers were clearly manual laborers of little relative technical skill or capital, their honor, trustworthiness, and religiosity were largely undisputed, which likely was no small matter in their society.

As relates to actual income, this is far more difficult to determine. There is no documentation from this period located that explains *how* income was shared within a particular guild - what shares were deposited in a common fund or how much was shared more immediately among the men who worked that day or week, for example. What is unfortunately even less understood is how the members were paid for work done on behalf of the guild. There were a number of tasks that were carried out on behalf of the guild, with more or less available information (service in the military, working in the Customs House and King's Scale, rescuing the victims of maritime accidents, hauling cargo and materials for the government, etc.). For these efforts, payment was be-



yond the scope of the ordinances and price schedules, and appears to have been conducted through specific contracts or *gratis* in exchange for guild privileges. What is clear, however, is that the guilds that operated cooperatively shared income; the individualistic guilds did not. This created a dichotomy between work, pay, and internal identity that in many ways most clearly differentiates these guilds. Likewise, the possibility of cooperative work, contracting, and remuneration clearly distinguishes some of these service guilds from the craft-guild norms of individualism, with or without sub-contracting, or outsourcing.

It should be noted that remuneration was in cash, paid in national currency. There is no indication of pilfering (customarily “legitimate” or otherwise) or payment in kind, as was practiced, for example, in London. The absence of pilfering or in-kind payments is perhaps noteworthy, considering the relative commonality of this practice on the waterfronts of Europe at the time.

### ■ LIBERALIZATION: MONOPOLY PRIVILEGES, TURN SYSTEMS, AND THE FREEDOM OF MERCHANTS

Liberalization of maritime-cargo handling was couched in terms of the freedom of the owners of merchandise to select at will from among the guilds, or individuals, or even to employ non-guildsmen. Traditionally, the owner of the goods in question could take direct responsibility for them, transporting them *by his own means* anywhere he or she chose (except within the Customs House and King’s Scale). This was an increasingly important conflict of interests during the process of proto-industrialization and resulted in the liberalization of the labor market. These external pressures were increasingly supported by central and local government authorities, except, in the case of the harbor-based guilds, under the jurisdiction of the navy, which oversaw and protected the traditional practices and privileges of the harbor-based guilds. This naval aegis would eventually be extended to the maritime porters, at least in the realm of the Customs House and King’s Scale.

The 1770 Ordinances governing the Guild of Maritime Porters and Maritime Horsecart Operators makes note in the preamble of previous decades of legal struggles over the handling of cargo. It should be noted that the practice of the turn – and its inclusion in the Ordinances – was a victory for the maritime porters and horsecart operators against other guilds and individuals involved in the lawsuits. The guildsmen had been generally accused in those cases of:

[... T]he abuse of the privileges which they had had declared in their favor, as with the establishment of a Turn, which the Guild of Maritime Porters and Horsecart Operators had ordered, depriving Particulars of hiring for the transport of Goods, the Individual of the Guild who be to his greatest satisfaction, and delaying transportation whenever the Individual whose Turn it was were not readily available [...].

The Ordinances reference and uphold – despite the aforementioned complaints of the merchants – a turn system in Chapter 12, which states:

[... A]nd to prevent confusion, and emulations, that could occur between the members of the Guild if the election among *Faquines* [Porters] were free, it is found to be convenient, that the practice of the turn be continued, as among the *Faquines de Capsana*, as among the *Carreteros de Mar* [Horsecart Operators].

Thus, we see the clear preference of merchants (“Particulars”) for a selection process, but an inability to effectuate this change at the local level, yet. It must be noted that this preference *could* – however unlikely – have referred to free selection between the members of the two trades, which would have also run contrary to the goods-specific privileges of these two trades (even, as they were, organized at that time in a single guild).

Some merchants called directly and unequivocally for the end of the guild system in port labor in Barcelona as early as 1778, justifying their claim by the notion that:

[S]uch communes, or colleges are detrimental to the common good, for the idea of monopolies which they contain; it seems that they can only justify the immeasurable ambition of the individuals of the Guild of Maritime Porters and Maritime Horsecart Operators.

While their supplication was not granted, this would be a central tenant of liberal advances in the area of maritime-cargo handling, which sought to increase the liberty of the merchants to determine which guild would handle goods or, better still, that they be allowed to hire their own workers to haul goods. This is similar to what occurred in Valencia in 1788, when the merchants requested a similar liberalization for free selection, although without seeking the abolition of the corporate system.

The guilds were all abolished in 1813 (in the context of the Napoleonic occupation of significant parts of Spain, including Barcelona). More correctly, the ordinances were rescinded by the legislative *Cortes de Cádiz*. This lasted less than two years, as the return of King Fernando VII in 1814 brought the reinstatement of the guilds in 1815. Thereafter, a profound reform of the guilds was aimed at eliminating their monopolistic privileges. Arguably, the royal government wanted the best of both worlds – the auto-regulation of economic activities and tributary systems, while eliminating the monopolistic guild privileges which were thought to limit free enterprise and industrial development.

In 1819, a council was formed by representatives of the Chamber of Commerce, three guilds (maritime porters, maritime horsecart operators, and maritime teamsters) and the local government to finally agree upon, “a definitive resolution [...] to avoid the harm which commerce is suffering because of the impediments of those ordinances, which could put an end to all of the supplications and complaints that have been made by the three guilds to maintain their ordinances...”. However, these efforts made little progress, due largely to the resistance of the guilds.

The 1813 abolition was re-instated in 1820, at the onset of the Liberal Triennial. However, it was again overturned upon the return of royal authority. After the 1820-1823 abolition, the issue of limiting monopolistic privileges persisted and the guilds still procrastinated over making alterations to their ordinances. In response to this inaction, the local government threatened to remove all privileges outright from the Guilds of Maritime Porters, Maritime Horsecart Operators, and Maritime Teamsters. This

brought the three guilds to serious negotiations. The result of this was the 1832 Ordinances, which represented a measured victory for liberal economic interests. The monopolies over certain goods were generally reduced, leaving to the owner of the goods the liberty to choose from among the three guilds. If the owner of the goods could not or did not wish to transport them him- or herself, the 1832 liberalization of ordinances brought an opportunity to select the most appropriate guild in the beach area. The publicly posted highlights of this Ordinance state: “2<sup>nd</sup>. Second: The owner of the goods or merchandise of any class could choose from said three guilds the one that most suited him.” This matter was quite contentious, as the determination of what was optimal was socio-technical, legal, and – of arguably greater importance to the owner – economic. This assault on the traditional system would have created a potentially disastrous scenario for the different guilds, as it represented a loss of their traditional monopolies over business opportunities.

The defense of the turn system was an important (if not widespread) strategy in the face of the growing challenge of liberalism. The merchants wanted the freedom to choose from among the different guilds and members (or, even more so, to choose whomsoever they pleased, be they their own employees or any other individual). However, the turn system was also a source of internal conflict, as more prosperous guildsmen (an occurrence in the internally competitive guilds) were more desirous of ending the practice.

The leaders of the Guild of Maritime Teamsters had attempted to abandon the turn twice during the first quarter of the nineteenth century, in 1801 and 1827. In the latter case, the issue was also related to the ownership by apparently wealthier masters of coal-storage facilities, a product that would be liberalized the following year. Their attempts were halted by the general membership on both occasions, showing that the matter was divisive in the guild. However, the turn practiced by maritime teamsters was discontinued in 1832, beginning a system of free choice by the owners of goods and merchandise.

Internal competition had also been an issue in the Guild of Maritime Horsecart Operators for centuries: as

Copy of the low relief sculpture of Santa María del Mar's Church representing two *bastaixos* transporting wineskin with the help of a dumbbell or a wooden bar on their backs. (Museu Marítim of Barcelona).



far back as 1666, when the ordinances limited each member to own only a single horsecart, and not lend or rent it to another. Evidence of the Ordinances of 1666 was presented in manuscript copy in the decade prior to the promulgation of the 1770 Ordinances. The situation in which a horsecart operator had to physically work with his own cart would be an issue about which the merchants would complain in 1778, and would eventually - after the period studied here - lead to a reconfiguration of the guild as an association of masters employing others to handle the horsecarts. They abandoned their first-in,

first-out turn in 1832. Just one-and-a-half years after the 1832 Ordinances were promulgated, the maritime horsecart operators proposed a return to their first-in, first-out turn system.

The matter of the turn was important during the re-assessment of the ordinances of the three beach-based guilds - a process that lasted from 1819 to 1832, when a single ordinance for three maritime cargo-handling guilds was institutionalized. The 1832 Ordinances ended the practice of the turn by the maritime horsecart operators and the maritime teamsters, but not by the maritime

porters. This was couched in terms of the freedom of the owners of the goods:

10<sup>th</sup>. Tenth: In the maritime horsecart operators and teamsters the turn will not be kept, and the owners of the goods may choose the one that best suits them, or that can be found in any part of the city. In the maritime porters the turn will continue as until now as determined by its *Caporal* [a “gang leader”, in this case a *Prohombre*].

The Guilds of Maritime Horsecart Operators and of Maritime Teamsters defended the practice that only guild members be hired, however, the free-selection system among the guildsmen contributed to internal competition that, while by no means total or complete, was significantly different to the prior experiences of these two guilds. This was much more so when compared to the continued practice by the maritime porters. The defense of the turn by maritime porters shows the continued high degree of solidarity within the Guild of Maritime Porters, which remained committed to the most egalitarian mechanism for distributing work and income. This organizational cohesion was likely a product of the daily solidarities that arose from the cooperative nature of their work. The turn system also effectively limited the ability of the Directors to centralize and control the hiring of certain work gangs; they were mere functionaries enforcing an existing system that was beyond their influence.

When there was no turn system, the merchant could select from among the privileged guild that member whom he felt would best serve his interests. This created a system by which internal competition could weaken the guild structure. The case of the Guild of Mule Rentors shows the *de facto* stratification of the guildsmen – who were supposedly all equal in the eyes of the guild – in which over one-half of the masters actually worked as employees of more successful masters as early as 1760. By comparison, at the same time, the maritime porters exhibited no symptoms of internal decomposition (in both groups, there was a 10% of the membership in economic hardship, but this could be due to any number of factors). This underscores the process of stratification faced by some guilds, particularly those in which the leveling

practices traditionally common in the guilds were weak or inexistent. This offers a sharp contrast to the guilds that better defended egalitarian mechanisms, like a turn system. The maritime porters, for their part, fiercely defended the turn system as a leveler of opportunity and the most egalitarian system for distributing work. It also acted as a mechanism of control, as failure to appear for a turn could result in punishment.

Just a year and a half later, in 1834, the strategy decided upon by the Maritime Horsecart Operators in drafting new ordinances was a return to a daily turn by order of appearance (first in, first out). This ordinance was proposed in compliance with an order by the municipal government on 28 February 1834 that guilds submit proposals for ordinances, as per a Royal Order of 10 January 1834. According to the 1834 Ordinances, Chapter VI (which covered the operations of cargo handling) notes that all maritime horsecart operators who intended to work that day were to be present at the location from which they would work (the beach or otherwise) at either six or seven in the morning (depending on the season: the former in summer, the latter in winter). As they arrived, they would line up their carts by chronological order of appearance. In this way, they established a turn for the day; no offer of employment could be refused except in cases of horsecart operators changing places, as long as this was not to the detriment of the other operators. This daily turn would be repeated after the last member in line had worked that day. Anyone who operated out of turn would be fined three *libras* (which is to say, *lliures* in Catalan) per cartload. The next day, a new order would be formed.

It is also worth noting that Chapter V, Article ii of the 1834 Ordinances prohibited the practice of a master having more than one cart (and, by extension, of either hiring a laborer to act as a master, or of employing another guild member). Likewise, Chapter V, Article iii states that “no individual shall use the horsecart and horse of another, nor lend his name...” and that he who did so would be fined. The only exception to this was the case of widows of guild masters and masters who were considered “*impedidos*” (or, “impeded”, or “unable” – who were unable

to work, likely by reason of age, and perhaps by reason of long-term injury or illness); in these cases, the hired laborer was to live in the house of the widow or "*impedido*" and eat at his or her table - a silhouette of the practices of apprenticeship practiced by craft guilds.

Where it was feasible to undermine the guild-specific privileges during the guild-selection process, the merchants sought more freedom. The main impediment to the undermining of the traditional modes of service provision (individual or cooperative) was the objective necessities of the goods to be transported. No matter what the merchants wanted, some tasks could only be carried out by work gangs. The merchants' attempt was also challenged or adapted to through the selective defense of traditional values and expectations within the different guilds. Where work was distributed and remunerated in a more egalitarian system (as in the case of the three unloader guilds and the maritime porters), the guilds were more strident in defending their traditional practices. Where work was individual, an internal stratification developed, and led to the decision to end the turn systems used by those individualistic guilds. The ability to determine which factor was most important in considering the ability of the different guilds to resist liberalization is complicated by the generally favorable position of the naval authorities, as their objective was to maintain enlistment rolls, and they had no allegiance to or dependence on local merchants.

The activities in the years immediately following the 1836 abolition are difficult to ascertain. While there is evidence that the guilds continued to operate, it seems that they were markedly less able to defend their privileges, which now had no legal basis. There are legal struggles regarding the monopoly of handling privileges in the face of intrusion in 1837, 1838, 1839, and 1840. The matriculated guilds continued as such until that system was eventually abolished in the final quarter of the nineteenth century. However, the fishermen seem to have maintained their guilds long after this. It was not until 1840 that municipal authorities refused to recognize and legitimize the election of guild officers for the maritime porters. It is important to note that the maritime porters eventually entered

the Matriculate of the Sea system, enjoying the privilege-defending aegis of the navy and becoming a trade union in 1873, based on their centuries-old traditions.

## ■ CONCLUSIONS

The main difference among the service guilds was related to the organizational model employed to control and execute labor activities (which were either individual or cooperative). In both maritime and terrestrial operations, there was an interesting relationship between the work processes and the organizational model of each guild. More than anything else, this was related to the individual or cooperative nature of the work process, in turn influenced by the types of cargo and the best means of handling them. In addition to these - arguably objective considerations - socio-culturally determined values, norms, customs, and traditions influenced the organizational models of the guilds. However, the economic considerations of the client-merchants were increasingly relevant, and expanding the liberty of the merchant to choose from among the guilds was the main aim of liberalization. While some work processes or types of cargo objectively required collective actions, the examples of London and Marseille show that this did not necessarily result in an egalitarian, cooperative structure.

The relationship between the objective handling requirements of the cargo (individual or cooperative work feasibility) had serious repercussions on the organizational models employed by the guilds. Those types of cargo requiring gang-based handling were handled by guilds that were able to organize work gangs to conduct this work. While this is not uncommon among artisan-phase cargo handlers, what is interesting in the case of Barcelona is the non-hierarchical, cooperative framework maintained by some of the guilds.

As I am often asked why the *bastaxos* maintained a collaborative mode of service provision in Barcelona, I will attempt to address my thinking on the matter here. The short answer is that we do not know why - we only know that they did. While there is a direct relationship between the objective handling necessities of the goods and the



The City and Port of Barcelona (c. 1800). The circle shows the general area of the Port. The area within the dashed lines is presented below, in greater detail. Detail of "Plan of the City and Port of Barcelona" by J. Moulinier and P. Lartigue (c. 1803), (in A. Labourde (1806-1820) *Voyage pittoresque et historique de l'Espagne*).



means of service provision, there is no consequential relationship between the means and the mode of provision – employment relationships were more likely determined by cultural factors. The means of service provision was basically the same throughout European ports in the artisan phase; the mode of organizing this work varied significantly as some guilds formally or informally introduced or continued employment relationships among guildsmen or even with men of other guilds (or of none at all). While this study has highlighted how this was undertaken and protected through the use of a turn, the fact remains that there is no causal relationship from a materialist perspective. The defense of the turn system was not universally achieved by the various guilds; quite the contrary, we see the rise of arguably wealthier guild masters (in leadership positions) who were keen on abandoning a system which they perceived to run contrary to their personal economic interests. It certainly did not help that the political paradigm shift towards liberalism encouraged and eventually required these changes (arguably to the benefit of the

merchants and industrialists who employed and benefited from cargo-handling services).

The strict turn that leveled opportunity and income, and prohibitions of sub-contracting or outsourcing, created very solid organizations based on horizontality, equality, solidarity, mutual aid, cohesive group identity, and discipline. By comparison, the guilds without a strict leveling turn system (those that used a first-in, first-out system, or those without any turn system) experienced greater internal divisions and fractures. It is likely that these internal dynamics – by which some masters (arguably those in leadership positions) were more interested in abandoning the guild regulations for personal interests based on market competition – resulted in guilds that were less adamant in the defense of their ancient organizations. The employment model for hiring – by which manner an individual was selected for work – was either by turn or by the choice of the merchant (who in that case acted as the employer), depending on the decision of the guild and their desire and ability to defend this system in the face of liberalism. The turn served to level among all the members the opportunity to work on any given day. It is interesting to note the apparent difference of opinions between guild leaders and the general membership regarding the end of a turn system. This was clearly evident in the case of the Guild of Maritime Teamsters, and likely played a role in the 1834 desire of the Guild of Maritime Horsecart Operators to re-instate a turn system just eighteen months after it was abandoned in the 1832 Ordinances.

One of the few places in which the guilds could have been influential in the hiring determination of which guild would handle goods was the Customs House. Goods leaving the Customs House and King's Scale could be handled in a variety of manners, by any of the terrestrial guilds (maritime porters, maritime horsecart operators, maritime teamsters, or mule rentors). However, the maritime porters reigned supreme in these two locations, and this may have offered them the opportunity of a direct involvement in the selection process (beyond the wishes of the owners of the goods). Romero Marín has noted the possibility that the maritime porters who worked in the

Detail of "Plan of the City and Port of Barcelona"  
by J. Moulinier and P. Lartigue (c. 1803), (in A. Labourde (1806-1820)  
*Voyage pittoresque et historique de l'Espagne*).



The three main  
areas of cargo  
handling:

1. The harbor
2. The beach and  
Customs House
3. The City and  
beyond.

The Customs House  
is marked \* in the  
upper-right corner.

The focal points  
of hiring were the  
beach and the  
Customs House.

Customs House and King's Scale could have determined which of the guilds received the goods (in what order) when these were dispatched, in this way promoting the interests of their own guild. Their ability to control the assignment of goods would have positioned them to favor their own guild over the others, regardless of the subjective determination of the owners.

The hiring process for cooperative activities was conducted by a guild director on behalf of the guild, not by the individual gangs of lightermen-unloaders (regardless of their particular guild affiliation) or of the gangs of maritime porters. That is, while there may have been a degree of *inter*-guild competition in the case of the harbor-based guilds (mitigated by agreements enforced by naval authorities) and almost none between the land-based guilds (until 1832), *intra*-guild competition was inexistent. However, in the individualistic guilds that did not employ a turn system, there was certainly intra-guild competition.

Contracts were organized in a collective, centralized manner under the responsibility of a guild director, or on an individual, per-member basis. In the case of collective contracts, the terms of payment were *generally* not ne-

gotiable (technically speaking) - prices were determined by the type of goods, the quantity, and the destination. In the case of an individual contract, the prices could not fall below the established rates (an important means of preventing detrimental competition). That said, in practice, there were most likely processes of price negotiation. As for the relevance of official price schedules - which, in theory, were designed to establish the officially authorized prices - it must be noted that the guilds were able to negotiate (perhaps "coerce" might be a better term) higher prices from merchants. There is no record of how this was accomplished; however, the emission of new prices was sometimes predicated on the need to update these schedules to better reflect the economic reality existent in the service sector. That is, in practice, the official prices responded to the actual prices (not the inverse).

Generally, contracts were short-term, based on a specific set of loads. The important considerations were the type of cargo, the quantity of cargo, and the distance of transportation. All of these were established in the different ordinances. There is evidence of longer-term contracts between guilds. In the eighteenth century, the Guild of Maritime Porters and Maritime Horsecart Oper-



ators reached agreements with some of the craft guilds to provide them with services at differentiated rates (as they were faced with the possibility that the owners of goods could haul these themselves).

Apparently, the contracts were oral in nature: fulfillment was based on honor, truthfulness, and mutual confidence. These values were framed within the context of honorable behavior by the individuals and groups involved. The monopolies created opportunities for corrupt practices, but also created the means of overseeing the complete and effective execution of service provision. This is because relevant authorities could objectively verify the types of goods, quantities, and locations - with these, the guild and merchant responsible could be determined, as well as the customary completion of labor at officially established prices. While there are no written records of these arrangements (owing, most likely, to the oral character thereof), there are no legal cases referring to failures to comply with oral contracts. It certainly seems that, whether or not both parties were entirely in agreement with the terms of an agreement, they tended to honor them nonetheless.

As for actual remuneration, the ordinances explain the terms of payments made to the guilds, but not those made to the individuals. Each guild operated through customary practices to determine or assign the benefits of work. Where the work was conducted collaboratively, payment was made to the leaders, and later distributed to the individual members, as determined by traditional practices (the specifics of which are largely absent from the written record). Where this work was individual, it was a matter of the client paying the responsible guild member for the work agreed upon and completed.

With an eye to making a quantitative assessment, there is no way to *easily* determine with any degree of precision the earnings of any given individual on any given day, week, or month. What could be done - with great effort - is an assessment of cargo lists, disaggregating the cargo by type, dividing it by load, calculating the amount of cargo per load and the number of workers required, and then calculating the number of workers per load and assigning an average destination. Even then, there is no

way of knowing how much of the revenue collected by the guild was shared directly among working members, and how much was used to cover other guild costs.

The 1832 Ordinances maintained the general privileges of the three beach-based guilds to haul cargo, but it eliminated the guild-specific privileges over different types of goods. However, it effectively reduced the monopolistic quality of the privileges to the very limited realm of the Customs House and King's Scale (where the strict privileges of the maritime porters remained in effect). To one degree or another, elements of competition were introduced into different privileged areas and activities. This contributed to competition between the guilds and among guild members within the two guilds that abandoned the turn systems (the maritime horsecart operators and maritime teamsters). Overall, the definite beneficiaries of these changes were the merchants - the very same people whose increasing political and economic power promoted these changes. It must be noted that the Matriculated Guilds (mariners, unloaders, and fishermen) were not covered by these liberalizing measures - their protection by naval authorities kept them beyond the reach of the increasingly liberal municipal authorities and the influence of locally powerful capitalist merchants.

In closing, the case of the maritime-cargo handlers shows the expanding reach of the liberal bourgeoisie. While a degree of liberalization was contemplated during the reforms of the Spanish *ancien régime*, it was with the arrival of more radical liberal politicians onto the political scene (in 1813, 1820, and in the early 1830s) that wholesale abolition of the guild system was articulated and effectuated. More recent explorations in guild history have benefited the historiography by rescuing the guilds from the proverbial "dustbin of history". While abolition was a near-total affair across different polities during the upscaling of manufacturing through industrial mechanization, to say that this abolition was actually necessary is a post hoc, ergo propter hoc argument, largely based on a teleological need to justify the supposed advance of economic development. Guilds were generally capable of considerable adaptive flexibility: their abolition was likely more tied to the desire of the bourgeoisie to remove barriers to cheap

labor than to an expansion of job opportunities or an administrative need on the part of governments.

While local cases demonstrate the ramifications of these changes on certain sectors, it must be kept in mind that while the proposals were generally couched in terms of industrial development, the measures were carried out across almost all sectors of the economy (leaving the so-called “liberal professions” untouched). In the service sector and the productive sector, this new paradigm would set the scene for industrial conflict between wider-reaching trade unions and the increasingly powerful capitalists (some of whom were from guild-master families). While the artisan-based manufactory gave way to the industrial factory during the mid-nineteenth century, the relatively late mechanization of cargo handling provided an opportunity for the millennial guild system to survive late into the industrial era. For some of these workers, the moral and organizational reservoir of centuries of collective, traditional experiences would mark their approach to this conflict.

## ■ NOTES

1. \* By Brendan J. von Briesen, Ph.D. candidate in Contemporary History, Universitat de Barcelona [email: brendanjbv@gmail.com]. This article is based, in part, on a (Spanish-language) paper presented to the “Maritime Industries” table at the XV Workshop on the History of Labour (Jornadas de Historia de Trabajo), Universitat de Barcelona, Barcelona, 4 and 5 June 2015). This research forms part of the Project “Crisis y Reconstrucción de los mercados de trabajo en Cataluña (1760-1960). Ocupaciones, culturas de trabajo y estrategias adaptativas. HAR2014-57187-P” financed by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation, and undertaken by the multi-institutional “Labour, Institutions, and Gender” Working Group. The author extends his gratitude to Jordi Ibarz with whom he presented an initial approach to the questions covered in this investigation in Ibarz Gelabert, Jordi and Brendan von Briesen, “Contratación y retribución en el trabajo portuario de Barcelona, 1760-1980”, paper presented to the *Coloquio internacional*, Mondes et marchés du travail dans l’Europe du Sud XV-XXI siècles, Cachan, France, 2015. [I have left all original wording and spelling as it appears in the documents.]

2. Even in port-labor studies, the artisan-phase is deserving of more study; see Lex Heerma van Voss and Marcel van der Linden, “Dockers’ Configurations”, in the most-recent, major port-labor compendium by Sam Davies, Collin J. Davis, David de Vries,

Lex Heerma van Voss, Lidewij Hesselink, and Klaus Weinbauer (eds), *Dock Workers: International Explorations in Comparative Labour History, 1790-1970*, 2 vols (Surrey, 2000), II, 762-778. The authors noted that, “The studies collected in this volume are mainly focused on dock work in the casual configuration” (II, 778). For a quantitative review of publications in English, French, Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese since 1997, see Jordi Ibarz Gelabert “Recent Trends in Dockers History”, paper presented to the XI European Social Science History Conference, Valencia, 2016. He shows that only 15 of the 258 (5.8%) maritime-labor publications surveyed correspond to the pre-casual, guild phase of dock labor. That said, a recent approximation of transport labor (including maritime) in non-European areas is available in Stefano Bellucci, Larissa Rosa Corrêa, Jan-Georg Deutsch, and Chitra Joshi (eds) *Labour in Transport: Histories from the Global South (Africa, Asia, and Latin America)*, c. 1750-1950, *International Review of Social History Special Issue*, 22 (Cambridge, 2014).

3. For an analysis of the late twentieth century historiography, and regarding the multi-dimensional importance of Catalonia in maritime trade and of the Catalonia-colonies relationship in the long view, see César Yáñez, “Catalunya i Ultramar: Poder i negoci a les colònies espanyoles, 1750-1914. La història catalana en clau colonial”, *Drassana: Revista Del Museu Marítim*, 1996, 38-46.

4. For the economic role of calico stamped textiles, see Àlex Sánchez, “Barcelona i la indústria de les indies: Una presentació”, *Barcelona Quaderns D’història*, 2011, 9-29. For a treatment of Catalan textile development and growth as an example of proto-industrialization, see Llorenç Ferrer, “The Diverse Growth of 18th-Century Catalonia: Proto-Industrialisation?”, *Catalan Historical Review*, 2012, 67-84. It must be recognized that Barcelona was not the main Catalanian port for exporting *aguardiente*, but it was, nonetheless, an important one; see Joan Clavera i Monjonell, Albert Carreras, Josep M. Delgado, and César Yáñez, *Economía E Historia Del Puerto de Barcelona: Tres Estudios*, Biblioteca Civitas Economía y Empresa (Barcelona, 1992). This work nonetheless provides a very good introduction of the history of the port as a commercial feature in the regional economy.

5. For a historiographic treatment of colonial trade and a still-relevant history of the Company, see José María Oliva Melgar, *Cataluña y el comercio privilegiado con América en el siglo XVIII: la Real Compañía de Comercio de Barcelona a Indias* (Barcelona, 1987).

6. Joan Alemany i Llovera, *El port de Barcelona* (Barcelona: Lunwerg, 1998).

7. I have not encountered a quantitative analysis of coal importation for Barcelona. In any case, the guild-based handling system remained unaffected overall.

8. Pierre [Pere] Vilar, *Catalunya dins l'Espanya moderna: la formació del capital comercial* (trans. by Eulàlia Duran i Grau), 4 vols (Barcelona, 1986 [1962]), IV, 152.

9. Josep Maria Delgado Ribas, "La organización de los servicios portuarios en un puerto pre-industrial: Barcelona 1300-1820", in Carlos Martínez Shaw, (ed.) *El derecho y el mar en la España moderna*, Biblioteca Chronica nova de estudios históricos, 37 (Granada, 1995), 107-146. Regarding the social and regulatory framework of port labor in detail in Brendan J. von Briesen, "Sharing the Load: Professional Differentiation and the Social Organisation of Maritime Cargo Labour in Early-Nineteenth-Century Barcelona", paper presented to the X European Social Science History Conference of the International Institute for Social History, Vienna, Austria, 2014.

10. Carlos Martínez Shaw and José María Oliva Melgar, (eds), *Sistema Atlántico Español: (Siglos XVII-XIX)* (Madrid, 2005). For a detailed study of eighteenth-century experience of Catalonia in this system, see Martínez Shaw, Carlos, *Cataluña En La Carrera de Indias: 1680-1756* (Barcelona, 1981). For an interpretation of the related debates in Spanish Economic History during the 1980s, see José María Oliva Melgar, "El comercio colonial de Cataluña en la época de Carlos III: Del sistema de puerto único al comercio libre: Aportaciones y debates", *Pedralbes: Revista D'història Moderna*, 1988, 447-468. For a robust bibliography related to the interpretive debates in the first half of the 1980s, see Josep Maria Delgado Ribas, "Comercio colonial y crecimiento económico en la España del siglo XVIII. La crisis de un modelo interpretativo", *Manuscripts: Revista D'història Moderna*, 1986, 23-40.

11. *Gaceta de Madrid* (Madrid), no. 735, 10 de diciembre 1836, "[Doña Isabel II por la gracia de Dios y por la Constitución de la monarquía española, [...] que las Cortes generales han decretado lo siguiente: [...]. Se restablece el decreto de las Cortes generales y extraordinarias fecha 8 de junio 1813 [...]", 2 December 1836, [available at: <https://www.boe.es/datos/pdfs/BOE//1836/735/A00001-00001.pdf>; last accessed 25 July 2016].

12. For a general history of this period, see Pedro Ruiz Torres, *Historia de España: Reformismo e Ilustración*, in the series by Josep Fontana i Làzaro and Ramón Villares (eds), *Historia de España*, 12 vols (Barcelona, 2007), V; and Fontana i Làzaro, Josep, *Historia de España: La Epoca Del Liberalismo*, in the series by Josep Fontana i Làzaro and Ramón Villares (eds), *Historia de España*, 12 vols (Barcelona, 2007), VI. For a specific treatment of economic issues and the related policy debates, see Lambie, Monique and Jean René Aymes (eds), *Ilustración y liberalismo, 1788-1814: Palacio Real de Madrid, octubre 2008-enero 2009*, (Madrid, 2008).

13. For a look at monopolistic privileges and the liberalizing process in greater detail, see von Briesen, Brendan J., "'To Avoid

the Detriments Which Commerce Is Suffering': Monopolistic privileges of the maritime cargo service guilds of Barcelona (C. 1760-1840)", paper presented to the XI Congreso Internacional de la Asociación Española de Historia Económica, Madrid, Spain, 2014.

14. Arxiu General del Museu Marítim de Barcelona (AGMMB), fons del Gremi de bastaixos, macips de ribera i carreters de mar de Barcelona, "Ordenanzas de Faquines de Capsana, Carreteros y Tragineros de Mar de la ciudad de Barcelona publicada por el Supremo Consejo de Hacienda en 11 de julio de 1832", 11.07.1832, capsa 2, carpeta 1 (2209).

15. For more on the Matriculated Guilds, see Colldeforns Lladó, Francesc de P., *Historial de los Gremios de Mar de Barcelona, 1750-1865* (Barcelona, 1951). For a normative treatment of the development of the system, see López Miguel, Olga, and Magda Mirabet Cucala, "La institucionalización de la Matrícula de Mar: Textos normativos y consecuencias para la Gente de Mar y Maestranza", in Martínez Shaw, Carlos (ed.), *El derecho y el mar en la España moderna*, Biblioteca Chronica nova de estudios históricos, 37 (Granada, 1995), pp. 217-239. For a look at the end of the system, and its impact on maritime cargo handling, see Ibarz Gelabert, Jordi, and Juanjo Romero Marín, "L'abolició de la Matrícula de Mar i les tasques de càrrega i descàrrega al Port de Barcelona, 1868-1874", *Barcelona Quaderns D'història*, 2009, 255-270.

16. Arxiu Històric de Protocols de Barcelona (AHPB), colección del Escribano de Mar, Vicenç Simón, Manual de 1767 (Manual 42), 24 May 1767 fo. s.n. [N.B.: There are three distinct meetings on this date, each with its own minutes.] The *Escribano de Mar*, or "Scribe of the Sea" was a special notary responsible for documenting the activities of the Matriculated Guilds under the jurisdiction of naval authorities; for a historical treatment of this collection, see Colldeforns Lladó, *Historial de los Gremios de Mar*.

17. See, for example, AHPB, colección del Escribano de Mar, Vicenç Simón [by Cosme Raures, interino], Manual de 1776 and 1777 (Manuals 34 and 35, respectively), fos s.n.

18. Archivo Naval de Cartagena (ANC: not to be confused with the Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya), "Zalvide", boxes (*cajas*) 1637 and 1638. In addition, the minutes of the few formal meetings of these three guilds are recorded in the Manuals of the *Escribano de Mar* collection of the AHPB. Unfortunately, the records suffer from some damage. See AHPB, colección del Escribano de Mar, J. Fontrodona, Manual de 1794, fos s.n.

19. According to Vives i Miret, the unification of these trades in a single guild was undertaken in the mid-seventeenth century. See, Josep Vives i Miret, *Historial Del Gremi de Bastaixos de Capçana i Macips de Ribera de La Duana de Barcelona: Segle XI-IX*, ([Barcelona], 1933), 120.

20. AHPB, colección del Escribano de Mar, Vicenç Simón [by Cosme Raures, interino], Manual de 1776 (Manual 34), 14 July 1776 fo. 213r-214v.

21. AHPB, colección del Escribano de Mar, Pau Raures, Manual de 1794, 22 August 1794, fos. 110(r)-111(r).

22. Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Barcelona [AHC], *Sección de la Junta de Comercio, Fondo Corporativo*, Llogaters de Mules, "[No title]", [1760], Caja 3, carpeta 108, fos 96r-108r; and AGMMB, fons del Gremi de bastaixos, macips de ribera i carreters de mar de Barcelona, "[Cadastre Personal]", 1761-1775, Caja 16, carpeta 3 (2339).

23. Juanjo Romero Marín, "Los Faquines de Capçana y su supervivencia en la era liberal", *Drassana: Revista Del Museu Marítim*, 2007, 104-114.

24. Gervase Rosser, "Crafts, Guilds and the Negotiation of Work in the Medieval Town", *Past and Present*, 1997, 3-31; Stephan R Epstein and Maarten Roy Prak (eds), *Guilds, Innovation, and the European Economy, 1400-1800*, Cambridge [etc.]: Cambridge University Press, 2008; Jan Lucassen, Tine De Moor and Jan Luiten van Zanden (eds), *The Return of the Guilds*, *International Review of Social History Supplements*, 16 (Cambridge, 2008).

25. Catharina Lis and Hugo Soly, "Subcontracting in Guild-Based Export Trades, Thirteenth-Eighteenth Centuries", in Stephan R. Epstein and Maarten Roy Prak (eds), *Guilds, Innovation, and the European Economy*, 81-113.

