

Early Modern Europe, 1450–1789

CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF EUROPE, 2ND EDITION

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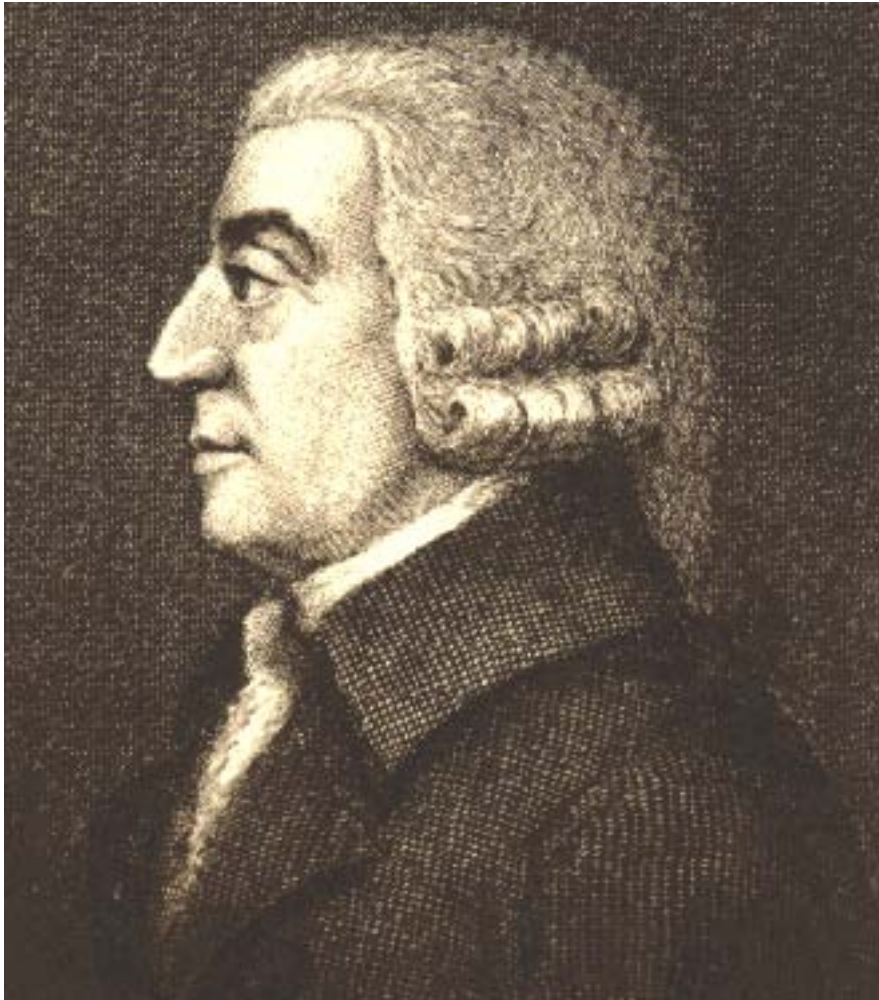
Primary Sources

CHAPTER SIX: ECONOMICS AND TECHNOLOGY, 1450–1600

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1. Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 1776 and Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, 1867



The Library of Economics and Liberty includes searchable, downloadable versions of classics of economic thought, including many from the early modern period. Links to two of the works mentioned in this chapter may be found at:

<http://www.econlib.org/library/Smith/smWN.html>

<http://www.econlib.org/library/YPDBooks/Marx/mrxCpA.html>

2. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 1904-5



Max Weber's ideas about the causal link between Calvinism and capitalism have provoked a century of debate, but are still powerful. The following is from Chapter Four: 'The religious foundations of worldly asceticism'. A searchable, downloadable version of the entire work can be found at:

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/WEBER/toc.html>

[For Calvinist Protestants:] The world exists to serve the glorification of God and for that purpose alone. The elected Christian is in the world only to increase this glory of God by fulfilling His commandments to the best of his ability. But God requires social achievement of the Christian because He wills that social life shall be organized according to His commandments, in

accordance with that purpose. The social activity of the Christian in the world is solely activity in the glory of God. This character is hence shared by labor in a calling which serves the mundane life of the community. Even in Luther we found specialized labor in callings justified in terms of brotherly love. But what for him remained an un-certain, purely intellectual suggestion became for the Calvinists a characteristic element in their ethical system. Brotherly love, since it may only be practiced for the glory of God and not in the service of the flesh, is expressed in the first place in the fulfillment of the daily tasks given by the *lex naturae*; and in the Process this fulfillment assumes a peculiarly objective and impersonal character, that of service in the interest of the rational organization of our social environment. For the wonderfully purposeful organization and arrangement of this cosmos is, according both to the revelation of the Bible and to natural intuition, evidently designed by God to serve the utility of the human race. This makes labor in the service of impersonal social usefulness appear to promote the glory of God and hence to be willed by Him. . . in the course of its development Calvinism added something positive to this [asceticism], the idea of the necessity of proving one's faith in worldly activity. Therein it gave the broader groups of religiously inclined people a positive incentive to asceticism. By founding its ethic in the doctrine of predestination, it substituted for the spiritual aristocracy of monks outside of and above the world the spiritual aristocracy of the predestined saints of God within the world.

3. Duties of Rural Workers, Germany 1490



Peasants carrying typical farm implements.

Agricultural production was carried out by peasant households in most parts of Europe, with a gender division of labor typical of that in grain-growing societies; men were responsible for clearing new land, plowing, and the care of large animals; women were responsible for the care of small animals, spinning, and food preparation. These gender-specific tasks were often maintained when agriculture was gradually commercialized and wage labor was added to subsistence agriculture. Larger landowners began to hire workers at busy times of the year such as planting and harvest as early as the fourteenth century, and also to hire servants throughout the year for general labor or specific tasks. The following is an extract from the ordinances regulating work at a large country estate at Erfurt in Germany in 1490. From Peter Ketsch, *Frauen im Mittelalter*, Bd. I: *Frauenarbeit im Mittelalter*, (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1983), pp. 96-7. Translation Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks.

The Cheesemother

The cheesemother shall make sure that the cows and the calves are fed and watered, given straw, and had their manure removed at the right times. She is to make sure that the cows are well milked at the right time, and assist in this, and bring the milk into the cellar and pour it into the trough. She should skim the cream from the milk at the right time, make it into butter, salt the butter, take it to the kitchen master and put it into tubs [to be sold].

She and the dairymaid shall make the cheese, and put it on shelves in the cheese-room. She is to turn it over and press it, and take it to the kitchen-clerk [the man who kept records of everything that went into and out of the kitchen.] When it is time, she and the dairymaid are to take the towels, washcloths, breadcloths, pillow- and cushion-covers from the kitchen clerk after he has counted them and wash them vigorously, press them, and give them back to the kitchen clerk. Only the kitchen clerk and the cheesemother are to have keys to the cheese room.

If people want to bathe, she and the dairymaid are to make the suds, heat the bathing-room and wash the seats and floor, the footstools and the cushions.

The cheesemother is to feed the geese, and if they are to be eaten, pluck them and give the feathers to the kitchen clerk.

During harvest time, if she and the dairymaid have time they are to help with the harvest.

If she takes oats from the baker, she is to give these only to the geese and not to the calves.

She is to pay attention so that the oxen are taken in at the right times, the calves are weaned and eaten before Lent, and that during Lent the milk is made into butter and cheese. [Lent was the forty days before Easter during which Christians did not eat meat or animal products. Male calves--other than those few allowed to grow into bulls-- were thus killed and eaten before Lent, and milk produced by cows during Lent was made into cheese and butter to be eaten at Easter feasts or post-Easter meals.]

She and the dairymaid are to sleep by each other in the same room, each in her own bed.

When the baker bakes, she and the dairymaid are to help him.

The Dairymaid

The dairymaid is to obey the cheesemother, follow her instructions, and, as it says above, help her.

She is to give food and drink to the cows, calves, old and young pigs, and clean their manure. The shepherds are to help her.

In winter she is to give food to the fatted pigs, and when it is time she should drive them into the water and wash them. The shepherds are to help her.

In winter she is to take straw to the cows in the cowstalls, feed the young calves and milk cows in the shed, pick up the chaff from the floor and soften it in hot water for the cows and the pigs. The shepherds are to help her. If baths are wanted, and the servant normally responsible for this is not free to do this, she and the shepherds should carry wood and draw water, fill the bath-basin, and warm the bathing-room.

4. Account book with payments for sugar and jam, Portugal, 1530s

In many parts of Europe, specialized agriculture for commercial markets developed in the sixteenth century. The Portuguese Atlantic islands had a perfect climate for raising sugar, which became the main export of islands such as Madeira. Sugar was a great source of income for merchants who ran refining operations as far away as Venice, and for the crown; the local monastery enjoyed an annual royal gift of sugar of approximately 750 kilos, and the industry employed the majority of local peasants. The following comes from account books kept by tax officials on the island. (Fernando Jasmins Pereira and José Pereira da Costa, eds., *Livros de Contas da Ilha da Madeira, 1504-1537* (Coimbra: Universidade de Coimbra, 1985), 36-38, 44. Translated by Darlene Abreu-Ferreira)

First, the said tax collector paid or handed over with me as scribe to Diogo Fernandez, scribe of the factory in Venice, per charter of the king our lord - be it known - seven thousand arrobas [measures of weight] of sugar that were loaded on the vessel Bernaldez to Venice.

The said tax collector paid and disbursed to Miguel Sanchez, procurator of the friars of Nosa Senhora de Guadalupe, fifty arrobas of sugar that they have from the said lord who gives them alms each year.

The said tax collector paid to Ruj Mendez per commission to the queen dona Lianor our lady one hundred and twelve and a half arrobas of white sugar...

The said tax collector paid the wife of Louremço Vaaz for the expense of victuals for the bookkeeper and the scribes per order of the bookkeeper three hundred and ninety réis [a type of coinage].

The said tax collector paid to Margarida Ousel for twenty-eight arrobas and nine arratees [a measure of weight, about one pound] of fruit jam [made with sugar] for the pastry kitchen of the said lord at five hundred réis [per] arroba.



Peasants stacking wood for sale in town

5. Regulations for Vineyard Workers in Germany, 1550

Specialized agriculture included wine production, which required large numbers of workers during certain times of the year. This ordinance for vineyard workers prescribes a division of labor by age and sex, with different wages and food for each group. (From Stuttgart, Württembergisches Hauptstadtsarchiv, Generalresxirpta, A38, Bü. 2, 1550. Translated by Merry Wiesner-Hanks.

Men who work in the vineyards, doing work that is skilled, are to be paid 16 pence per day; in addition, they are to receive soup and wine to eat in the morning, at midday beer, vegetables, and meat, and in the evening soup, vegetables, and wine. Young boys are to be paid 10 pence per day. Women who work as haymakers are to be given 6 pence a day. If the employer wants to have them doing other work, he may make an agreement with them to pay them 7 or 8 pence. He may also give them soup and vegetables to eat in the morning—but no wine—milk and bread and midday, but nothing in the evening.

6. Price Statutes for Basic Commodities, Scotland, 1541-1701

The inflation of the sixteenth century made both agricultural and manufactured products more expensive, sometimes beyond the reach of many families. Governments responded by setting a maximum price for basic commodities, though they had difficulty enforcing such prices. This set of statistics from Aberdeen in Scotland traces maximum prices set for wheat, flour, bread, ale, shoes, mutton, and candles.

<http://www.ex.ac.uk/~ajgibson/scotdata/prices/abstat1.html>

7. Village pottery-making, Spain, late sixteenth century

Many parts of the countryside became impoverished in the sixteenth century, and the number of landless peasants increased. Families with too little land to support themselves attempted to survive any way they could, and made or gathered simple items to sell at nearby market-towns. In response to Phillip II of Spain's survey of his kingdom, the town of Alcorcon reported on just such activities; the town was clearly proud of its pottery, but recognized that this was not enough to support the residents adequately. (Relaciones histórico-geográfico-estadísticas de los pueblos de España hecho por iniciativa de Felipe II: Provincia de Madrid. eds. Carmelo Viñas y Mey and Ramón Paz (Madrid: CSIC, 1949), 43. Translated by Allyson Poska)

. . . of the majority of the inhabitants of the said place, two-thirds are poor men and the other third have middling estates, the richest of which is worth four thousand ducats. As for the rest, the livelihood that they have is pitchers, pots, jugs, and little jugs that are made better in the said place than in other parts. These are made so well and the clay so fit for the ministry that they are taken to many faraway places and they have them in much of the kingdom. The women do this. It is a livelihood of much work and little profit, because the firewood and brushwood that is brought for the ovens is very expensive

8. Act for the punishment of sturdy vagabonds and beggars, England 1536



Blind beggar and his dog

Local and regional governments in the sixteenth century passed a variety of “poor laws” in an attempt to solve the problems of poverty. Most of these called on villages and towns to care for their own “worthy poor,” such as orphans and blind people, and ordered able-bodied poor to be set to work. The following is a typical law, passed during the reign of Henry VIII. (27 Henry VIII, c. 25)

An act for punishment of sturdy vagabonds and beggars.... And forasmuch as it was not provided in the said act how and in what wise the said poor people and sturdy vagabonds should be ordered at their repair and at their coming into their countries, nor how the inhabitants of every hundred should be charged for the relief of the same poor people, nor yet for the setting and keeping in work and labour of the aforesaid valiant vagabonds at their said repair into every hundred of this realm: it is therefore now ordained and established and enacted ... that all the governors and ministers of ... cities, shires, towns, ...hamlets, and parishes, as well within liberties as without, shall not only succour, find, and keep all and every of the same poor people by way of voluntary and charitable alms ... , in such wise as none of them of very necessity shall be compelled to wander idly and go openly in begging to ask alms in any of the same cities, shires, towns, and parishes, but also to cause and to compel all and every the said sturdy vagabonds and valiant beggars to be set and kept to continual labour, in such wise as by their said labours they and every of them may get their own livings with the continual labour of their own hands....

Item, it is ordained and enacted ... that all and every the mayors, governors, and head officers of every city, borough, and town corporate and the churchwardens or two others of every parish of this realm shall in good and charitable wise take such discreet and convenient order, by gathering and procuring of such charitable and voluntary alms of the good Christian people within the same with boxes every Sunday, holy day, and other festival day or otherwise among themselves, in such good and discreet wise as the poor, impotent, lame, feeble, sick, and diseased people, being not able to work, may be provided, holpen, and relieved; so that in no wise they nor none of them be suffered to go openly in begging, and that such as be lusty, or having their limbs strong enough to labour, may be daily kept in continual labour, whereby every one of them may get their own substance and living with their own hands....

And for the avoiding of all such inconveniences and infections as oftentime have and daily do chance amongst the people by common and open doles, and that most commonly unto such doles many persons do resort which have no need of the same, it is therefore enacted ... that no manner of person or persons shall make or cause to be made any such common or open doles, or shall give any ready money in alms, otherwise than to the common boxes and common gatherings ... , to and for the putting in ... due execution ... this present act, upon pain to ... forfeit ten times the value of all such ready money as shall be given in alms contrary to the tenor and purport of the same; and that every person or persons of this realm, bodies politic corporate, and others that be bound or charged yearly, monthly, or weekly to give or to distribute any ready money, bread, victual, or other sustentation to poor people in any place within this realm, shall ... give and distribute the same money or the value of all such bread, victual, or sustentation unto such common boxes, to the intent the same may be employed towards the relieving of the said poor, needy, sick, sore, and

indigent persons, and also towards the setting in work of the said sturdy and idle vagabonds and valiant beggars....

9. Sale of land, Russia 1620

Land was the primary source of wealth in most parts of Europe. In some areas, women could not inherit or own land, but in Russia, women could legally own property, including land, and manage it themselves. Often they collaborated with kinsfolk, both men and women, in commercial dealings. In this document, dating to 1610, one widow, Fedosia, is selling a homestead that her deceased husband had received from another widow, Anna, as the result of a mortgage. The purchaser, Bogdan, shares the same profession as Fedosia's late husband--cannoneer. Fedosia avers that she owns the homestead free and clear, and promises to assume any costs of litigation, if claims to the property surface later. Although the multiple recent transfers of this property make such claims more likely, the provisions for Fedosia to assume the risk should Bogdan's title to the homestead be challenged, in fact this language was standard in deeds of this sort. (Published original in *Real Estate Transfer Deeds in Novgorod, 1609-1616*, ed. Ingegerd Nordlander (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1987), pp. 153-154. Translated by Eve Levin)

I, the widow Fedosia Ivan's daughter, wife of the cannoneer Potafei Sidorov, have sold the mortgaged homestead of my husband to the cannoneer Bogdan, Ovdokim's son, the master tailor. This, the cannoneer's, homestead, had belonged to the nun Anna, widow of Ulian, the scribe of St. Sofia Cathedral, and had previously belonged to the baker Vasillii, and is located on St. Vlasii Street. The homestead stands between the Monastery of the Savior and my, Fedosia's, house, on the other side, going from the Volkhov River to the Church of St. Vlasii. On the homestead there are the house, low cottage, hayrick, loft, and fence surrounding the garden. I, Fedosia, received from Bogdan Ovdokim's son the price of thirty altyny minus one grivna. [The altyn and the grivna were small silver coins;

the total price here was the equivalent of a little more than one and a half rubles.] That homestead is untaxed, being in a tax-free area. I, Fedosia, do not have any debt on my husband's homestead, and there is no debt or mortgage on my husband's homestead [recorded] in writs or in wills. If anyone shall sue me, Fedosia, or Bogdan concerning my husband's mortgaged or encumbered house, and if [that person] shall cause Bogdan loss and bureaucratic involvement [The Russian term, volokita, means "bureaucratic delay" or, as we might call it, "red tape."] because of that house because of my, Fedosia's, neglect to clear it, I, Fedosia, will assume that loss and bureaucratic involvement, according to this bill of sale. Witnesses to this are Tretiak Ivan's son Ruskii and the notice was written by the merchant Mikhailets Peter's son Ilkin in the year 7118 (=1610), July 28.



City houses in most of Europe were made with wood frames filled with mud and clay, a style termed “half-timbered.” Houses of wealthier urban residents could include glass windows and carved ornamentation, as in this house from sixteenth-century France

10. Contract to build an addition on an inn, England 1444

Contracts of all types were drawn up by notaries in European cities beginning in the twelfth century, and many of these have survived. This contract between the inn's owner and a carpenter sets out the specifications for the building, and provides insight into urban building patterns.

<http://www.trytel.com/~tristan/towns/florilegium/community/cmfabr07.html>

11. Ordinance for used-goods dealers, Germany 1488

Until the eighteenth century, most people in early modern Europe had very few consumer goods such as clothing and household items, and often could not afford new merchandise. The trade in used items was therefore very brisk, and used-goods dealers could be found in every town. Such individuals handled merchandise that people gave them to sell--thus acting as pawnbrokers--and also goods that came on the market after a bankruptcy or a death if there were no heirs. City authorities were concerned that used-goods dealers did not sell stolen merchandise, and so wanted all their transactions to occur at public areas such as the marketplaces that were near churches in most cities. Some cities required used-goods dealers to swear oaths with various stipulations; the following is from Munich in 1488, where city authorities were also concerned that Christian used-goods dealers not be intermediaries in transactions between Jews. Because Jews were prohibited from owning land or joining guilds in many parts of Europe, they often engaged in selling used goods themselves, and in some places there are specific regulations for Jewish used-goods dealers, pawnbrokers, and moneylenders. Jews had been banished from Munich earlier in the fifteenth century, and a Christian church had been erected on the site of the Jewish synagogue in 1440. (Munich Stadtarchiv, Zimilien 41, Eidbuch 1488. Translated by Merry Wiesner-Hanks)

All used-goods dealers, male and female, shall swear that whatever is given to them to sell, they shall store, sell, and transfer at the highest price offered, and they themselves shall say who has offered the most money.

When the transaction is over, they shall deliver the goods, and shall not buy or pay for any goods themselves. They shall also offer everything for sale publicly, and after the transaction shall bring the goods to no one other than the person who has offered the most for them. And they shall take or demand no commission from anyone higher than four pennies per pound's worth of goods. They shall also tell everyone what the goods are and who has sold them. All of them shall [swear] that they will always personally tell what everything is, whether it is inherited, owned, or possessed, and will sell their merchandise by the church of Our Lady and not by St. Peter's [church]. When they receive merchandise because of a bankruptcy, they should announce the goods publicly once a day for two days before they sell them, and on the third day announce them publicly every hour after noon. All goods that they receive because of bankruptcy they should lay out on a bench or table if the weather allows this, and if the weather does not allow it they should list the goods on a sheet and present the sheet [for people to see], and keep everything secure and safe. Whatever merchandise they receive from Jews, whether male or female, they are not to store it with Jews, male or female, nor trade it to Jews.

12. Inventories of Household Goods, Germany 1530-1550

Inventories taken at the time of death or remarriage provide extensive information about the property, household goods, and work-related equipment found in early modern households. Cities often required such inventories, which were done by professional appraisers, who noted everything in great detail. Inventories of wealthy households went on for many pages, while those of poorer individuals were very brief. The following three inventories come from the German city of Nuremberg, the first two taken at the time of death and the third at a remarriage. The values placed on goods are expressed in a variety of monetary terms, with the most common being the silver pfennig (abbreviated d for “denarius,” the Latin word for penny), the pound (abbreviated £) and the golden gulden or florin, abbreviated fl. The values of these coins relative to each other changed depending on the relative value of gold and silver, but a pound was generally figured at 30 d and the gulden at 8 £, 12 d. (Nuremberg, Stadtarchiv, Inventarbuecher, Nr. 1, fol. 101 (1530), Nr. 2, fol. 83-84 (1537), Nr. 17, fol. 89 (1550). Translated by Merry Wiesner-Hanks)

I, Kunigunde, the late Fritz Trayfels wife and also a citizen of Nuremberg, list publicly with this inventory all of my goods and debts that were on hand at the death of my hus-band. I had them appraised in the presence of Albrecht Liner, pansmith, and Lorentz Osterreich as guardians of my daughter Fridl that I raised with my husband. I had all my goods appraised immediately by Margareth Pesolt, sworn appraiser, as follows here:

Tin dishes--62 pounds, worth 20 pfennig (d) to the pound,
total 4 gulden (fl), 6 £, 22d.

A silver beaker weighing 13 lot, 2 pounds, total 6 fl, 3 d. 10 1/2 pounds of brass, the pound worth 15 d. total 4 £ 23 d.

30 1/2 pounds old copper, the pound at 10 d--1 fl 1 £ 23 d. Three leather pillows--1 fl.

A strawsack and a canopy [for a bed]--5 £.

A table--70 d.

A candleholder--4 d.

5 glasses and one curved glass--12 d.

A bench--25 d.

A reel and spindle--40 d.

A bird cage—22 d.

A mirror and spoonholder--3 d.

A dress-5 £.

2 pair of stockings--50 d.

A camisole and two jerseys--6 £. A green skirt-- 2 £. An old hat-- 4 d.

A black smock--40 d.

An old iron bucket--3 d.

One pound of feathers--20 d. Two small baskets--6 d. A black bucket--8 d. A harness--50 d.

A sofa, straw sack, underbed, 2 pillows, 2 linen sheets and a bed cover, all taken together--7 fl.

Old rags in a small box--10 d.

Two cushions--20 d.

One and a half els of linen cloth--40 d.

A linen sheet—30 d. Six tablecloths--9 £. 7 handtowels--2 £.

A small chest—22 d. A sieve and a spit--40 d. A meat fork--4 d.

Bowls and baskets--8 d.

Yeast and flour--5 d.

A red woman's dress--4 £. A black coat--3 fl. A cloak--5 £.

Three hammers--10 d. Three lights--10 d. A belt--5 d.

The sum of all listed equals 31 fl 5 £ 25 d. Now follows my debts on the death of my husband: To my brother-in-law Albrecht 4 1/2 fl; my sister-in-law Frenkin 8 £; for taxes

6 £; Mr. Ebersbass 3 £; Mrs. Frenkin 2 £; my brother-in-law Endress Frenkin 2 fl; the baker's wife 1/2 fl.

The sum of all debts equals 8 fl 2 £ 6 d. Therefore when 8 fl 2 £ 6 d debts are subtracted from the total of all goods 31 fl 5 £ 25 d, 23 fl 3 £ 19 d remain. Given with the protestation and oath that if I find any more, over a short or long time, that I haven't listed here and that was on hand, I'll report it as well and will keep nothing back.

The aforementioned widow has sworn to this inventory in the presence of the guardians as is legally proper.

After Katherine Deunin, a sworn appraiser, died about six weeks ago, she left various movable goods at the house of Hans Soldnet, a tailor here. This tailor, on the recommendation of the honorable and wise Board of Widows and Orphans, had the following inventory and appraisal taken by Anna Mayrin, a sworn appraiser, as follows here point by point:

In cash--2 £ 15 d.

An underbed--6 £.

A small straw mattress--21 d.

A canopy--1 £ 10 d.

An old leather-colored cloak with a white lining--5 £. An old slip--28 d. An old fur--15 d.

Two old sheets--21 d.

An old neckcloth--8 d.

Two old small trunks--28 d. Two cups for brandy--4 d. Two old neckerchiefs--5 d. Old rags--12 d. Two bags--5 d.

Total sum of all goods listed here equals 2 fl 2 £ 5 d. Now follow the debts of the aforementioned Deunin, known at her death. To Hans Soldner, tailor, her landlord, for rent and money for the funeral, and also for his trouble and time, one and a half gulden. To Barbara, Sebastian Pecken the

mail-maker's wife at Spizenberg for a veil and 6 pounds of spun yarn, one and a half gulden. To Christina, a maid here, for a coat that she bought but did not pay for, one gulden. When the debts are taken from the goods remaining, the debts are greater by 1 fl 6 £ 6 d. Further than this, I, Hans Soldner, have no information.

I, Hanns Weykopf, citizen and cabinetmaker in Nuremberg, publicly attest that my present second wife, Barbara, brought the following to our residence after our first legitimate cohabitation. She placed into my hands, in the presence of the honorable Lucas Gryder and Jacob Ulherz, both citizens and the assigned guardians for the children of my first marriage, diverse money and movable goods to me. The movable goods and clothes were listed, estimated and appraised by the sworn appraiser Barbara Weyssin and are piece by piece described in order as follows:

In cash--received in good coinage in the normal currencies used in this area and pure gold--50 fl
In clothing--a black Arles cloth cloak--9 fl.

A red satin underdress with a green border--5 fl. A black coat with a white lining--7 fl. A fur--10 £.

A black jersey apron--2 fl.

A black patched petticoat--2 £.

A black camel-hair breastcloth--3 1/2 fl. A red waistcoat--1 1/2 fl. An el of black damask--2 fl. A black veil--5 £.

A jacketed apron--1/2 fl.

A cotton pinafore--2 d.

A green pair of stockings--3 £.

A bag lined with satin--1/2 fl.

A white headcovering--3 £. A gold ring--5 £ A hat--3 oft.

Six neckcloths--1 1/2 fl. Three undershirts--1/2 fl. Four bodices--12 d.

The total sum of all recorded property and goods is 94 fl 5 £ 9 d. That I hold to with complete confidence. If I do not publish this [i.e., bring the inventory to the city council] it will be up to the guardians for my children from my first marriage.

Both partners have sworn to this with their oaths in the presence of the guardians.



A household-workshop, with mother and daughter spinning, the father figuring accounts, and the son reading. The tile oven and leaded-glass windows indicate that this is a prosperous urban family.

13. Account books of a retail dealer, Denmark 1559

Major merchants belonged to the upper levels of urban society and economy, while retail dealers were considered middle- or even lower-class. The following is an account book of one of them, Keluf dens Nielsen (d. 1559), covering the years 1555-59. The excerpt cited below relates to her dealings with a couple, Per and Johanne Klemitsen, and reveals the many activities a retail dealer, sometimes called a huckster, could engage in, in order to make a living. In this selection the monetary values are: 1 mark = 16 shilling, 1 shilling = 3 albi (witten) (Malmo skitier 2: Kobmandsregnskaber 153 7-1559, Ed.. Einar Bager. (Kobenhavn: Selskabet for Udgivelse af Kilder til dansk Historie, 1978), pp. 94, 111, 122: "Keluf Jens Nielsens Rfikenskaper." Translated by Grethe Jacobsen and Pernille Arenfeldt)

P. 94:

I, Keluf Jens Nielsen, and Per Klemmentsen settled our accounts one month before Christmas and he owes me:

9 mark and 1 barrel of beer

For 2 mark 60 pots of German beer, each pot 2 albi

2 green socks of "gottingsk" cloth [cloth from Göttingen] for 4 shilling

4 quarts of hemp, each quart 5 shilling

1 herring net 8 shilling

1 quart of peas for 4 shilling, at that time that was the price

Last summer Johanne Per Klemmentsen gave me as surety 1 bedcloth for 13 shilling

I redeemed Johanne Per Klemmentsen's tunic for 3 marks

Johanne Per Klemmentsen lay here for seven weeks, food and beer for 6 shilling a week as much as she wanted

I pledged surety for Per Klemmentsen to Hans Dobelsten for planks for 12 shilling

I pledged surety for Per Klemmentsen for one barrel of German beer for his wedding beer for 3 marks

The wife of Per Klemmentsen one pair of shoes, one pair for himself and one pair of soles. In return I have received one cow for 6 mark and 3 geese for 1 mark.

Supplied Per Klemmentsen his wife with 10 shilling for 11 weeks, which he gave me. I bought ointment and rubbed her with Peter's oil [a plant oil] as much as I knew of.

Johanne Per Klemmentsen 3 mark and 4 shilling, 6 shilling for 1 quart hemp, 4 albi and 4 shilling for 1 quart of peas, 3 shilling for wheat bread, 14 shilling for German beer the day Per Klemmentsen's child died, 14 pots of German beer, each pot 2 albi

[P.111]

Per Klemmentsen one cupboard for 1 mark, 1 rapier 12 shilling, 1 hammer 2 shilling, pound of butter for 8 albi, 1 pound candle (wax) 8 albi

[P. 122. After Keluf's death in the fall of 1559 a list of her debtors was written, among them was:]

Peder Klemmentsen Tommermand [carpenter]

1 cupboard 1 mark 1 rapier 12 shilling 1 hammer 2 shilling 1 pound of butter 7 1/2 albi 1 pound candle (wax) 8 albi

14. Warning about shady business practices, Russia fifteenth century

Merchants at all levels tried to get the most advantageous deals, and sometimes this led to questionable business practices. The following is a document written on birchbark from Novgorod, which hints at a conflict between two male businessmen, the brothers Esif and Foma, and their suppliers, two women named Tania and Iublia. Because it is not completely preserved, the details of the business cannot be fully discerned, but it is clear Esif is warning his brother. Published originals in A. V. Artsikhovskii and V. I. Borkovskii, *Novgorodskie gramoty na bereste* (iz raskopok 1953-1954gg.) (Moscow: AN SSSR, 1958), pp. 64-66. Translated by Eve Levin)



Two fifteenth-century merchants

A petition from Esif to my brother Foma, that you send wax and honey, and a well-sewn sheepskin. For a sewn coat... And watch Tania, so she doesn't do anything wrong, and only sells to you according to the price. And what you buy from her and Iublia... is guilty. And otherwise everything is well here.

15. Ordinances regarding women in gold production, Germany sixteenth century

Most guilds in Europe limited full membership to men, but widows were often allowed to continue operating a workshop in a limited form. The first of the following ordinances concerns widows in goldsmithing, and sets out very standard types of limitations. The second and third ordinances concern goldspinning, women who spun gold thread for luxury embroidery and usually worked in the shops of goldsmiths or gold-beaters (individuals who pounded gold into very thin sheets for gold-leaf work). These ordinances attempt to prohibit unmarried gold-spinners from living and working on their own, and are similar to general restrictions on unmarried women found in many towns and cities. (Nuremberg, Stadtarchiv, QNG, Nr. 68 I, 135 (1535), Nr. 68 III, 1097 (1560), Nr. 68 III, 1307 (1597). Translated by Merry Wiesner-Hanks)

[From Goldsmiths' Ordinance, 1535]

If a goldsmith dies and leaves no son behind him that will use or work in his craft, or is not gifted in this or old enough to assume the Meisterrecht, then the goldsmith's widow may (if she wants) work in the craft for three years after the death of her husband, and no longer. Then this same widow will have to marry someone else from the goldsmith's craft who has already been a master or wants to make his masterpiece, after these three years. Every widow that wants to work in the craft is obliged to carry out the usual duties, such as allowing her work to be inspected or any other things called for in the regulations of the craft the same as any other, and is liable for punishments for infractions according to the same regulations and ordinances.

[From Goldbeaters' ordinance, 1560]

First, from now on no goldspinner is to be tolerated here unless she has first learned from an honorable master of the gold-beating craft. Those

who are unmarried and want to live with the master are to be maintained by that master for a reasonable yearly salary.

Second, from now on no goldspinner is to have the power to spin gold for herself unless she has learned from a goldbeater. However, those spinners who have already learned before this ordinance will be allowed to continue. Whoever breaks this ordinance on one or more points and cannot behave or conduct herself properly will be liable to pay a fine of five pounds for every infraction.

From now on every master of the gold-beating craft shall pay every spinner and maid that he has living in his house seven gulden as a yearly salary if they spin him six strands each week. Also, those spinners and maids who can stretch out 100 Ramm [a measure of length] every day or sew together four books shall be given eight gulden as a yearly salary. If a spinner or maid spins, stretches or sews less in the year, then her salary will be deducted accordingly. Whatever she makes above this dally allotment should also be figured in to her benefit in the same way and also paid by the master. No master of the craft shall pay any spinner or maid who completes the daily work noted above any more or less, nor use any of his other servants for this work, all with a fine of five pounds. This applies only to the spinners and maids who serve the masters in their houses and absolutely not to those who work for themselves [From Goldspinners' Ordinance, 1597]

From now on no maid is to be taken on and taught for less than four years. Each maid is to be registered when taken on and let go as is normally required. Third, every spin-maid is to contract herself at the least for one year to a master and during that time not leave him without justifiable cause (which has to be proven to the authorities). Whenever a trained maid wants to contract herself to another master, she should report this to the

sworn masters beforehand, so that they can see that this master does not already have too many maids. Fourth, every master should house and feed all his maids in his house. No unmarried maid should be given work to do for herself [i.e.. if she didn't live with the master].



A sixteenth-century urban woman, from the stained glass windows of the cathedral of Metz, possibly the glass-maker's wife.

16. Widows fight for their rights in court, Germany, sixteenth century

Widows attempting to run a business after the demise of their husband often confronted particular obstacles. The widows featured in the two documents below took matters into their own hands by complaining to the authorities. Their technique consisted both of asserting their rights to practice their trades, and underlining their vulnerability as widowed women. (Unpublished petitions in Frankfurt Stadtarchiv, Zfinfte, Ugb. C-50, Ss, no. 4; Ugb. C-32, R, no. 1. Translated by Merry Wiesner-Hanks)

a) Widow's petition to the Frankfurt City Council, late 16th century

Distinguished and honorable sirs, I, a poor and distressed widow, wish to respectfully report in what manner earlier this year I spun some pounds of yarn, 57 to be exact, for the use of my own household. I wanted to take the yarn to be woven into cloth, but didn't know whom I should give it to so that I could get it worked into cloth the quickest and earliest.

Therefore I was talking to some farm women from Bornheim, who were selling their produce in front of the shoemakers' guild house, and they told me about a weaver that they had in Bornheim who made good cloth and could also make it quickly. I let him know--through the farmers' wives--that I wanted him to make my cloth. I got the yarn together and sent my children to carry it to him; as they were on their way, the weavers here grabbed the yarn forcefully from my children, and took it to their guild house. They said they had ordinances that forbade taking yarn to foreigners to weave, and told me they would not return it unless I paid a fine.

I then went to the lord mayors, asking them about this ordinance that would let people confiscate things without warning from the public streets. They said they didn't know about any such ordinance, and that my yarn should have long been returned to me. I then went to the overseer of the guild, master Adlaff Zimmermann who lives by the Eschenheimer tower,

who answered me with rough, harsh words that they would in no way return my yarn to me, and that the guild did have such an ordinance.

Therefore I respectfully request, if they do have such an ordinance, I didn't know anything about it, and so ask you humbly and in God's name to tell the weavers to return my yarn. If, according to this ordinance, I am supposed to pay a fine, they should take it from the yarn, and give the rest back. I ask this of your honorable sirs, as the protectors of widows and orphans, and pray that you will help me.

Your humble servant, Agatha, the widow of the late Conrad Gaingen.

b) Widow's petition to the Frankfurt City Council, late 16th century

Most honorable and merciful gentlemen, you certainly know what a heavy and hard cross God has laid on me, and in what a miserable situation I find myself, after the much too early death of my late husband, with my young children, all of them still minors and some still nursing. This unfortunate situation is well known everywhere.

Although in consideration of my misfortune most Christian hearts would have gladly let me continue in my craft and occupation, and allowed me to earn a little piece of bread, instead the overseers of the woolweavers' guild came to me as soon as my husband had died, in my sorrow and even in my own house. Against all Christian charity, they began to order changes in my workshop with very harsh and menacing words. They specifically ordered that my apprentice, whom I had raised and trained at great cost and who had just come to be of use to me in the craft, leave me and go to them, which would be to their great advantage but my greater disadvantage. They ordered this on the pretense that there was no longer a master here so he could not finish his training.

Honorable sirs, I then humbly put myself under the protection of the lord mayors here, and asked that the two journeymen and the apprentice be allowed to continue on in their work as they had before unimpeded until a final judgment was reached in the matter. Despite this, one of the weavers began to shout at my journeymen whenever he saw them, especially if there were other people on the street. In his unhindered and unwarranted boldness, he yelled that my workshop was not honorable, and all journeymen who worked there were thieves and rascals. After doing this for several days, he and several others came into my workshop on a Saturday, and, bitter and jealous, pushed my journeymen out. They began to write to all places where this craft is practiced to tell other masters not to accept anyone who had worked in my workshop.

I now humbly beg you, my honorable and gracious sirs, protect me and my hungry children from such abuse, shame, and insult. Help my journeymen, who were so undeservedly insulted, to regain their honor. I beg you, as the protector of humble widows, to let my apprentice stay with me, as apprentices are allowed to stay in the workshops of widows throughout the entire Holy Roman Empire, as long as there are journeymen, whether or not there is a master present. Protect me from any further insults of the wool-weavers' guild, which does nothing to increase the honor of our city, which you, honorable sirs, are charged to uphold. I plead with you to grant me my request, and allow me to continue my workshop.