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**Reference:**

de Munck Bert.- From brotherhood community to civil society? Apprentices between guild, household and the freedom of contract in early modern Antwerp  
Social history - ISSN 0307-1022 - 35:1(2010), p. 1-20  
Full text (Publisher's DOI): <https://doi.org/10.1080/03071020903491724>  
To cite this reference: <https://hdl.handle.net/10067/812410151162165141>

## From brotherhood community to civil society? Apprentices between guild, household and the freedom of contract in early modern Antwerp.

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This article examines the nature and impact of late medieval and early modern guilds through the lens of the master-apprentice relationship. Starting from a conceptual distinction between the ‘guild ethos’ and ‘civil society’, it is shown that Antwerp craft guilds stopped being ‘brotherhoods’ and ‘substitute families’ and retreated into a sphere separate from household and family. In the seventeenth and eighteenth century, masters can no longer be considered to have wielded a type of corporative mandate and to have acted *in loco parentis*. While parents had the final word in matters of discipline, master sons had gradually lost their privileged entrance (i.e. they stopped being ‘born’ within the guild), thus suggesting that the private sphere of the family prevailed over the public sphere of the guilds. The guilds’ uniforms and collective activities, moreover, respectively disappeared or became obsolete. From at least the ‘long sixteenth century’ on, Antwerp guilds appear to have transformed from confraternities or brotherhoods into juridical and institutional instruments, which did not aim at disciplining or socializing apprentices into an organized social group. In the end, the relationship between masters and apprentices was based on (oral and other) contracts rather than guild rules (whether formal or informal).

Recent research has rendered the phrase ‘from status to contract’ inadequate for summing up the emergence of modern labour relations.<sup>2</sup> The master-servant relationship retained legal status well into the nineteenth century – indeed, it was even expanded (via imposition of criminal sanctions) to prevent breach of contract.<sup>3</sup> In modern labour relations status and contract appear instead as two sides of the same coin.<sup>4</sup> Yet, labour relations in the ancien régime continue to be addressed from the perspective of ‘status’ only, especially as regards apprentices. Until the late eighteenth century, private contracting is believed to have been limited. In England – where over half the population aged 15 to 24 is said to have lived as servants, maids, or apprentices in another household<sup>5</sup> – master-servant relationships derived their legal framework from the Statute of Artificers (1563). This statute established a seven-year apprenticeship as a national requirement and defined the apprentices as bound to their master by a recorded indenture.<sup>6</sup> The duty to serve and to obey the master was an all-pervasive background.<sup>7</sup> On the continent, craft guilds were far

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<sup>1</sup> This article was written in the context of the IAP-project ‘City and society in the Low Countries, 1200-1800: space, knowledge, social capital’. Thanks are due to Maarten Van Dijck for his comments on an earlier version.

<sup>2</sup> The expression appears in H.S. Main, *Ancient Law: Its Connection with the Early History of Society, and Its Relation to Modern Ideas* (London, 1961), 170.

<sup>3</sup> K. Orren, *Belated Feudalism. Labor, the Law, and Liberal Development in the United States* (Cambridge, 1992); R.J. Steinfield, *Coercion, Contract, and Free Labor in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2001); D. Hay and P. Craven (eds), *Masters, Servants and Magistrates in Britain and the Empire, 1562-1955* (Chapel Hill/London, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> S. Deakin and F. Wilkinson, *The Law of the Labour Market. Industrialisation, Employment and Legal Evolution* (London, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> P. Laslett, ‘Characteristics of the Western family considered over time’, in P. Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations: Essays in Historical Sociology* (Cambridge, 1977), 34 and 44; M.K. McIntosh, ‘Servants and the household unit in an Elizabethan English community’, *Journal of Family History*, 9 (1984), 3-23; R. Wall, ‘Leaving home and the process of household formation in pre-industrial England’, *Continuity and Change*, 2 (1987) 91; M. Mitterauer and R. Sieder, *Vom Patriarchat zur Partnerschaft. Zum Strukturwandel der Familie* (Munich, 1977), 131-134.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. J. Lane, *Apprenticeship in England, 1600-1914* (London, 1996), 1-8 (esp. p. 2).

<sup>7</sup> A. Yarbrough, ‘Apprentices as adolescents in sixteenth-century Bristol’, *Journal of Social History*, 12 (1979), 67-81; S.R. Smith, ‘The ideal and the reality: apprentice-master relationships in seventeenth-century London’, *History of Education Quarterly*, 21 (1981), 449-460; S. Rappaport, ‘Reconsidering apprenticeship in sixteenth-century London’, in J. Monfasani, R.G. Musto and E.F. Rice (eds), *Renaissance Society and Culture: Essays in Honor of Eugene F. Rice Jr.* (Ithaca/New York, 1991), 239-261; *Ibid.*, *Worlds within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth-Century London* (Cambridge, 1989), 232-238. Interest in reciprocity and negotiations has gradually increased. See I. Krausman Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth in Early Modern England* (New Haven etc, 1994); P. Griffiths, *Youth and Authority. Formative*

more likely to institutionalise labour relationships, but guilds are also believed to have focused on maintaining and reproducing a social order. This indicates that marriage and mastership often coincided and that journeymen, besides boarding with their masters, were not allowed to marry.<sup>8</sup> Corporatism was considered ‘a constitutional system that did not simply organize work, but that translated the various activities of work into a moral representation of status and rank’.<sup>9</sup> Apprenticeship was at the heart of this system. ‘It was a moral and political socialization as much as it was an initiation to the trade’.<sup>10</sup> As a result, private contracting is assumed to have been subordinate to the guilds’ regulations. According to the reference work on private law in the Southern Netherlands, for example, it was generally the guilds that imposed the stipulations in apprentice contracts.<sup>11</sup>

Historians have generally assumed that this situation existed until the end of the ancien régime. Apprentices did not conclude learning contracts on a type of ‘free learning market’. Their learning accompanied boarding with the master, who acted *in loco parentis* (as a surrogate father). The master not only taught his trade to the youth but socialized him into corporatist culture, and as such could be seen as having acted in the name of the guild. Thanks only to the abolition of the guilds and the introduction of a modern legal system based upon ‘freedom of contract’, the disciplinary, hierarchical, and compulsory master-servant relationship – with agreements not terminable at will – were thought to have made way eventually for contractual relationship between capital owners and proletarianized workers.<sup>12</sup> However, recent research has qualified the hierarchical and patriarchal relationship between master and servant in the ancien régime as well. Some researchers have questioned the so-called *Ganze Hause* model (in which the apprentice was fully integrated into his master’s household and the master was both teacher and surrogate father). Reinhold Reith has noted the intrusion of wage- and labour-like regulations into the relationship between master and pupil, implicitly linking the disappearance of the ‘traditional’ relationship to the emergence of proletarianization and deskilling (the apprentice working instead of learning).<sup>13</sup> But there is more. Recent ideas about the emergence of civil society have revealed a certain field of tension between the private realm of the family (or family firm) and the public sphere of the guilds.<sup>14</sup> Whereas scholars have tended to link the emergence of ‘civil society’ to the end of the old regime – i.e., to the implosion of absolutism, ‘slavery’, and corporatism – recent research has tended to project the emergence of civil society backward in time.<sup>15</sup> Medieval confraternities and lay brotherhoods – including guilds –, are now considered the crib of ‘civil

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*Experiences in England, 1560-1640* (Oxford, 1996). Also: A. Levene, ‘“Honesty, sobriety and diligence”: master – apprentice-relations in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England’, *Social History*, 33 (2008) 2, 183-200.

<sup>8</sup> J. Ehmer, ‘The artisan family in nineteenth-century Austria: *embourgeoisement* of the petite bourgeoisie?’ in G. Crossick and H.-G. Haupt (eds), *Shopkeepers and Master Artisans in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (London/New York, 1984), 195-218, esp. 208-212; G. Crossick and H.-G. Haupt, *The Petite Bourgeoisie in Europe, 1780-1914. Enterprise, Family and Independence* (London, 1995), 20; G. Crossick, ‘Past masters. In search of the artisan in European history’, in: Crossick (Ed.), *The Artisan and the European Town* (Aldershot, 1997), 7; J.R. Farr, *Artisans in Europe, 1300-1914* (Cambridge, 2000), 245.

<sup>9</sup> Farr, *Artisans*, 33.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, 34.

<sup>11</sup> ‘*L’engagement d’un apprenti par un maître donne lieu à un contrat dont les stipulations sont en majeure partie imposées par le métier*’. Philippe Godding, *Le droit privé dans les Pays-Bas méridionaux du 12<sup>e</sup> au 18<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Brussels, 1987), 470.

<sup>12</sup> E.g. K.D.M. Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor. Social Change and Agrarian England, 1660-1900* (Cambridge, 1985), 257-263.

<sup>13</sup> R. Reith, ‘Apprentices in the German and Austrian craft in early modern times — Apprentices as wage earners?’ in B. De Munck, S.L. Kaplan and H. Soly (eds.), *Learning on the Shop Floor. Historical Perspectives on Apprenticeship*, (London/New York, 2007), 179-202.

<sup>14</sup> A. Black, *Guild and Civil Society in European Political Thought from the twelfth Century to the Present* (London, 1984); K.A. Lynch, *Individuals, Families, and Communities in Europe, 1200-1800. The Urban Foundation of Western Society* (Cambridge, 2003).

<sup>15</sup> See R.D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work. Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, 1993); A. Black, ‘Concepts of civil society in pre-modern Europe’, in Sudipta Kaviraj and Sunil Khilnani (ed.), *Civil Society. History and possibilities* (Cambridge, 2001), 33-38.

society'. Civil society, however, is defined as a sphere separate from both 'formal political life' and 'the narrow confines of household or family'.<sup>16</sup> It is characterised not by paternalism and patriarchy but by liberal ideas about legal equality and personal freedom. Consequently, questions arise as to the impact of this view on our ideas regarding the relationship between master and apprentice.

As is clear from Black's standard work on European political thought, the relationship of guilds with civil society is far from obvious. Black sees guilds as a type of 'artificial family', based on values like confraternity, friendship and mutual aid. The concept of civil society, in contrast, connects to liberal ideas about person and property, including the freedom of contract. Although Black has rightfully argued that they often developed simultaneously or were at least closely connected in political theory, questions concerning the long term development remain.<sup>17</sup> How did the guilds and their 'ethos' transform as market forces and bureaucratic states expanded? In particular, how did the relationship of guilds with the private realm of the family change? My aim is to illuminate the nature and impact of guilds through the lens of the master-apprentice relationship. Although the idea that guilds were backward and inflexible institutions until the end of the eighteenth century has been rightfully rejected – it has been revised especially from an economic perspective – the idea of a paternalist drive on the part of the guilds remains taken for granted. According to James Farr, '(t)hroughout the old regime, hierarchy and discipline were joined by paternalism in defining corporatism'.<sup>18</sup> Maarten Prak, referring to English literature, concludes from the idea that guilds 'conveyed a strong moral framework of Christian charity' that apprenticeship boiled down to the introduction of young pupils into 'a more general bourgeois culture'.<sup>19</sup> It is true of course that training is always more than merely acquiring skills and technical knowledge, but the idea here is that guilds installed and perhaps even overruled the authority of families and fathers. According to Josef Ehmer, '(t)he individual artisan's family had only limited autonomy within the system of control (...) the life career of a traditional artisan was influenced far more strongly by his attachment to a guild rather than to a family'.<sup>20</sup> In other words, guilds are seen as 'substitute families'.<sup>21</sup> Before becoming a master himself, an apprentice had to be educated and socialised in a master's household (excepting apprentices who were their masters' sons).

The first question to consider, then, is whether nothing changed before the end of the *ancien régime*. In the first section, I will show that the way in which craft guilds in Antwerp defined the distinction between masters' sons and other apprentices changed drastically during the early modern period. Masters' sons gradually lost their privileged status and had to meet entry requirements similar to those of non-masters' sons. In terms of the guild as a substitute family, this may indicate that masters' sons were no longer 'born' within the guild, as a consequence of which guilds should be considered as moving into a sphere separate from the family. In the second section, I will argue that for guilds the apprentices' lodging requirements were not related to paternalistic ideals or intentions to discipline or acculturate trainees. Analysis of the guilds' regulations suggests that rules obliging apprentices to board with their masters were not only relaxed in the eighteenth century but had previously served only exclusionary purposes. In the third section, I will argue that the relationship between masters and apprentices were based on

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<sup>16</sup> Lynch, *Individuals, Families, and Communities*, 19.

<sup>17</sup> Black, *Guilds and Civil Society*.

<sup>18</sup> Farr, *Artisans*, 33

<sup>19</sup> M. Prak, 'Moral order in the world of work: social control and the guilds in Europe', in H. Roodenburg and P. Spierenburg (eds), *Social Control in Europe. Vol. 1, 1500-1800* (Columbus, 2004), 176-199, 179; C. Brooks,

'Apprenticeship, social mobility and the middling sort, 1550-1800', in J. Barry and C. Brooks (eds), *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society and Politics in England, 1550-1800* (London, 1994), 52-83, esp. 77.

<sup>20</sup> Ehmer, 'The artisan family', p. 196 and 199.

<sup>21</sup> Some interesting remarks on this concept in G. Rosser, 'Big brotherhood: Guilds and urban politics in late medieval England', in I.A. Gadd and P. Wallis (eds), *Guilds and associations in Europe, 900-1900* (London, 2006), 27-42, 31-32.

apprentice contracts rather than on customs or corporative by-laws. Analysis of a sample of apprentice contracts and several juridical conflicts between master and (the parents or guardians of) his apprentice indicates that their relationships, even when the apprentice lived with his master, were surprisingly businesslike. They appear to have resulted from contracts rather than ‘status’ and ‘patriarchy’. From a disciplinary perspective, an apprentice’s family was far more important than the guild from at least the first decades of the seventeenth century onward – thus shifting attention to the structural transformations of the long sixteenth century, including Antwerp’s ‘golden age’.

The first section of this article is based upon in-depth and long-term analysis of Antwerp guilds’ by-laws (and account books). Seven guilds are studied in further detail: cabinet makers, carpenters, coopers, gold- and silversmiths, pewterers and plumbers, shoemakers and tanners. In the second section the guilds’ regulations and account books are compared to a sample of 272 apprentice contracts (gathered from notary archives) from within these sectors plus the cloth dressers and the barber-surgeons.<sup>22</sup> The problem with these contracts is that they may be atypical, as most contracts were probably not concluded before a notary. This may explain the bias towards the luxury sector, especially silversmithing in our sample. I tackle this problem (in part) in the subsequent analysis of 20 juridical proceedings concerning disputes over breaches of contract between a master and (the party of) his apprentice.<sup>23</sup> These dossiers are low in number but survived at random.

### Becoming master versus becoming member of a brotherhood

By questioning the traditional view of guilds, scholars have qualified the causal link between the continuity of family firms and guild regulations. Whereas high entrance fees and – especially – the exceptions for masters’ sons have long been regarded as a reason for the closed character of most professions, the current idea is that guilds had only limited impact on occupational mobility.<sup>24</sup> Some historians now claim that continuing a firm within the same family was more a ‘bourgeois’ (or nineteenth century) phenomenon than it was typical for the guild-based trades in the old regime.<sup>25</sup> According to Josef Ehmer, occupational continuity within household was the result of industrialisation and the increasing concentration of capital in certain sectors.<sup>26</sup> But how was family related to the guild in the ancien régime? Was the public sphere of the guild separate from the private realm of the family firm from the late middle ages onward, or should we instead look for a period in which guild and family grew apart?

At first sight, we should begin with an analysis, from a long-term perspective, of the hereditary character of the guilds. What was the ratio of masters’ sons to non-masters’ sons among the new masters, and what changed over time in this respect? For several reasons, this type of analysis would prove inadequate. To start with, the availability of sources is problematic. Account books or registration ledgers in which the new guild members were registered year after year are generally available only for either the eighteenth century or for short time spans in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Current research facilitates long-term perspective only for

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<sup>22</sup> I discovered these contracts thanks to Mrs G. Van Hemeldonck, who kindly provided me with over 2,000 references she had to apprentice contracts. Based on her notes, occupations were selected: barber-surgeons (51 contracts), cloth dressers (12), gold and silversmiths (165), tinsmiths and plumbers (27), shoemakers and tanners (5), and cabinet makers and carpenters (12). Most contracts are from the second half of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries.

<sup>23</sup> These appear in the Antwerpse Stadsarchief [Antwerp municipal archive, hereafter AMA] in the Processen Supplement (hereafter PS). These are only some of the court records that remain, since most are not indexed. The cases used here were the ones retrievable by keyword. They all originate from the period 1579 to 1680, suggesting that important transformations may have occurred there.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. B. De Munck, *Technologies of Learning. Apprenticeship in Antwerp from the 15th Century to the End of the Ancien Régime* (Turnhout, 2007), chs 3 and 4.

<sup>25</sup> Crossick, ‘Past masters’, p. 11.

<sup>26</sup> Ehmer, ‘The artisan family’, p. 202-105.

the coopers' guild, for which we have account books from 1577 through the end of the eighteenth century. These accounts books reveal a changing attitude concerning the habit of registering masters' sons as apprentices. While it was common at the end of the sixteenth century to register several sons from the same family (often on the same day), this practice shifted in favour of registering only one son per master (although registering two sons remained not uncommon in the eighteenth century).<sup>27</sup> One could infer from this that, gradually, only the eldest son was registered as an apprentice, and that, as a result, guild and family firm had drifted apart in this sector. Important questions remain, however. First, the lower number of apprentices per master might be the result of dwindling attractiveness of the guild, due to either economic problems (i.e., perhaps Antwerp's economy permitted establishment of new cooper firms only until the sixteenth century) or to concentration trends (which would have likewise made it more difficult to start new firms). Second, we should consider changing barriers to entry. Perhaps registering as an apprentice gradually grew more expensive; or perhaps, for those not aspiring to master status, it was becoming unnecessary to register as an apprentice, due partly to deteriorating distinction between free and unfree journeymen (free journeymen having finished an apprenticeship while the unfree had not).<sup>28</sup>

Far more revealing than examining ratios of masters' sons to others among the new apprentices and masters are insight into how guild officials regulated entrance to the guild, especially as pertains to the differences between masters' sons and others. How did the guilds' entry requirements change between the fifteenth century and the end of the ancien régime, and what does this reveal about the relationship between the guild and the private sphere of the family? At first glance this might seem a somewhat odd question, but for masters' sons there was an astonishing variety of routes towards mastership. At one end of the scale masters' sons could 'inherit' mastership from their father, such that they could become masters themselves without further requirements in terms of an apprenticeship term, master piece, or entrance fees. At the other end of the scale masters' sons had to meet the same requirements as did others: being inscribed as an apprentice, making a master piece, and paying entrance fees (both as a new apprentice or as a new master). The latter option seems to have been exceptional, but in the long term entry requirements could shift from one end of the scale to the other. This shift, in turn, can be interpreted as a move between ideal typical poles, with the former representing a close relationship between the guild and the masters' family, the other indicating the guild as an organization essentially foreign to the family.

Analysing the entry fees in Antwerp from this perspective is very revealing. Until the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, masters' sons often did not have to pay 'admission fees' (to be paid when becoming a master). In 1436 carpenters' sons could join the guild free of charge.<sup>29</sup> In 1543, they did not have to pay the sixteen guilders for the craft guild and the five guilders for the meal, as did others; in fact they paid just four guilders for the municipal reinforcements.<sup>30</sup> Legitimate children of master shoemakers and tanners paid only the wine and six Brabant groats for the stewards ('knapen') in 1477, whereas for others the admission fee totalled two Brabant pounds, one *gelte* of wine per dean, and two *gelten* of wine for the guild officials.<sup>31</sup> As for 'registration fees' (paid upon registering as an apprentice), the exemptions for masters' sons are even more revealing. Among the Antwerp shoemakers and tanners, masters' sons did not need to register as apprentices at all, so they were probably considered a kind of master 'by birth'.<sup>32</sup> In other sectors, it is less clear how we should interpret the guild ordinances' silence as concerns

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<sup>27</sup> De Munck, *Technologies of Learning*, 162-163.

<sup>28</sup> De Munck, *Technologies of Learning*, ch 4.1 and 4.4.

<sup>29</sup> AMA, Guilds and Crafts (hereafter GC) 4001, fol. 1; GC 4002, fol. 231.

<sup>30</sup> AMA, GC 4341, 31 March 1543, art. 3-6.

<sup>31</sup> AMA, GC 4112, 3 December 1477, fol. 39-43v, arts. 5 and 17; GC 4112bis, pp. 44-51 (copy). Gelte = 2,95 litres.

<sup>32</sup> AMA, GC 4112, 3 December 1477, fol. 39-43v, arts. 5 and 17; GC 4112bis, pp. 44-51 (copy).

masters' children, but the slow rise in subsequent ordinances suggests that masters' sons at first did not have to pay registration fees.

Gradually, the difference between masters' sons and others concerning entry fees started to change. Contrary to the traditional idea that guilds became more exclusive because of privileges for sons of masters, the financial requirements for masters' sons began to resemble those of others.<sup>33</sup> In the first half of the seventeenth century, sons of master carpenters paid thirteen guilders for admission, whereas others paid forty. In 1647 this shifted to forty-eight guilders for regular apprentices and twenty-six for masters' sons.<sup>34</sup> Thus, in relative terms, masters' sons had to pay more. This trend intensified thereafter. In 1658 'ordinary' new masters had to pay sixty guilders, masters' sons forty.<sup>35</sup> In 1746, masters' sons paid 227 guilders and four stuyvers; others 267 guilders and four stuyvers.<sup>36</sup> In relative terms the difference between masters' sons and others had dwindled substantially. In the guild of the cabinet makers, the trend was similar. In 1543 the admission fee rose from fifteen guilders to twenty-three guilders; masters' sons from then on (probably) had to pay twelve guilders.<sup>37</sup> In 1595 the admission fee rose to thirty-six guilders for those who were not sons of masters, and twenty-four guilders for those who were.<sup>38</sup> And in 1755 this fee had risen to 240 guilders for masters' sons, and 290 guilders and sixteen stuyvers for others.<sup>39</sup> When the guilds eventually merged with the carpenters in the ordinance of 6 July 1756, the 'master fee' was 300 guilders for those not the sons of masters and 240 guilders for those who were.<sup>40</sup>

Typically, masters' sons began paying half as much as others during the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; but in the eighteenth century they generally paid more in absolute and relative terms. In the guild of the shoemakers and tanners, sons of masters had to pay half as much as others from at least the mid-seventeenth century onward.<sup>41</sup> In the course of the eighteenth century the ratio was three to four with tanners and shoemakers alike (they had split at the end of the seventeenth century). In 1746 the admission fee in the tanners' guilds amounted to 150 guilders for masters' sons and 200 guilders for others.<sup>42</sup> In 1784 in the shoemakers' guild it was 72 guilders versus 108 guilders.<sup>43</sup> Among the tinsmiths and plumbers the ratio remained two to one in 1770 (18 guilders for masters' sons; 36 guilders for others); but when all additional charges are included (including compensations for the trial masters or elders at whose homes the trials were performed; the use of copper moulds for making the trial; meals and the like), the difference, in relative terms, between masters' sons and other decreases drastically. Altogether, guild membership in 1770 cost 88 guilders or 95 guilders (depending on the status of the prospective masters); masters' sons paid only eighteen guilders less.<sup>44</sup> The same

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<sup>33</sup> One of the problems was that entry fees were examined in absolute terms only, and that the ratio of what masters' sons paid to what others paid was not analysed in a long term perspective. References in De Munck, *Technologies of Learning*, ch 2.3.

<sup>34</sup> AMA, GC 4004, 29 April 1647, fol. 7-8.

<sup>35</sup> AMA, GC, 4341, 11 February 1658. In addition, a new category was included: sons of free journeymen (who paid fifty guilders).

<sup>36</sup> AMA, GC 4341, Ordinance 9 March 1746, art. 5-6. In addition eighteen guilders were due to the six trial masters and two guilders and sixteen stuyvers to the steward; twelve guilders were 'to be consumed'.

<sup>37</sup> AMA, GC 4334, fol. 31-33; GC 4335, 31 March 1543 (1544).

<sup>38</sup> AMA, GC 4334, fol. 50r-51r; GC 4335, fol. 63v-65v, 26 July 1595 (copy).

<sup>39</sup> AMA, GC 4345, fol. 5ff, Request 30 August 1755.

<sup>40</sup> AMA, GC 4345, 6 July 1756, art. 7, 12-15.

<sup>41</sup> Not including the "expenses" ('vacatiën'), the chapel, and the poor box. Including them diminishes the difference. AMA, GC4112, 1644, fol. 114v-116r.; GC 4113, 12 July 1655; AMA, GC 4112, fol. 125v-126, 19 July 1655; GC 4112bis, pp. 151-152; GC 4113, 19 July 1655.

<sup>42</sup> AMA, GC 4112, 17 February 1746, fol. 163r, art. 1-3.

<sup>43</sup> AMA, GC 4008, Survey 1784, shoemakers, fifth question.

<sup>44</sup> AMA, GC 4264, 1 March 1543 (1544); GC 4264, Request 29 January 1684; GC 4264, 17 February 1684; AMA, GC 4264, 25 June 1705; GC 4264, Request 2 November 1712; AMA, GC 4264, Order 22 October 1770, AMA, GC 4264, Request 5 September 1771, GC 4264, *Advies*, 1772.

applies to other guilds: when all charges are included, the financial privilege for masters' sons falls drastically.<sup>45</sup>

In short, one could say that membership requirements for masters' sons came gradually to resemble the requirements of others. The shift is even more interesting when considering registration fees. As shoemakers and tanners were not to be registered as apprentices, they paid no registration fees until mid-seventeenth century.<sup>46</sup> In 1655 the registration fee amounted to two guilders for 'outsiders' and half that for masters' sons.<sup>47</sup> At the end of the ancien régime, the registration fees for masters' sons were still waived among the tanners<sup>48</sup>; but in the shoemakers' guild they paid the same as others (eight guilders).<sup>49</sup> The sons of master cabinet makers paid no registration fees until 1755, while others paid the considerable sum of 21 guilders.<sup>50</sup> After the merge with the carpenters, the registration fee was 43 guilders and ten stuyvers for regular apprentices; 21 guilders and fifteen stuyvers for masters' sons.<sup>51</sup> For the carpenters this amounted to a slight decrease for masters' sons, but here the long-term trend is unclear. The same applies to the tinsmiths and plumbers. By 1770 masters' sons paid the full sum of 30 stuyvers, in addition to the two guilders for the mercers, but it is unclear if they had done so before. Registration fees for masters' sons among the gold- and silversmiths also confirm the trend: they paid registration fees from 1646 onward.<sup>52</sup>

In other words, membership for them had become very much like membership for non-masters' sons. This suggests that the gap between guild and family had widened. Of course, additional research is needed here. One interesting topic would be the guilds' definition in juridical terms of who was a master's son. Guilds typically restricted the privilege to sons born when the father was a master.<sup>53</sup> This applied, for example, among the carpenters (in 1543). Other guilds distinguished between firstborn sons and others, as was the case with the gardeners in Louvain<sup>54</sup> and the shoemakers in Mechelen.<sup>55</sup> We could again interpret this in terms of a difference between being member of a brotherhood by birth versus inheriting the family firm.<sup>56</sup> Another related field of attention is the question of whether masters' sons had to make a master piece. One could argue that masters' sons, in not being required to make a master piece, were considered as having been born into the guild, unlike those who were required to prove that they had learned the trade properly.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> See De Munck, *Technologies of Learning*, 94-96; Also B. Willems, 'Het Antwerpse kuipersambacht (1580-1796)', (unpubl. licentiate's thesis VUB, Brussels, 1997), 84-86.

<sup>46</sup> In Paris as well very few guilds counted sons of masters as apprentices. S.L. Kaplan, 'L'apprentissage au XVIIIe siècle: le cas de Paris', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 40, 3 (1993), 436-479, 456.

<sup>47</sup> AMA, GC 4004, 19 July 1655, fol. 60v; GC 4112, fol. 125v-126r; GC 4112bis, p. 151-152; GC 4113, 19 July 1655.

<sup>48</sup> AMA, GC 4112bis, p. 192-197, 13 September 1774, art.2.

<sup>49</sup> AMA, GC 4008, Survey 1784, shoemakers/tanners, fifth question

<sup>50</sup> AMA, GC 4345, fol. 5ff, Request 30 August 1755.

<sup>51</sup> AMA, GC 4345, fol. 5, 30 August 1755; GC 4345, fol. 9ev., 6 July 1756.

<sup>52</sup> D. Schlugleit, *De Antwerpse goud- en zilvermeden in het corporatief stelsel (1382-1789)*, (Wetteren, 1969), 146 and 366.

<sup>53</sup> E.g. AMA, GC 4341, 31 March 1543, art. 3 (carpenters); A. Van De Velde, *De ambachten van de timmerlieden en de schrijnwerkers te Brugge, hun wetten, hun geschillen en hun gewrochten van de 14<sup>de</sup> tot de 19<sup>de</sup> eeuw* (Ghent, 1909), 12 (carpenters in Bruges).

<sup>54</sup> A. Meulemans, 'Leuvense ambachten. De hoveniers, fruiteniers en mandenmakers', *Eigen schoon en de Brabander*, 38, 1955, p. 27. Also: L. Van Buyten, 'Arbeid en commercie op het einde van het Ancien Regiem: ondernemers, ambachtsmeesters en werklui te Leuven rond 1789', in: *Leuven anno 1789* (Louvain, 1989), 70-72.

<sup>55</sup> In 1578 there were three level for the entries fees: one for the eldest son of an master (two guilders), one for other sons of masters (ten guilders) and one for outsiders (22 guilders). D. Pepermans, 'Sociaal-economische studie van het schoenmakers- en schoenlappersambacht te Mechelen in de Nieuwe Tijd' (unpubl. licentiate's thesis VUB, Brussels, 1999), 63-64.

<sup>56</sup> Interestingly, the gold- and silversmiths seem to have shifted from the former system to the latter. See B. De Munck, *Technologies of Learning*, 89 and 101-109. Also Pepermans, Sociaal-economische studie, p. 64.

<sup>57</sup> In Ghent, for instance, master sons were usually free from the obligation to make a master piece. J. Dambruyne, *Corporatieve middengroepen. Aspiraties, relaties en transformaties in de 16de-eeuwse Gentse ambachtswereld* (Ghent, 2002), 211.

As for Antwerp, my hypothesis would be that corporative regulations in any case reflected both a widening gap between guild and family and a growing concern about the continuity of family firms. While the entry requirements for masters' sons came gradually to resemble those of others, exceptions were still made for sons who intended to follow in their fathers' footsteps.<sup>58</sup> The gold- and silversmiths, for instance, clearly distinguished eldest sons from others from 1646 on. The next question, then, is how this affected the relationship between master and apprentice on the shop floor. Were masters' sons trained by their fathers or by another master? Can masters be regarded as substitute fathers in cases when they trained other apprentices? Was a master's authority restricted to the shop floor or did it extend to the private realm and even to the public sphere? Clearly, the first question to ask is whether apprentices not only worked but also lived on their masters' premises.

### To board in order to learn?

Regulations concerning boarding by apprentices are highly instructive for understanding the role of craft guilds. Generally, boarding apprentices is associated with an ancien régime situation, where in addition to moving into a different household, apprentices were raised and disciplined by a surrogate father. As such, the corporative boarding requirement might appear to indicate that masters wielded a type of corporative mandate. The emergence of a category of pupils that no longer boarded is associated with freedom of work or learning.<sup>59</sup> Rephrased in terms of the field of tension between guild and family, one could argue that the disappearing custom of boarding with a master indicates a widening gap between the private sphere of the family (and learning a craft) and the public sphere of the guild (and being socialized into a particular status). But the first question, of course, is whether that custom was indeed disappearing, and if so, for whom. Secondly, one should examine why the custom disappeared, and perhaps why it had existed in the first place. Thirdly, the question of the guild's role must be reconsidered.

In theory, we should again begin with the masters' sons. The question of whether masters' sons learned or even boarded with masters other than their fathers could shed light on the relationship between guild and family. One might regard masters' sons boarding with another master as an indication that the guild was a family-like brotherhood, one in which a master/father was easily replaced by another father/master. Unfortunately, the available sources do not allow for establishing unambiguously if masters' sons boarded with another master. As we have seen, masters' sons were not always registered as apprentices in registration ledgers. Furthermore, due to their not having to pay registration fees, we cannot always find their names in account books. If registration ledgers or account books did register the names of the apprentice and his master (enabling one to infer if they were father and son), it remains difficult to decide if the apprentice in question learned with another master (perhaps because that master had different skills than the apprentice's father) or if he actually *boarded* there.

Nonetheless, some fragmentary data enable us to formulate a hypothesis concerning a possible evolution in the early modern period.<sup>60</sup> Among the carpenters, the number of masters' sons registered under their fathers' names increased from 55 to 100 percent in the eighteenth century (N=78). This increase accompanied a significant decrease in the total number of masters' sons registered (from 20 in the first decade of the century to one in the last). Thus the disappearance of masters' sons learning elsewhere is possibly the result of a waning necessity to

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<sup>58</sup> Schlugleit, *De Antwerpse goud- en zilvermeden*, 146. Before that date, they appear to have hesitated between privileging 'natural' sons or 'legitimate sons', in 1524 restricting privileged entrance especially to *legitimate* sons (GC 4488, 24 November 1524, art. 7, fol. 114v). It is unclear how we should interpret this, but a possible hypothesis is to understand 'natural sons' here not as a sons born outside of the master's marriage, but born when the father was not a master yet. In that case, the shift towards 'first born son' could be seen as a step towards privileging (only) the one inheriting the family firm in stead of the ones born within the guild.

<sup>59</sup> Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor*, 257-263; Charlot and Figeat, *Histoire de la formation des ouvriers*, 37ff.

<sup>60</sup> De Munck, *Technologies of Learning*, ch 5.2.2.

do so. Perhaps sons learning elsewhere resulted from fathers lacking sufficient work to engage their sons or from the fathers already holding the maximum number of apprentices a master could hire (due to guild stipulations concerning maximum numbers of apprentices per master).<sup>61</sup> However, the account books of both the gold- and silversmiths and the coopers suggest that other factors were involved. The gold- and silversmiths' account books enable one to establish the degree to which masters' sons apprenticed with their fathers for a limited time. Between 1562 and 1592 fifty out of eighty new apprentices (62.5 percent) who were masters' sons apprenticed elsewhere. It is impossible to know if all of them boarded with the other masters; but the registration of Gillis Marsants in the account of 1579-1580 states explicitly that he would be living with his father, thus suggesting that the arrangement was unusual.<sup>62</sup> As for the coopers, the earliest accounts show that a small minority of masters' sons (five of the 93 who registered between 1577 and 1601) did not apprentice with their own fathers (or at least with a namesake). This figure dropped to zero in the eighteenth century, suggesting that in the long term it became more exceptional for masters' sons to board elsewhere when learning their fathers' trade. Of course, one could argue that the fathers of these five youths had either died or held insufficient work, so that already in the sixteenth century the general custom was for masters' sons to be trained at home. So the remaining question is whether the practice of masters' sons boarding with another master either disappeared between the fifteenth and the eighteenth centuries or was not customary even before.

In order to learn more, we must again turn to apprentices who were not sons of masters. From our sample of apprentice contracts, we can see that the custom of apprentices boarding with their masters was under pressure in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Apart from the wood sector (for which there is an insufficient number of observations), the relative number of apprentices boarding tended to decrease.

Table 1: Rates of apprentices that boarded according to Antwerp apprentice contracts (percentages)

Source: Database (N between brackets)

| <b>Occupations</b>            | <b>... -1649</b> | <b>1650-1699</b> | <b>1700-1749</b> | <b>1750-1799</b> |
|-------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Barber-surgeons               | /                | 96.4 [28]        | 94.7 [19]        | 75.0 [4]         |
| Cloth dressers                | /                | 100 [5]          | 100 [4]          | 0.0 [3]          |
| Gold and silversmiths         | 100 [6]          | 85.7 [77]        | 83.9 [56]        | 57.7 [26]        |
| Tinsmiths and plumbers        | /                | 71.4 [7]         | 46.7 [15]        | 25.0 [4]         |
| Cabinet makers and carpenters | 0.0 [2]          | 25.0 [8]         | 50.0 [2]         | /                |

Notwithstanding the insufficient number of observations overall, the declining trend is clear. What caused this trend? Did it have anything to do with changing guild rules (or practices aimed at enforcing them)? Despite the small sample sizes (indicated in square brackets in Table 1), we can formulate a tentative hypothesis. Andreas Griebinger and Reinhold Reith have argued that industries where workshops remained small differed from industries that experienced 'pre-capitalist' growth. In occupations dominated by small-scale family firms, apprentices are considered to have been subject to closer patriarchal supervision and likely performed more household chores. In contrast, in many textile sectors and in the construction industry the relationship between apprentices and masters gradually began to resemble that between an employer and a labourer.<sup>63</sup> At first sight, the pattern in our sample confirms this hypothesis. After

<sup>61</sup> In Antwerp a maximum of one or two apprentices per master was the norm. See De Munck, *Technologies of Learning*, ch. 3.2.

<sup>62</sup> AMA, GC 4487, Account book of gold and silversmiths, 1579-1580.

<sup>63</sup> A. Griebinger and R. Reith, 'Lehrlinge im deutschen Handwerk des ausgehenden 18. Jahrhunderts. Arbeitsorganisation, Sozialbeziehungen und alltägliche Konflikte', *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung*, 13 (1986), 149-199.

all, as the tinsmiths and plumbers' group consisted mainly of plumbers, and as carpenters prevailed over cabinet makers, these artisans may be associated with the construction industry, where larger businesses tended to have control. Gold- and silversmiths and barber-surgeons reflected a more traditional profile.

However, other factors, such as apprentice age, may have also been important. Through age 14, 94.1 percent of apprentices boarded (16 out of 17); from age 15 through 17, 71.4 percent of apprentices boarded (15 out of 21); and of the apprentices over age 18 only 53.8 percent boarded (7 out of 13). Another obvious factor was how far the parents lived from the workplace. As observed previously, boarding continued longer in occupations that received a large share of apprentices from the countryside.<sup>64</sup> Since the place of origin is indicated as being outside Antwerp in only 25 cases, we lack the material to address this aspect in detail. But given that the percentage of apprentices boarding in our sample was lowest in occupations for which the share of newcomers is likely to have been larger, this factor does not appear to have been decisive.

As to the role of the guilds, fragmentary data from guild ordinances seem to indicate that the corporative prescriptions did matter in that respect. Boarding gradually ceased to be required during the course of the eighteenth century,<sup>65</sup> after which the custom was basically abandoned.<sup>66</sup> The cloth dressers abolished the boarding requirement in 1745, and the apprentices in our database did in fact stop doing so after this date.<sup>67</sup> The pattern was similar among the tinsmiths and plumbers, who abolished the boarding requirement in 1731.<sup>68</sup> Nor has any evidence of such a requirement been found among the cabinet makers and carpenters, and this group in fact had the lowest share of apprentices that boarded throughout the period reviewed. The gold and silversmiths reaffirmed the requirement in 1673. Only after the mid-eighteenth century does this occupational group appear to have started to enforce it less rigidly.<sup>69</sup> By 1784 most craft guilds had ceased to require apprentices to board.<sup>70</sup> Barber-surgeons were the sole exception among the occupations examined here: as they were the only guild examined here still requiring boarding in about 1784, it was no coincidence that this group had the highest rate of apprentices living under the roofs of their master.<sup>71</sup>

My tentative hypothesis would therefore be that corporative prescriptions regarding boarding were what really enforced the practice. This does not mean, however, that boarding had been made compulsory on educational, patriarchal or disciplinary grounds. Although craft guilds had indeed prescribed boarding, the purpose had little to do with education, training, or a paternalistic ideal. Each time this rule appears in guild regulations, it served to prevent unfree workers from registering as apprentices without actually learning the craft on the shop floor.<sup>72</sup> Masters typically faced illegal entrepreneurs (generally merchants or mercers) who had neither served as apprentices nor made a master piece but who still acted as masters. Like masters, these illegal entrepreneurs recruited journeymen in order to produce products rather than purchasing them from masters (or subcontracting to masters). Such *faux-maîtres* tried to register as apprentices without really learning the trade. Another strategy was to form companies with

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<sup>64</sup> R. Reith, 'Zur beruflichen Sozialisation im Handwerk vom 18. bis ins frühe 20. Jahrhundert. Umriss einer Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Lehrlinge', *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 76, 1 (1989), 1-27, 10-12.

<sup>65</sup> Frans Smekens has observed that in 1784 craft guilds relaxed their regulations in one respect: compulsory boarding by apprentices. Frans Smekens, *De verzamelde geschriften van Frans Smekens* (Borgerhout, s.d.), 53.

<sup>66</sup> AMA, GC 4264, *Contrarie redenen met versoeck voor...*, 1760, art. 48-51.

<sup>67</sup> AMA, GC 4029, 8 November 1745, art. 3.

<sup>68</sup> AMA, GC 4008, Guild survey 1784, nr. 26.

<sup>69</sup> Schlugleit, *De Antwerpse goud- en zilversmeden*, 158-159, 215-220, 242-248, 306-308, 312ev.

<sup>70</sup> AMA, GC 4008, Guild survey 1784, nrs. 26 (shoemakers), 29 (tinsmiths and plumbers), 30 (carpenters and cabinet makers).

<sup>71</sup> AMA, GC 4008, Guild survey 1784, barber-surgeons, art. 4.

<sup>72</sup> For the occupations selected here: AMA, GC 4028, 20 September 1696, art. 1, 7, 8 and 10 (cloth dressers); GC 4264, 1 March 1543, GC 4004, 4 July 1651, fol. 42v-43v (pewterers and plumbers); GC 4488, 14 January 1543, fol. 76r and 78r (gold and silversmiths).

masters and to use their marks, which legalised their work at the same time.<sup>73</sup> The failure of compulsory apprenticeship periods (and master pieces) to prevent such practices led to boarding being made compulsory in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>74</sup> It was unambiguously prescribed to eliminate fictitious apprentice periods. As such, compulsory boarding was lumped together with the prohibition against forming companies where a legal master ‘liberated’ an illegal master.<sup>75</sup> Even master trials appear to have been introduced for that purpose.<sup>76</sup> The aim of the craft guilds was to exclude large merchants or illegal entrepreneurs hoping to become masters without actually learning the occupation.<sup>77</sup>

That this happened mostly in the sixteenth century does not make explaining the relationship between norm and practice any easier – for what was the ratio of boarding to non-boarding among apprentices before and after introduction of the obligation to do so? My hypothesis would in any case be that the Antwerp craft guilds evolved from informal, family-like brotherhoods into businesslike juridical institutions because of economic expansion in the long sixteenth century.<sup>78</sup> In the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, before apprenticeships became a standard requirement, guild boards were expected to inform the municipal authorities ‘what person that is’ whenever somebody applied for master status. In addition, new masters were often required to ‘demonstrate’ their competence, which presumably meant that master trials would be required ad hoc for prospective masters not known in the city. An artisan immigrating to Antwerp and immediately aspiring to master status was obliged to prove ‘that he is able to do his craft reasonably.’<sup>79</sup> Since the standard apprentice period and master trial were subsequently prescribed at a time when Antwerp attracted a broad circle of newcomers, question arises as to whether this might have served to control the influx. A growing influx of artisans (of all sorts) may have strained face-to-face-relations and the role of family networks within the guild, one result of which was a growing necessity for formal rules on apprenticeship.

More research is needed here of course, but guild ordinances in any case reveal a growing lack of interest in the organization’s collective activities. Guilds continued to be present in traditional urban festivities such as processions, but members often had to be forced to attend these ceremonies. This is evident from the fines that were forecasted repeatedly in the guilds’ ordinances.<sup>80</sup> The fines were to be paid by masters who were absent at ‘internal’ activities, such as

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<sup>73</sup> AMA, GC 4001, 2 August 1493, fol. 128-129 (carpenters); GC 4488, fol. 82; GC 4485, no. 1, 24 January 1543, fol. 11r-12v; GC 4001, fol. 187v-188; GC 4002, 22 November 1574, fol. 64v; GC 4485, no. 3, fol. 14v; GC 4488, fol. 76-78, 82 (gold and silversmiths); GC 4337, 19 July 1694, fol. 36 (cabinet makers); GC 4028, 20 September 1696, p. 123, arts 7, 8, and 10 (cloth dressers). See also H. Deceulaer, *Pluriforme patronen en een verschillende snit. Sociaal-economische, institutionele en culturele transformaties in de kledingsector in Antwerpen, Brussel en Gent, 1585-1800* (Amsterdam, 2001), 162.

<sup>74</sup> AMA, GC, 4262, 7 September 1521, fol. 1-2 (oil pressers); GC 4264, 1 March 1543 (1544); GC 4004, 4 July 1651, fol. 42v-43v (pewterers and plumbers); GC 4488, 24 January 1543, fol. 76r and 78r (gold and silversmiths); GC 4017, 30 May 1576, fol. 333ff (cloth cutters); GC 4255, 17 January 1595, art. 6ff (hat makers); GC 4028, 20 September 1696, art. 1 (cloth dressers).

<sup>75</sup> AMA, GC 4262, 7 September 1521, art. 1-3 (oil pressers); GC 4255, 17 January 1595, arts. 6-15 en 20-24 (hat makers); GC 4028, September 1556, art. 6; GC 4028, 20 September 1696, art. 1-2; GC 4028, 20 Sept. 1696, art. 10 (cloth dressers).

<sup>76</sup> See B. De Munck, ‘Skills, trust and changing consumer preferences. The decline of Antwerp’s craft guilds from the perspective of the product market, ca. 1500 – ca. 1800’, *International Review of Social History*, 53, 2 (2008), 197-233.

<sup>77</sup> On this subject, see B. De Munck, ‘La qualité du corporatisme. Stratégies économiques et symboliques des corporations anversoises du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle à leur abolition’, *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 54, 1 (2007), 116-144.

<sup>78</sup> On this subject, see also B. De Munck, ‘Fiscalizing solidarity (from below). Poor relief in Antwerp guilds between community building and public service’, in M. van der Heijden and G. Vermeesch, *Serving the community. Public facilities in early modern towns of the Low Countries* (Amsterdam, 2009) forthcoming.

<sup>79</sup> E.g. AMA, GC 4001, 8 February 1404, fol. 3r (shoemakers); GC 4001, 6 November 1436, fol. 1r, art 2 (carpenters); GC 4001, 20 August 1428, fol. 49 (cabinet makers and coopers); GC 4352, 1 March 1434, fo; 12v (blacksmiths).

<sup>80</sup> E.g. AMA, GC 4001, 18 October 1424, fol. 42 (wood breakers); GC 1 March 1434, fol. 14 (blacksmith); GC 4124bis, 19 May 1456, art. 15 (tailors); GC 4017, 17 September 1487, art. 6 (hosiers); GC 4101, 7 November 1538, fol. 11r (wood breakers); GC 4488, 31 March 1544, art. 21-22 (gold- and silversmiths); GC 4060, 24 May 1557

the nameday of the patron saint and attendance at funerals of fellow masters. Moreover, the internal meals tended to disappear. From the sixteenth century onward they were systematically replaced with obligatory financial contributions from new members that were paid to relieve the guilds' debt.<sup>81</sup> In some guilds, masters had to be forced to fulfill certain director functions, and some were prepared to pay considerable sums to escape their duties when elected dean or poor-box master.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, reference to external signs signaling adherence to a certain guild disappeared from the guild statutes and ordinances. During the fifteenth century, new guild members as a rule had to possess the guild's costume,<sup>83</sup> yet in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries not a single guild mentions any sort of uniform. In 1550 the coopers deliberately stopped requiring that masters attach 'some silver' on their sleeves.<sup>84</sup> Some masters refused to apply the guild's sign to their shops, as was the case with the gold and silversmiths.<sup>85</sup>

In all, from at least the fifteenth century on, the public sphere of the guild and the private sphere of the family seem to have evolved into two separate realms. From at least the end of the sixteenth century, the guild boards themselves gradually lost interest in the brotherhood-like functions of their organisations. The remaining question is what this may have changed for the relationship between master and apprentice on the shop floor and in the master's house.

### Between master and family

Unfortunately, a lack of sources prevents full examination of the daily relationship on the shop floor for the long sixteenth century, when changes appear to have been the most drastic. However, thanks to a sample of 272 apprentice contracts (most of which originate from the second half of the seventeenth and the eighteenth century) and the files of some 20 juridical proceedings on breach of contract (all from the period 1579-1680), we can unveil some characteristics of the master-apprentice-relationship from the seventeenth century on. In order to do so we should first shed light on the role of 'third parties' who may have affected contracting practices. Historians have argued from an economic perspective that guilds acted as third-party enforcers of contracts.<sup>86</sup> Regarding Antwerp, current research does not permit firm statements on that account, but stipulations about education and discipline were in any case absent from corporative statutes and by-laws. Apart from minimum terms for learning and boarding requirements, guild ordinances remained silent on the relationship between master and apprentice. Apprentice contracts, in turn, did not refer to the guild or to the guilds' rules, thus suggesting that the contracting parties agreed upon the contract terms autonomously.<sup>87</sup> To a certain degree, this may be explained by the fact that a master derived his authority from custom and juridical treatises like the famous texts of Damhouder and Wielandt. The latter stipulated that

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(bakers), art. 7-9; GC 4028, 7 October 1537, fol. 6; GC 4028, 30 July 1610, fol. 75-76 (cloth dressers); GC 4356, 30 July 1610 (locksmiths).

<sup>81</sup> Examples and references in De Munck, *Technologies of Learning*, ch 2.3.3.

<sup>82</sup> E.g. AMA, GC 4028, 21 July 1561, fol. 51-52 (cloth dressers); E. Huys, *Duizend jaar mutualiteit bij de Vlaamsche gilden* (Kortrijk, 1926), Annexe I, 94-95 (silk weavers) and 100 (linen weavers).

<sup>83</sup> E.g. AMA, GC 4267, 21 August 1458, fol. 108-109 (masons); GC 4001, 4 November 1430, fol. 25v (linen weavers); GC 4002, 18 April 1422, fol. 9 (mercens); GC 4001, 1 September 1421, fol. 17 (shipmasters).

<sup>84</sup> In stead, the silver would be distributed to the poor box. 19 Januari 1550-51, Huys, *Duizend jaar*, Annexe I, 52.

<sup>85</sup> AMA, GC 4485, nr. 15, 13 and 27 September 1688, fol. 33r-33v.

<sup>86</sup> Jan Luiten Van Zanden, 'Common workmen, philosophers and the birth of the European knowledge economy. About the price and the production of useful knowledge in Europe 1350-1800', Paper for the GEHN conference on Useful Knowledge, Leiden, Sept. 2004; revised 12 Oct. 2004, [www.iisg.nl/research/jvz-knowledge\\_economy.pdf](http://www.iisg.nl/research/jvz-knowledge_economy.pdf) (consulted on 1 December 2008); Idem, 'De timmerman, de boekdrukker en het ontstaan van de Europese kenniseconomie. Over de prijs en het aanbod van kennis vóór de Industriële Revolutie', in *Tijdschrift voor sociale en economische geschiedenis*, 2, 1 (2005), 105-120, 113. See also S.R. Epstein, 'Craft guilds, apprenticeship, and technological change in pre-industrial Europe', *Journal of Economic History*, 58, 3 (1998), 684-713

<sup>87</sup> In contrast to Paris, where notarial contracts were sanctioned by the signatures of those sworn into the guild concerned. S.L. Kaplan, 'L'apprentissage au XVIIIe siècle: le cas de Paris', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 40, 3 (1993), 437-438 and 455-456.

a master could beat his apprentice (or child, wife, servant etc.), even to the point of injury, as long as it was aimed at ‘correcting’ the youth and did not happen ‘excessively’.<sup>88</sup> On the whole, however, juridical texts as well are remarkably silent on the relationship between master and apprentice. If the relationship was regulated, the bottom-line seems to have been the respective obligation of both parties to serve the contract.<sup>89</sup> In the end, a kind of ‘freedom to contract’ appears to have been the rule.

Unsurprisingly, then, contrary to the guilds’ statutes and ordinances, apprentice contracts as a rule included stipulations about the authority of masters. These stipulations abound with phrases indicating that apprentices ‘are to be obedient and subservient in all respects’.<sup>90</sup> On the one hand, however, we could easily infer from this that when an apprentice contract was concluded the authority of the master was no longer self-evident.<sup>91</sup> On the other, even in the case of the contracts, the extent to which these phrases were relevant remains open to question. It is not always clear to what measure notaries used templates and simply copied standard phrases in apprentice contracts. Remarkable similarities between contracts concluded by the same notary suggest that such practice was common, thus complicating any determination of which stipulations actually mattered to those concerned. Still, several deviations from the standard phrases indicate that at least some of the masters’ authority over apprentices was deliberately circumscribed within the contract, thus suggesting that it was open to negotiation. Over ten percent of the contracts determined that the respective apprentices concerned had to ‘obey in all aspects relating to the craft’, ‘obey in all that relates to the prescribed craft,’ and even: ‘regulating himself and doing everything that depends on the guild shop.’<sup>92</sup> This meant that subordination of apprentices was qualified, and that the apprentices were required to obey only with respect to occupation. Was the authority of the master limited to the shop floor? To what extent did it reach into the public and the private sphere? As to the distinction between the private sphere of the master’s house versus the shop floor, court records reveal that domestic chores were not considered part of the contract. In several court records about runaway apprentices, the apprentice’s party complained about the youth having to perform household chores. Whether a boy was expected to work as a servant in his master’s household depended on the price paid.<sup>93</sup> In other words, in considering a master’s authority we should not only distinguish between the shop floor, the home of the master, and the public sphere, but also keep the contract in mind.

Of course, the authority of masters over apprentices on the shop floor was never challenged. In a court case between a notary and an apprentice who had run away, for example, the notary was derided for his inability to keep order among his boys.<sup>94</sup> With apprentices that boarded, we may assume that masters controlled their private lives as well. Masters expected appropriate respect and could easily argue that they had no obligation to keep ‘such persons’ in

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<sup>88</sup> F. Wielant, *Verzameld werk. I. Corte instructie in materie criminele*, ed. J. Monballyu, (Brussels, 1995), 274.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. *Rechten ende costumen van Antwerpen*, Titel LIX, Van Hueringhe, art. 23. <http://www.kuleuven-kortrijk.be/facult/rechten/Monballyu/Rechtlagelanden/Brabantsrecht/antwerpen/impressa2.html> (consulted on 1 December 2008); ‘Obligation pour les serviteurs et servantes ainsi que pour leur maîtres d’observer le terme des contrats d’engagement’, J. Bolsée, *Recueil des anciennes ordonnances de la Belgique*, serie II, VII, 1555-1559 (Brussels, 1957), p. 212-213.

<sup>90</sup> E.g. AMA, Notaries’ Archives (hereafter N) 2025, 11 June 1734; N 4176, fol. 42 (1739); N 918, 19 Jan. 1698.

<sup>91</sup> Unfortunately, based on our sample of notarial contract it is impossible to state something on the practice of contracting as such. For the first half of the seventeenth century we found only two contracts (in the occupations selected), 127 come from the second half of that century, 97 for the first half of the eighteenth century, and 38 for the second half of that century. Of the eight contracts we found from before 1600, three are from aldermen’s registers (1469, 1479, 1537). Unlike with the Notaries’ Archive, however, the aldermen’s registers were not systematically searched, so the question remains as to what extent contracts were registered there until to about 1650.

<sup>92</sup> E.g. AMA, N 4760, nr. 30 (1794); N 133, 14 October 1732; N 1609, fol. 82 (1706).

<sup>93</sup> AMA, PS 3587, *Rephycke*, art. 15-16. Also PS 2713, *Antwoorde*, art. 5 (1657); and PS 2209; PS 2637; PS 4159; PS 5496.

<sup>94</sup> AMA, PS 2426, *Reproche voor Margriet Brugmans*, art. 8-9 (1584).

their home, if they failed to treat them with such respect.<sup>95</sup> A master baker who was ordered by the deans to take back in his home an apprentice he had sent away (or who had run away) refused on the ground that ‘everybody should be free in his home.’<sup>96</sup> This master also believed he should be taken at his word, when he said that the conduct of the apprentice violated his authority.<sup>97</sup> This does not mean, however, that the authority of masters was absolute, not even in their own home. The conflicts examined appear moreover to confirm that the *in loco parentis* principle could no longer be taken for granted.<sup>98</sup>

Although the prerogatives of masters were circumscribed by criminal law rather than by the contracts, what was permitted might also be a subject of debate and figure in the negotiations (possibly through threats) between the master and the party supplying the apprentices. When widow Vander Borgh returned her runaway son to master Verwilt, the master refused to take him back at first. His condition was that he be permitted to beat him again if necessary, even with a spade. The mother agreed to this term.<sup>99</sup> In another case about serving out a contract, a father suggested to the master that he should hit the youth, if he did not want to work.<sup>100</sup> In the end, masters were often on the defensive, as may be inferred from the fact that they were the ones – except in two cases – filing the lawsuit.<sup>101</sup> Remarkably, apprentices in some trials appear to have challenged their masters deliberately to instigate breach of contract. The master of Jeronimus Marien accused his mother for having instigated the youth to deliberately make mistakes at work. According to the master, the idea was to have the master beat the apprentice, so that the latter could depart legally.<sup>102</sup> It would be interesting to examine whether the labour market was a factor here. As all records found concern cases between 1579 and 1680, a period in which skilled labour is not known to have been abundant, the point might be that masters had difficulty recruiting apprentices.<sup>103</sup> Whatever the case may be, apprentice contracts may have undermined the positions of masters as well.

The scope of the master’s responsibility figured in the negotiations over a new contract. The contracts dealt extensively with the attire provided and with laundering the clothes and linens of apprentices. Rather than determining what was provided, the contracts stipulated who was responsible for such items. The first and most important agreement was whether apprentices would board or not, without much additional elaboration. Presumably, the expectations were clear in most cases. A suit against a master diamond polisher, for example, reveals that this held true for bedding.<sup>104</sup> The master was accused of providing substandard sleeping accommodations. The hard straw mattress without a bedstead or pillow, ragged blanket, and clean sheet every six months were compared to sleeping arrangements for dogs.<sup>105</sup> The situation was similar with respect to the apprentice’s underwear, which was supposed to be decent and clean.<sup>106</sup> Discussions about the food provided to apprentices reveal that this was another frequent subject of negotiations. Some apprentices pilfered fruit, when they were supposed to be spending their

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<sup>95</sup> AMA, PS 5745, *Antwoorde ende verclaeren*, art. 5 (1665).

<sup>96</sup> AMA, PS 5745, *Contrapersistit loco duplicque*, art. 7.

<sup>97</sup> AMA, PS 5745, *Salvatie*, art. 15.

<sup>98</sup> 13 of the 19 apprentices caught in a dispute between their master and their parents or guardians boarded with their master.

<sup>99</sup> AMA, PS 13, *Antwoorde reconventionale ende persistit*, art. 9.

<sup>100</sup> AMA, PS 2897, *Replicque*, art. 11 (1600).

<sup>101</sup> Comp. with I. Krausman Ben-Amos, ‘Service and the coming of age in seventeenth-century England’, *Continuity and Change*, 3, 1 (1988), 41-64, 63, footnote 55 and P. Rushton, ‘The matter in variance: adolescents and domestic conflict in the pre-industrial economy of Northeast England, 1600-1800’, *Journal of Social History*, 25, 1 (1991), 89-107, 92.

<sup>102</sup> AMA, PS 13, *Antwoorde reconventionale ende persistit*, art. 15 (1579)

<sup>103</sup> De Munck, *Technologies of Learning*, Chapter 3.3.

<sup>104</sup> AMA, PS 4159, *Antwoorde*, art. 22.

<sup>105</sup> AMA, PS 4159, *Antwoorde*, art. 22 (1675).

<sup>106</sup> AMA, PS 4159, *Duplicque*, art. 20; PS 13, *Replicque reconventionale ende persistit*, art. 5ev. (1579).

pocket money supplementing the regular meals.<sup>107</sup> The apprentice pharmacist Jan Van Lingervelt, for whom 22 Flemish pounds a year were paid for ‘board’, ostentatiously consumed a cup of almond milk after a heated argument and then went to sleep.<sup>108</sup> And Jan Noninx had burst into a rage on various occasions, because the lady of the house had not prepared the food the young man had envisaged.<sup>109</sup>

Clearly, apprentices had several minimum standards in mind, and these were closely associated with perceptions of their status. But the contract mattered as well. In addition to more general complaints about the quality and quantity of the food, it was sometimes argued that this depended on the price paid (or the apprenticeship duration, which up to a certain degree amounts to the same). Françoise Van Ranst, who lived and worked in a linen shop, complained that the food she received there was ‘not worth a hundred guilders a year.’<sup>110</sup> Some apprentice contracts even included explicit agreements concerning eating and sleeping arrangements. They might determine that apprentices would take their meals with the master the last two years.<sup>111</sup> Or it might be agreed that apprentices would receive the same food as that served to the master.<sup>112</sup> Eleven contracts stipulated exactly who would be responsible for the bed and bedclothes (in three cases the master, in eight the father, mother, or guardian) of the youth, giving rise to very detailed arrangements.<sup>113</sup> Such discussions indicate that the specific facilities and conduct under the roof of the master depended on the precise balance of power in the home, which in turn depended on the stipulations in the apprentice contract. Conceivably, therefore, apprentice contracts (executed by a notary) appeared primarily when parties did not know what to expect.

It was especially unclear in what measure the master’s authority extended outside his home.<sup>114</sup> Clauses about leisure time of apprentices were rare, suggesting that in most cases these boundaries were clear, as well as what would or would not be tolerated.<sup>115</sup> The point is, however, that all cases in the court records reviewed where masters were active outside their own home – for example to look for runaway apprentices – concerned apprentices whose natural father was no longer alive.<sup>116</sup> In one case the master had even agreed in the contract to raise the youth, who was already known as a problem case.<sup>117</sup> It would therefore seem that masters were normally not responsible outside the workplace or their home. The mother of an apprentice who had stolen butter and beer reproached his master for not keeping an eye on his help, although she assumed that a good master would inform the parents, while the master concerned objected that this was not his responsibility.<sup>118</sup> On the other hand, the apprentice of pharmacist Willem Verwilt, who did not pay for the beer he ordered from a 14-year-old shop girl and was said to have intimidated the girl in other ways as well, was threatened with being handed over to his master (i.e. not to his parents). Again, the father of this apprentice had passed away.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> AMA, PS 13, *Antwoorde reconventionale*, art. 25 (1579); PS 3587, *Replycke*, art. 24 (1601).

<sup>108</sup> AMA, PS 3730, *Antwoorde*, art. 2; and PS 3730, *passim* (1632).

<sup>109</sup> AMA, PS 5745, *Contrapersistit loco duplicque*, art. 2 (1665).

<sup>110</sup> AMA, PS 2209, *Replicque*, art. 24 (1680). See also PS 3587, *Quadruplicque*, art. 6.

<sup>111</sup> AMA, N 2607, fol. 1 (1653).

<sup>112</sup> AMA, N 1737, nr. 166 (1739).

<sup>113</sup> AMA, N 545, fol. 83 (1553); N 3726, fol. 81 (1677); N 4304, nr. 1 (1708); N 4425, 27 January 1712; N 2494, 16 January 1714; N 2495, 8 February 1716; N 4310, nr. 20 (1723); N 4580, nr. 1 (1734); N 2900, 11 August 1739; N 1390, nr. 64 (1749); N 965, nr. 45 (1779).

<sup>114</sup> Sonenscher, *Work and Wages*, 245-251, argued that masters commanded more respect in their home/workplace than elsewhere.

<sup>115</sup> AMA, N 995, 6 November 1655; N 3329, 20 February 1698; N 3569, fol. 7v (1599); N 667, 30 July 1715; N 678, fol. 216; N 1303, nr. 49; N 962, nr. 67, (1776).

<sup>116</sup> AMA, PS 4911, *Aenspraekende ende conclusie*, 6 April 1663, art. 5; *Replicque*, 11 July 1663, art. 2; *Duplicque*, 26 Sept. 1663, art. 4-6; PS 4911, *Antwoorde*, 6 April 1663, art. 5-6; PS 3587, *Quadruplicque*, art. 50 (1601).

<sup>117</sup> AMA, PS 4911, *Antwoorde*, 6 April 1663, art. 3.

<sup>118</sup> AMA, PS 2713, *Wij onders. attesterende...* (1657).

<sup>119</sup> AMA, PS 13, *Antwoorde reconventionale*, art. 28 (1579).

The apprentice contracts reveal, moreover, that masters were responsible for apprentices who fell ill only in very exceptional cases and generally only for very brief periods.<sup>120</sup> One contract determined that the apprentice would be the responsibility of his master for the first two months of his illness<sup>121</sup>; another set the duration at two weeks,<sup>122</sup> and two others limited it to one week.<sup>123</sup> In all other cases, sick apprentices were immediately entrusted to their parents or guardians,<sup>124</sup> which automatically affected the authority of the masters. One contract even stated explicitly that the apprentice would take his dinner at home on Sundays and holidays.<sup>125</sup> In the end, it might be interesting to examine in further research whether (and when) parents had different emotional ties with their children, as has been argued earlier.<sup>126</sup> Our judicial proceedings suggest that they expressed compassion if their son suffered mental or physical abuse. The witnesses at the Verwilt-trial for instance agreed that the mother became very upset upon learning that the youth had never arrived at his master's house after she sent him there.<sup>127</sup>

All this suggests that the private sphere of the nuclear family in stead of the public sphere represented by corporative regulations or the persona of the master determined how apprentices were raised. The public function of craft guilds and raising adolescents had become two separate realms. Apprentice contracts stipulated to what measure masters were to assume the authority and responsibility of the parents. Guilds, in these court files, were mentioned only in a minority of cases; when mentioned, guild boards or deans were seen as mediators or arbitrators with little authority.<sup>128</sup>

## Conclusion

In all, the question whether these guilds were family-like brotherhoods or were instead businesslike institutions designed to install labour market monopsonies and distinguish between masters and illegal entrepreneurs cannot be answered conclusively here. There are, however, reasons to believe that guilds did not have much impact on the daily relationship between master and apprentice, at least after the long sixteenth century. Indeed, guild regulations did not mention daily practices on the shop floor whatsoever. This alone does not prove that guild-based masters did not execute a type of corporative mandate, yet when we do find regulations that could be interpreted as designed to regulate the master-servant-relationship, they turn out to have been installed for entirely different reasons. This was the case with the obligation for apprentices to board, an obligation that had nothing to do with installing the patriarchal authority of masters. In this particular case, the reason was to block fictitious apprenticeships and thus to guard the guilds' labour market monopsony.

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<sup>120</sup> Cf. with Margaret Pelling, 'Apprenticeship, health and social cohesion in early modern London', *History Workshop Journal*, 37 (1994), 33-56.

<sup>121</sup> AMA, N320, 28 March 1692.

<sup>122</sup> AMA, N 4223, 30 December 1686.

<sup>123</sup> AMA, N 3145, fol. 66 (1761); N 4424, 7 July 1710.

<sup>124</sup> See e.g. AMA, PS 13 (1584-85); PS 2897 (1600); and PS 3730 (1632-33).

<sup>125</sup> AMA, N 285, 8 February 1703.

<sup>126</sup> Parents often reproached schoolmasters for being too strict, while schoolmasters complained that parents spoiled their children and did not discipline them enough. E. Put, *De 'cleijne scholen'. Het volksonderwijs in het hertogdom Brabant tussen Katholieke Reformatie en Verlichting (eind 16de eeuw – 1795)* (Leuven, 1990) 140-143. See also Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, 'Reciprocal bonding: parents and their offspring in early modern England', *Journal of Family History*, 25, 3 (2000), 291-312.

<sup>127</sup> AMA, PS 13, *Getuychenisse*, of Michiel Vander Kinderen.

<sup>128</sup> CAA, PS 2897, *Duplicque*, art. 23 (1600) and passim; PS 4159, *Antwoorde*, art. 17 and 25, *Replicque*, art. 22-26, *Duplicque*, art. 26 (1675); PS 5496, *Antwoorde*, art. 5, *Replicque*, art. 6, *Duplicque*, art. 6 (1611); PS 6563, *Antwoorde*, art. 7 (1670). In the latter process, there was discontent about the deacons' judicial authority: *Duplicque*, art. 1-16. Only in PS 2637 (1644) the deacons of the guilds were seen as adjudicator (as was already stated in the apprentice contract) and in one litigation only there are traces of a sentence: PS 5745 (1665).

Of course, guilds may have affected the (contractual or other) relationship between masters and apprentices without written rules. Yet there are reasons to believe that the guilds' impact in the private sphere waned from at least the sixteenth century on. Due to lack of sources we cannot illuminate the exact relationship between the guilds' rules and the practices concerning concluding private contracts. Our sample of notarial contracts suggests that private contracting became more common after about 1650.<sup>129</sup> However, as apprentice contracts were likely to have been concluded far more often orally or simply written on a piece of paper, notarial contracts are only the tip of the iceberg. Nonetheless, the data on the juridical proceedings on breach of contracts – which are limited in quantitative terms but survived more or less at random – do suggest that the relationship between master and apprentice tended to be based on a contract from at least the end of the sixteenth century on. The relationship resulted from private negotiation between the master and the parents or guardians of an apprentice, and as such depended at least partially on the financial faculties and private feelings and opinions of the latter. Some court records and apprentice contracts list craft guilds as potential arbitrators. Such cases, however, were not about enforcing corporative regulations but about resolving disputes over apprentice contracts. The final aim boiled down to guaranteeing a financial and economic agreement on the transfer of technical knowledge between private parties.

Nor did guild-based masters act as surrogate fathers in the name of the guild. In matters of discipline, parents had the final word, thus suggesting that the private sphere of the family prevailed over the public sphere of the guilds. The next question, then, becomes whether guilds had been family-like brotherhoods before, and if so, when this changed. Based on certain elements in this article, I would argue that from the fifteenth century onward a gradual but fundamental transformation occurred. Whereas masters' sons were first a kind of 'masters by birth', and were thus not required to pay the entrance fees owed by others, they gradually lost this privileged status in the early modern period. By the mid-eighteenth century they were paying almost the same as others did; thus they were as much outsiders as were other apprentices, all entering an organization external to them. Moreover, much of the guilds' collective activities and forms of expression disappeared from the sixteenth century on. Their costumes and common meals, among other things, respectively disappeared or became obsolete. When common activities (like processions and burying fellow members) continued to exist, masters grew disinclined to be present. Guilds even had difficulties finding masters prepared to act as guild officials like deans and poor box masters. The rules that continued to be important – including the obligation to board – served to distinguish between privileged masters and outsiders, thus turning guilds into juridical vehicles in the hands of a group of established masters who were defending their economic privileges.

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<sup>129</sup> See Note 91.