

**How Rich a Lawyer, How Poor a Tailor?
An Economic Hierarchy of Occupations in Fifteenth-Century Spain.**

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A tax record from the Catalan city of Manresa known as the *Liber Manifesti* of 1408 provides detailed occupational and capital-holding data for the heads of 640 households. This number probably encompassed all but a few of the city's householders at the time, with the greatest exception being an unknown, but probably small, number of clerics.¹ The aim of this paper is to present a picture of the craft sector of the Manresan economy to a level of detail which is unusual for premodern Europe, in the hopes of nuancing our notions of what a guild or occupational sector might entail. In particular, it will be seen that some occupations contained a very heterogeneous group of householders, in terms of both wealth and economic function. It will be contended that in those occupational sectors where wholesaling and other capitalistic activity was sustainable, a greater range of economic classes can be found masquerading under the same occupational title, whereas in occupations where the capitalistic functions were handled by merchants or other nominally 'exogenous' agents, we find a more concentrated distribution of wealth. Likewise, it will be seen that within each profession, differing levels of wealth led to different investment (capital-holding) strategies. And while much of this points to the dangers of generalizing about premodern occupational titles, it should be kept in mind that, oftentimes, contemporaries had relatively clear ideas of where the practitioner of a given occupation stood on the social and economic ladder. Our evidence can thus give us an important economic base for helping us to reconstruct (and deconstruct)

¹ For a description of the *Liber Manifesti* (AHCM/AM I-165) See Fynn-Paul, *The Catalan City of Manresa in the 14th and 15th Centuries: A Social, Political, and Economic History* (Unpub. PhD dissertation, University of Toronto, 2006), p. 349-350. (Published version forthcoming from University of Chicago Press).

these mental hierarchies based on occupational status which were so important in premodern society—as indeed they continue to be today.

1. Overview of the Manresan Craft Sectors.

Tables 1 and 2 are presented as an introduction to the Manresan craft spectrum. The *Liber Manifesti* information makes it possible to know which occupations were practised in late medieval Manresa, how many practitioners were devoted to each industry or profession, and the proportion of the city's resources that were committed to them. In addition, the *Liber Manifesti* provides information on how the allocation of householders' resources varied according to profession, gender, and social class. Tables 3 through 5 summarize these findings. Because of the volume of information presented in these tables, a thorough exploration of the conclusions that might be drawn from each table is not possible here. A few important trends will therefore be singled out, though for the present many conclusions must be left to the interests of the reader.

Table 1. Ranking of Selected Professions in Manresa by Average Wealth.²

Rank	Profession	No.	Average Wealth (£)	Rank	Profession	No.	Average Wealth (£)
1.	Lawyer	5	1,546	15.	Dyer	2	269
2.	<i>Rentier</i>	26	1,076	16.	Butcher	8	264
3.	Doctor	2	799	17.	Shearer	20	189
4.	Draper	2	725	18.	Architect	1	172
5.	Royal Scribe	3	652	19.	Shoemaker	89	149
6.	Merchant	25	639	20.	Painter	1	147
7.	Furrier	25	511	21.	Blacksmith	11	133
8.	Apothecary	5	508	22.	Porter	6	129
9.	Scribe	6	498	23.	Carpenter	13	123
10.	Notary	4	449	24.	Miller	6	122

² Source: *Liber Manifesti*.

11.	Tailor	19	442 (226) ³	25.	Weaver	8	118
12.	Shopkeeper	4	331	26.	Farmer	76	99
13.	Innkeeper	4	293	27.	Messenger	3	79
14.	Barber	4	290	28.	Guard	2	51

Table 2. Manresan Professions by Sector, 1408.⁴

Professions (<i>Latin Name</i>):	Householders in profession:		Wealth in profession:		
	No.	Percent of total	Total (£ Barc.)	Percent of city's wealth	Avg. per household (£ Barc.)
<u>Major Professions:</u>	<u>78</u>	<u>12.6</u>	<u>66,861</u>	<u>42.9</u>	<u>857</u>
<i>Rentier</i> ⁵	26	4.5	27,969	17.9	1,076
Merchant (<i>Mercator</i>)	25	4.3	15,967	10.2	639
Lawyer (<i>Iurisperitus, Lic. in Leg.</i>)	5	0.9	7,728	5.0	1,546
Doctor (<i>Bacc. and Lic. in Medicina</i>)	2	0.3	1,597	1.0	799
Notary (<i>Notarius</i>)	4	0.7	1,797	1.2	449
Scribe (<i>Scriptor</i>)	6	1.0	2,985	1.9	498
Royal Scribe (<i>Scriptor Dni. Regis</i>)	3	0.5	1,957	1.3	652
Royal Household (<i>de Domo D. R.</i>)	2	0.3	4,322	2.8	2,161
Apothecary (<i>Apothecarius</i>)	5	0.9	2,539	1.6	508
<u>Leather Trades:</u>	<u>136</u>	<u>23.5</u>	<u>29,237</u>	<u>18.8</u>	<u>215</u>

³ The number in parentheses is the average for all tailors minus the fortune of Bernat de Gamicans, who, although listed as a tailor, was an active capitalist. More on him below.

⁴ Marc Torras Serra, in *La crisi del segle XV a Manresa*, 74-5, provides a list of occupations from the *Liber Manifesti* of 1408 in which the numbers for some professions differ slightly from those above. Usually they are higher than the figures presented here. The difference can be accounted for the fact that Torras counted female householders listed as *uxor* of a man with a certain occupation as though they were members of a given profession. For example, Torras lists 6 lawyers, while Table 8-1 lists 5 (including one man listed as *licenciatus in legibus*). Likewise, Torras found 3 *saigs*, while Table 8-1 lists 2. In each case, there is a single female householder listed as *uxor iurisperitis* and *uxor sagionis* which would make up the missing numbers. My own total of adult male householders, excluding the underage and the deceased, came to 522 declarations.

⁵ It would be misleading to list all those who appear in the *Liber Manifesti* without an occupation under a single heading, as Marc Torras has done in *La crisi del segle XV a Manresa*, 74. Very wealthy householders listed without an occupation should be considered as probable *rentiers*, since this group included many of the city's most politically prominent citizens. Below a certain level of wealth, however, those without an occupation could not have lived very well from their own assets, and so they must be either dependants of wealthy houses, or else casual labourers, or else simply householders whose occupation the redactors of the *Liber Manifesti* neglected to record. For the present purposes this level has been set at £260. The income from this patrimony, if it were fully invested at 5 percent, would generate less than the projected income for a labouring man in 1400 of 400 *sous*. (See discussion in Chapter 4 on this point). £260 is not too far below £320, which was the lowest total patrimony for a man who was listed without an occupation but who became a *conseller* between 1403 and 1413. (See discussion of Table 10-6). That this man was a *conseller* is a strong indication that he was considered to be a *rentier* by his peers.

Shoemaker (<i>Çabaterius, Sutor</i>)	89	15.2	13,254	8.5	149
Furrier (<i>Coriaterius</i>)	25	4.3	12,783	8.2	511
Leather Worker (<i>Blanquarius</i>) ⁶	11	1.9	1,729	1.1	157
Tanner (<i>Pellium Assahonator</i>)	10	1.7	1,406	0.9	141
Vellum Maker (<i>Pergaminator</i>)	1	0.2	65	0.0	65
<u>Cloth Trades:</u>	<u>52</u>	<u>9.0</u>	<u>15,873</u>	<u>10.1</u>	<u>305</u>
Shearer (<i>Parator Pannorum</i>)	20	3.4	3,787	2.4	189
Tailor (<i>Sartor</i>)	19	3.2	8,394	5.7	442
Weaver (<i>Textor</i>)	8	1.4	947	0.6	118
Draper (<i>Draperius</i>)	2	0.3	1,449	0.9	725
Dyer (<i>Tintorerius</i>)	2	0.3	537	0.3	269
Wool Buyer (<i>Parayre</i>)	1	0.2	219	0.1	219
<u>Lesser and Misc. Trades:</u>	<u>82</u>	<u>14.0</u>	<u>13,864</u>	<u>8.9</u>	<u>169</u>
<u>Agriculture:</u>	<u>77</u>	<u>13.2</u>	<u>8,065</u>	<u>5.2</u>	<u>105</u>
Yeoman/Farmhand (<i>Laborator</i>)	76	13.0	7,527	4.8	99
Manse Holder (<i>Mansi de la Serra</i>)	1	0.2	538	0.3	538
<u>Female Householders:</u>	<u>92</u>	<u>15.8</u>	<u>16,191</u>	<u>10.4</u>	<u>176</u>
<u>No Profession:</u>	<u>67</u>	<u>11.5</u>	<u>5,733</u>	<u>3.7</u>	<u>85</u>

Source: *Liber Manifesti* 1408.

Table 1 presents a ranking of each occupation in Manresa by average wealth. This table, while seemingly straightforward, is actually one of the few chances that we have for premodern Europe to see exactly how the relative wealth of each occupation in a single at a given time ranked relative to each other in economic terms. It will be noted that professionals, including merchants and notaries, tended to be worth at least three or four times the average craftsman, whose average worth was about £150, while petty capitalists, such as innkeepers and grocers, tended to hold assets worth about twice the average for a craftsman. Within the craft sector proper, some professions clearly had higher capital requirements for entry than others; butchers had to own significant herds of livestock, and had to be able to purchase

⁶ For the distinction between a *Blanquer* and an *Assaonador*, see Jordi Bolós, *Diccionari de la Catalunya medieval*, 36 and 47.

animals on credit. Dyers, likewise, seem to have required significant sums of capital to set up in their profession. It is also interesting that Manresa's four barbers had a high average wealth (they were worth £90, 282, 326, and 462, respectively); it would be interesting to know if this was because their medical pursuits placed them in great demand and thus in command of high fees, or if certain capital requirements of their profession presented a barrier to entry, or both.

Table 2 presents Manresa's workforce in seven principal sectors. The first of these categories is the major professions. This heading includes merchants, *rentiers*, lawyers, scribes, apothecaries and other professions that required a good deal of capital and/or formal education. The major professions are, unsurprisingly, distinguished by the high average wealth of their practitioners. It is interesting to learn that Lawyers as a group were 50 percent wealthier even than the *rentiers*, who followed them on the economic scale. I have written elsewhere about the economic and social relationships between lawyers, *rentiers*, and merchants, but since they are not the focus of this paper, it will suffice to say that lawyers tended to come from *rentier* families and to live like *rentiers* (excepting for the relatively undemanding duties which their profession placed upon them), and that merchants of the early fifteenth century, who were on average only 2/3 as wealthy as *rentiers*, generally pursued the mercantile vocation because they did not have quite enough money to rest on their laurels and survive as *rentiers*.⁷

The second and third categories on Table 2 are the leather industry and the cloth industry, which together constituted Manresa's principal manufacturing sectors. In Manresa, the leather industry was much more important than the cloth industry, the former being about twice the size in terms of employment and wealth than the latter.

⁷ See Fynn-Paul, *The Catalan City of Manresa*, Chapter 8.

Manresa in 1408 was above all a city of shoemakers. The 89 householders who practised this profession outnumbered the second most numerous group, the agricultural workers, who numbered 76 households, and they far surpassed the numbers of merchants and the furriers, at 25 households each, who tied for the third most numerous occupation in the city. The fourth sector of the Manresan economy included the skilled and miscellaneous trades of the service industry, such as carpenters, butchers, and smiths. The practitioners of these trades numbered 82 households, or 15 percent of the city's total. The fifth and least important sector in terms of wealth was agriculture, which employed over 13 percent of the city's households. Most of the householders in this sector were relatively poor plot farmers, though they were generally not impoverished. Since these men owned little property themselves, it is probable that they earned much of their income by working the holdings of more substantial landowners. A sixth sector of the Manresan economy was the female householders. Women headed 16 percent of Manresan households in 1408, and controlled over 10 percent of the city's wealth, more than either the cloth or agricultural sectors. Women's wealth was especially important in the city's credit market: female investors controlled fully 21 percent of the city's *censal* debt.⁸ Finally, some 67 of the 640 households in the *Liber Manifesti* were listed without a profession. Of these, about half were the estates of people who had recently died, whose goods were being held in trust for their heirs.⁹

Table 3. Types of Property Held by Members of Selected Professions, 1408.¹⁰

⁸ See Table 8-10, below.

⁹ For the distinction between *rentiers* and men who had no occupation, see note 2.

¹⁰ All values are in percentages, and express the portion of their total wealth that members of a given profession invested in each category. Values will not total 100 percent, because some miscellaneous goods have been left out to avoid confusion. This table was computed by weighing each individual's

Profession	Average wealth (£ Barc.)	Primary house (percent)	Secondary houses/ shops	Land	Money capital	Feudal rights	Loans/ investments	Debts
Lawyer	1,546	16.7	2.2	15.5	0.0	3.0	40.1	6.5
<i>Rentier</i>	1,076	16.2	2.1	25.4	5.0	8.0	20.2	6.3
Merchant	639	19.1	2.0	20.2	33.1	2.0	4.8	7.2
Furrier	511	15.0	5.3	28.2	19.0	2.0	6.9	9.7
Apothecary	508	25.4	5.9	20.7	17.8	0.0	3.6	20.0
Scribe	498	26.4	4.1	23.3	0.7	4.0	17.0	6.7
Tailor	442	20.7	4.5	27.0	5.7	1.0	11.8	8.4
Butcher	264	27.2	4.7	34.5	9.7	0.0	2.2	10.4
Shearer	189	23.6	2.9	25.1	11.2	5.0	4.0	9.9
Women	176	32.8	3.2	21.6	2.3	2.0	10.4	7.0
LeatherWorker	157	19.4	3.3	30.5	22.4	0.0	0.1	7.5
Shoemaker	149	21.7	1.9	32.7	9.2	0.0	2.8	14.0
Carpenter	123	24.3	1.6	29.0	4.0	0.0	2.3	12.0
Weaver	118	26.3	4.2	21.6	11.2	0.0	0.3	3.0
Farmer	99	21.9	1.5	38.0	0.5	0.0	3.2	6.6

Source: *Liber Manifesti* 1408.

Table 3 provides a ranking of selected Manresan professions by average wealth, as well as a breakdown of the percentage of their total assets that householders of each profession invested in six different types of capital.¹¹ Against the total capital of each householder, their debt is shown as a percentage of their gross wealth. Many basic assumptions about late medieval professionals are here quantified in a way that our sources seldom allow. For example, the simple but seldom quantifiable idea that *rentiers* invested a higher proportion of their wealth in annuities and *censals* than merchants is indeed borne out by the table. *Rentiers* held 20.2 percent of their wealth in annuities, while merchants as a group held only 4.8 percent

choices equally, rather than by simply computing the total amount of money dedicated to each category by all members of an occupation or group. The choices of each individual have therefore been weighed equally, regardless of their wealth. "Scribe" includes scribes, royal scribes, and notaries.

¹¹ For a larger selection of professions, see Appendix 5-1.

of their wealth in this fashion. On the flip side of this equation, merchants held fully 33.1 percent of their wealth in trade goods and capital stocks, while *rentiers* held only 5.0 percent of their wealth in this category. A number of subtler and more surprising observations can also be derived from Table 3, which help to create a nuanced picture of how occupation influenced the lifestyles of Manresa's householders.

For example, the city's apothecaries, whose average wealth was a very comfortable £508, spent lavishly on their homes and places of business, and accumulated more debts than the members of any other profession. These attributes suggest a profession whose members were eager to maintain an affluent image. Perhaps these medieval apothecaries, like doctors who spend generously on their office furnishings today, realized that much of a client's confidence in their powers of healing derives from the impressiveness and professional aspect of their places of business. In other words, they may have been, in the schema of Pierre Bourdieu, very aware of the importance of social capital in the functioning of their business.¹² Of course, some of the apothecaries' debts may have been related to the expensive drugs which they would often have purchased on credit; their lack of debt-aversity is remarkable, however, since other Manresan occupations required the purchase of expensive goods on credit; more precise knowledge of their habits thus awaits further study.

On the other hand Manresa's furriers, who are often called here by their Latin name *coriaterii*, spent very modestly on their homes though they were on average the most affluent of the city's tradesmen. They did however spend substantially on their tanneries and other places of business. The relatively high debt burden maintained by

¹² For an application of Bourdieu's theory to occupational spending patterns, see Johan Dambruyne, "Representation and Investment Strategies in the Early Modern Guild World: A Comparison between the South and North of the Low Countries," in Ian A. Gadd and Patrick Wallis, eds., *Guilds and Association in Europe, 900-1900*, 103-121.

the *coriaterii* probably reflects their use of credit in securing a constant supply of skins for their trade, while their high levels of capital stocks (19.0 percent) indicates the high intrinsic value of their furs and skins.

Butchers, whose average wealth of £264 indicates a prosperous group, spent quite lavishly on their homes and places of business, but they held a very high proportion of their wealth in land (34.5 percent) rather than capital stocks (9.7 percent). This is because they had to be substantial landowners in order to maintain the animal herds that formed the basis of their trade.¹³ Like *coriaterii*, butchers maintained significant debt burdens (10.4 percent), presumably because of the exigencies of maintaining a stable herd.

The city's scribes, whose average wealth was £498, held 17 percent of their assets in *censals* and loans. This is significantly higher than the city average of 11 percent for their wealth bracket. Some of this trend is probably ascribable to the notaries' self-image as members of the legal profession. Lawyers were Manresa's *rentiers par excellence*. It is very likely that notaries attempted to live off of annuities to the extent that they could, in imitation of the far wealthier lawyers. But it is also true that notaries' patrimonies were not so large as to make them blind to the higher returns yielded by money lending. At this time, interest rates obtainable from personal loans were yielding an average of 7.0 percent, while government bond shares, known in Catalonia as *censals*, yielded only 5.4 percent.¹⁴ The notaries' social position at the hub of many business transactions afforded them frequent opportunities to lend money even as they scribed an official record of the deal at hand.

¹³ For example, AHCM Tr. 113 (Pere Sarta) contains a number of livestock purchases that were made by Pere's partners, who were butchers. The first act in the book, 1329.1.1, is a purchase of the city's meat taxes made by B. Galceran and several other butchers. 1330.8.23 (10k9) shows the purchase of a cow for £4, amongst many other purchases.

¹⁴ See Chapter 5, Table 5-2 for personal loans and 5-5 for *censals*.

Their high liquidity probably reflects their secondary function as Manresa's small bankers. It is known that the Jewish moneylending sector, which had supplied capital to rural peasants in the area of Manresa prior to the Black Death, virtually disappeared in the wake of the 1348 epidemic.¹⁵

Table 4. The Relative Influences of Wealth, Profession, and Gender on the Types of Capital Held by Manresan Householders.¹⁶

Percentile of gross wealth	Group	Wealth range or avg. (£)	Primary house (percent)	Secondary houses/shops	Land	Money capital	Feudal rights	Loans/investments	Debts
95-99	<i>City</i>	<i>1,099-4,098</i>	<i>10.9</i>	<i>3.3</i>	<i>18.1</i>	<i>12.2</i>	<i>13.0</i>	<i>26.2</i>	<i>7.0</i>
	Lawyers	1,546	16.7	2.2	15.5	0.0	3.0	40.1	6.5
	Rentiers	2,133	10.2	2.4	21.1	6.9	16.0	27.4	5.8
	Merchants	1,268	12.3	1.6	19.8	33.6	1.0	15.1	0.0
	Furriers	1,805	8.3	7.4	13.7	18.0	0.0	16.9	5.9
	Women	1,255	10.1	3.4	13.9	2.7	7.0	50.7	1.8
90-94	<i>City</i>	<i>582-1,063</i>	<i>16.7</i>	<i>5.0</i>	<i>18.3</i>	<i>15.7</i>	<i>4.7</i>	<i>23.0</i>	<i>7.6</i>
	Rentiers	712	22.9	1.7	32.0	0.0	0.0	26.5	10.0
	Merchants	772	19.9	3.4	17.9	38.9	6.0	2.0	12.3
	Furriers	653	9.6	7.7	20.2	24.9	0.0	24.9	10.8
	Women	903	9.5	12.2	4.7	0.0	9.0	56.6	0.0
80-89	<i>City</i>	<i>319-582</i>	<i>16.8</i>	<i>2.9</i>	<i>24.7</i>	<i>19.2</i>	<i>0.6</i>	<i>11.0</i>	<i>5.4</i>
	Rentiers	470	15.8	2.2	27.0	5.6	1.0	16.5	5.7
	Merchants	389	11.9	0.6	21.2	40.7	0.0	3.1	4.6
	Furriers	458	11.8	7.5	31.4	30.8	0.0	0.0	3.4
	Women	441	25.1	1.2	18.1	2.1	0.0	31.1	4.6
70-79	<i>City</i>	<i>210-319</i>	<i>23.6</i>	<i>3.6</i>	<i>26.3</i>	<i>8.9</i>	<i>3.9</i>	<i>9.2</i>	<i>13.1</i>
	Rentiers	262	35.5	0.5	24.3	0.0	19.0	2.8	0.0
	Merchants	197	22.8	7.1	24.3	26.5	0.0	3.3	3.0
	Furriers	251	14.6	7.2	31.0	19.2	0.0	6.9	12.6

¹⁵ The series known as the *Libri Judeorum* at Manresa ends abruptly in 1348, and from that date Jews all but cease to be mentioned in the civic records. No programs are recorded in Manresa after the Black Death; it is likely that those Jews who survived the plague fled, like many of their co-religionists, to Barcelona. See Fynn-Paul, *The Catalan City of Manresa*, p. 32 n. 91.

¹⁶ The wealth listed under "City Average" has been given as a range, while the wealth for each profession has been given as an average of those householders practicing that profession whose total wealth fell within the range given under the "City Average." For further explanation see note to Table 8-2.

Women	267	39.1	1.3	18.7	2.3	14.0	3.2	18.8
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Source: *Liber Manifesti* 1408.

Table 4 presents a further analysis, one which shows resource allocation by a combination of wealth and profession and/or gender. This has been attempted for only three occupations and for women householders, and for only the top four wealth brackets. The three occupations were chosen because they represent three distinct groups within the city, ones which contemporaries recognized as such, and as it turns out each group held its wealth according to a distinct paradigm. The furriers were chosen to represent the craftsmen or *menestrals*, because they were the wealthiest and most entrepreneurial in the city. They were acknowledged as such in various official documents.¹⁷ Lawyers were added so that their statistics can be compared with those of *rentiers*. They appear only in the top bracket because four of the city's five lawyers were represented here. Women householders represented a significant portion of Manresan households in terms of wealth and numbers, and they also held their capital according to a distinct paradigm. The topic of women householders is discussed in section 4 below.

The table reveals that occupation had a much greater influence than wealth on how a male householder allocated his resources. For example, merchants held significantly more capital stocks than *coriaterii* in all four wealth brackets. But it is also very instructive to see the ways in which economic status did influence property holding. One of the most obvious examples of the influence of wealth is the percentage of a householder's resources that was committed to their primary home. As discussed in Chapter 7, the wealthiest townsmen held a smaller percentage of

¹⁷ For example, the *coriaterii* are the only *personas de offici* (*menestrals*) who are mentioned by name in the 1393 election protocol. Marc Torras, ed. *El Llibre Verd de Manresa*, 322-47.

wealth in their primary home than all other Manresans. As wealth decreased, householders felt compelled to spend more on their home. This trend is reflected in all four professions listed on Table 4, with the exception of merchants and *rentiers* in the 90-94th percentiles. Because these men often belonged to prominent local families and thus had a reputation to maintain, these men were eager to maintain themselves in mansions as showy as any in the city, even if such conspicuous consumption dipped slightly into their potential investment capital.

Table 5. Distribution of Wealth within Selected Occupations and Trade Sectors.¹⁸

Percentile of h.holders	City	Shoe-makers	Furriers	Tanners	Leather trades	Cloth trades ¹⁹	Merchants	Farmers
10	0.7	1.7	0.8	0.3	1.3	1.8	1.7	2.0
20	2.2	4.4	2.2	2.3	3.6	5.1	4.6	6.1
30	4.5	8.1	4.6	7.7	6.4	9.2	10.8	11.3
40	7.5	12.7	8.4	13.5	10.2	13.7	16.9	18.0
50	11.3	18.1	13.3	20.7	14.9	18.7	23.3	25.0
60	16.5	24.5	19.0	31.8	20.5	26.3	31.6	34.6
70	23.3	33.6	27.3	44.5	27.8	34.1	42.6	45.4
80	<u>32.3</u>	<u>45.5</u>	<u>37.8</u>	<u>58.3</u>	<u>38.2</u>	<u>44.4</u>	<u>59.9</u>	<u>56.1</u>
90	49.1	61.8	60.0	78.3	53.3	63.6	78.0	72.7
95	63.3	72.6	82.9	n.a.	66.0	73.7	83.7	84.5
Patrimony (£):								
High	£4,098	£1,239	£2,183	£305	£2,183	£906	£1,581	£43
Low	£2.5	£15	£35	£5	£5	£25	£81	£10
No. H.holds	640	89	25	10	136	53	26	76

Figures show that the lowest x percent of the population owns x percent of the wealth. Source: *Liber Manifesti* 1408.

¹⁸ Underlined figures are explained in the text.

¹⁹ Minus Gamiçans; estimates are within one percentile point of population.

Table 5, the last of the tables to be introduced in this section, shows the distribution of wealth within selected professions. The distribution of wealth statistics for the city as a whole from have been reproduced for comparison. In Table 5 the figures for the 80th percentile have been underlined because these are perhaps the best indicator of the true distribution of wealth within each profession. The 80th percentile figures show whether the middle class of a given group, roughly the 50th through the 80th percentiles, actually held a significant portion of the wealth in comparison with the wealthiest sectors. In other words, if the middle classes held little of the wealth in a given profession, this will be reflected by low numbers in the 80th percentiles. The distribution in the 50th through the 80th percentiles might indicate whether a given trade was oligarchic, closed, exploitative, and perhaps stagnant, or whether it was a more egalitarian trade. The 50th through 80th percentiles have been singled out because the assets of the householders on the lower half of the spectrum were generally so small when compared to those of the rich that the distribution of wealth figures for these percentiles do not strike a casual observer as significant. Nonetheless the figures for these percentiles can be used to judge whether the poorer people were desperately poor or respectably poor; and in Manresa people tended towards the latter. At the other end of the scale, figures for the 90th and 95th percentile are often misleading because the fortunes of one or two extremely wealthy individuals can unduly affect these numbers.

From the figures for the 80th percentile of various professions, Table 5 shows that every craft and sector in the chart had a more equal distribution of wealth than existed for the city as a whole, a finding which is only natural since each profession includes a more limited sample of householders. Nevertheless the degree of disparity, both within certain professions and among different ones, is striking. It is often

assumed that the guild organization of medieval crafts tended to hinder innovation and thereby ensure that most practitioners of a given trade remained within a certain range of economic prosperity. Even though this assumption has been successfully challenged, historians have seldom been able to produce a clear picture of the disparity of wealth within certain trade sectors, so that vague terminology such as “guild elites” or “wealthier guild members” must suffice to signify these differences.²⁰ In an important recent study, Jenny Kermode speaks of a dynamic mercantile sector in later medieval London and York. Why should this not have also been true, on a less dramatic scale, for the craftsmen of the same towns?²¹ Table 5 shows that there were extreme differences of wealth within each profession or sector, even in a relatively modest sized town like Manresa. This can be seen most clearly from the high and low wealth ranges for each profession at the bottom of the table. In Manresa there were shoemakers whose fortunes ranged from a very substantial £1,239 all the way down to £15, which probably represents the start up capital of a young man who has taken up his trade only recently. Or perhaps Ramon Folç, the shoemaker in question, was still an apprentice. That his house was worth only £4 indicates that he lived in something approximating a cow shed. This can be known for certain because several cow sheds

²⁰ For an important treatment of guild innovation, see S. R. Epstein, “Craft Guilds, Apprenticeship, and Technological Change in Preindustrial Europe,” *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 58, No. 3 (Sept. 1998), 684-713. For another treatment see John Munro, “Urban Regulation and Monopolistic Competition” in *Textiles, Towns, and Trade*, IX (41-52). For an example of the function of guild elites, see J. Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, 55-56.

²¹ Jenny Kermode, in *Medieval Merchants*, 4, notes that the merchants of York and London “comprised a mobile and fluid class of people who quickly accumulated wealth within a single lifetime, only to see it as rapidly dispersed. Each generation largely made its own fortunes, earning a livelihood by developing distinctively flexible entrepreneurship in response to the peculiar opportunities and pressures exerted by long-distance trade.” While this model is too dynamic to accurately describe the merchants of Manresa, whose families often maintained positions of social dominance throughout the fourteenth century, it does provide a useful model for understanding the rise of several wealthy *coriaterii* (furriers) in the 1390s. On a smaller scale, this type of dynamism may have been occurring continually amongst the middling levels of the city’s trade sectors, at least between ca. 1250 and 1400. This might help explain the disparity of wealth within given trades. Of course, that the vagaries of inheritance were always a great influence.

were assessed at £4 in the *Liber Manifesti*. Other shoemakers at the low end of the economic spectrum owned no homes at all. Since there was little real estate available for rent in Manresa at this time, these men must have lived with relatives, and they might therefore have not yet become independent practitioners of their trade.

Table 5 does show that some professions were economically more homogenous than the furriers and tailors, even if none approached a truly equitable distribution in which the bottom 30 percent controlled 30 percent of the wealth, the bottom 50 percent controlled 50 percent, and so forth. The more homogenous trades were those that did not contain a wealthy elite, such as the farmers and the tanners. One surprisingly homogenous group which did contain many wealthy members was the merchants.²² This is partly a function of the profession's high average wealth, and the fact that few people outside of the £400 to £900 wealth bracket were choosing to become merchants. The reverse observation can also be made: people who were worth between £400 and £900 were often choosing to practise the mercantile trade. In the more typical case of the tanners, homogeneity was a reflection of the fact that most members of the profession fell within a narrow range of wealth that might be described as middle or lower middle class.

2. The Leather and Cloth Sectors.

²² Jaume Aurell, in *Els Mercaders Catalans al Quatre-cents*, 371-72, argues that it was the shared mentality, rather than the homogenous economic background, which brought together the Barcelona merchants as a class. ("El que determina la cohesion del group social no és un determinat nivell econòmic comú a tots els members sinó l'exercici d'una mateixa professió i l'entensa a través d'una sèrie de valors comuns.") Kermode, in *Medieval Merchants*, 4, says a remarkably similar thing: "it is difficult to identify a merchant class drawing apart from the rest of urban society, as Sylvia Thrupp did in the case of London. What was apparent in York, Beverley and Hull, however, was shared attitudes and ambitions, shaped by the distinctive experience of commerce and the exercise of political authority into an evolving class-consciousness." Although Merchant fortunes in Barcelona, York, and London were undoubtedly disparate, it is ironic that in comparison with other crafts and occupations, the Manresan merchants were a more economically homogenous occupational group than most other large sectors (they were even more homogenous than the tanners and the farmers). The argument that mentality brought merchants together, rather than a shared economic background, should be modified in the case of Manresa, where the merchants shared a similar mentality *as well as* occupying a distinct economic niche. (For more on this, see Section 2, below).

The practitioners of trades, as opposed to the *rentiers*, merchants, and those in the learned professions, were called *menestrals* in Catalan. The *menestrals* were characterised by medieval political theorists as the third of the three urban groups that were eligible for government office, below the *rentier*-citizens and the merchants.²³ Among Manresan industries in 1400, the leather sector was the most important, and within this sector, it was with the furriers, or *coriaterii*, who wielded the majority of both capital and political influence. The furriers' trade was a favourite choice for younger sons of wealthy families who did not set up as merchants. For example, Romeu Sarta was listed as a *coriaterius* in 1393 alongside two wealthier relatives who were merchants.²⁴ In 1393 Berenguer Ferraria was also a prominent *coriaterius*, and fifteen years later in 1408 a minor member of the family, Guillem, was set up in the same trade.²⁵ The wealth of the city's eight most prominent furriers—which was the most concentrated wealth of any *menestral* occupation in the city—gave it a higher prestige than other *menestral* trades. This is reflected by the fact that the *coriaterii* were the only *menestrals* who served as *consellers* during the decade 1403-1413.²⁶ Furthermore, they were singled out for special mention during the reorganization of the government in 1393. Other aspects of the furriers' trade contributed to their prestige. Merely setting up in this trade required a considerable capital outlay. As a group, furriers spent more on secondary places of business than any other Manresan profession except apothecaries. Also, as can be seen in Table 6, *coriaterii* had to spend a very high proportion of their wealth on capital stocks, which shows the high cost of skins, furs, equipment and chemicals that were required for their operations.

²³ This division was made in the constitutions of 1323, 1365, and 1393. See discussion in Chapter 10.

²⁴ Marc Torras, ed. *El Llibre Verd de Manresa*, 324-25.

²⁵ For the 1393 provision see previous note, for 1408 see *Liber Manifesti*, 1408, 125v.

²⁶ See Chapter 10, Table 10-4.

Two of the wealthiest *coriaterii* had their capital stocks invested “outside the city,” one in the company of the Manresan merchant Francesc de Camp.²⁷ It is likely that the capital of the wealthiest *coriaterii* was devoted to speculation in furs, import/export, and wholesale supply for the city’s leather industry. At this level of wealth, although they were called *menestrals*, furriers acted like specialized merchants. In fact, the wealthiest *coriaterius* in the city, Joan Canyell, was first recorded in the *Liber Manifesti* as a merchant, but the word *mercator* was struck from the record and he was re-described as a furrier.²⁸ Four wealthy furriers owned tanneries in addition to their workshops. These tanneries must have employed a small staff of tanners and assistants.²⁹ Two furriers also owned lime kilns. Lime is a caustic substance which was used in the tanning process, and the owners of the kilns presumably supplied not only their own tanners but all the other tanners in the city with this sought-after commodity. Lime was also an essential ingredient in the mortar used for the city walls, in churches, and in stone houses, so that the ownership of a lime kiln was a lucrative asset. These tanneries and lime kilns show that the city’s wealthiest *coriaterii* were not tradesmen operating at the level of self-sufficiency, but were in a small sense capitalist-industrialists who maintained employees, practised vertical integration, and sold a range of products relating to different stages of their production processes.

Table 6. Wealth, Stocks, and Places of Business of the Manresan *Coriaterii*.³⁰

²⁷ For Francesc de Camp, see *Liber Manifesti*, 1408, 165v.

²⁸ *Liber Manifesti*, 1408, 94v.

²⁹ See Table 9-7 for the tanneries and lime kilns.

³⁰ Capital stocks included some loans of unknown type for J. Sancto Johannes and P. Vyastrello. No stocks were recorded for B. Michelis and J. Caneti so that what they did have was probably estimated with the value of their workshops and the contents of their houses. This holds true with lesser furriers.

Name	Gross wealth (£ Barc.)	Capital stocks (£ Barc.)	Buildings owned in addition to home. (Value in £ followed by description given in <i>Liber Manifesti</i>).
Canyellis, J.	2,183	500	80; 70 (shop w/lime kiln); 40 (tannery); 5
S. Johan., J.	2,050	805	50 (workshop w/lime kiln); 40 (tannery); 35 (workshop); 15 (tannery)
Michelis, B.	1,773	0	50 (workshop); 10 (workshop); 5
Vyastrello, P.	1,215	599	60 (workshop in <i>coriateria</i>); 30 (half workshop in <i>coriateria</i>); 30 (tannery in <i>coriateria</i>); 5
Romira, B.	724	360	50 (workshop); 10
Caneti, J.	581	0	35 (workshop); 6 (workshop)
Michelis, P.	516	255	36 (workshop)
Vilaramon, J.	501	230	44 (workshop); 22
Morrera, B.	462	8	17; 10
Carboners, P.	350	92	15
Romira, P.	293	200	None
Solerii, B.	293	0	15 (workshop)
Sobirana, P.	288	0	30; 25 (workshop); 10
Corneto, F.	254	60	20 (workshop)
Rafechs, G.	220	87	12 (workshop in the <i>coriateria</i>); 5
Casis, J.	211	6	15
Morera, P.	196	0	None
Prixana, G.	155	0	15
Ferarii, G.	127	0	None
Casis, F.	106	33	None
Canyellis, G.	94	40	None
Rocha, J.	59	0	None
Sobirana, B.	52	0	None
Romira, B.	44	0	None
Mestre, G.	35	14	None

Source: *Liber Manifesti* 1408.

The wealth of the *coriaterii* was founded in part on the demand for leather that was created by the other 111 householders who worked in Manresa's leather industry. While the average wealth of the *coriaterii* was a very considerable £511, the other leather tradesmen were worth £150 on average, a level that put them considerably above the average farm worker, whose average wealth was £99, and many other

The *Liber Manifesti* records J. Sancto Johannes' £805.1 as a loan or loans made "outside the city." About J. Canyellis' £500, we learn that it was "in the company of En Camp," probably the Manresan merchant Franciscus de Campo, who is recorded with stocks of £600, his own share of the company.

tradesmen such as carpenters, whose average wealth was £123. Of these 111 *menestrals*, fully 89 practised the trade of shoemaking, and it is a testament to the strength of the industry that so many men could enter the trade and still maintain such a comfortable standard of living. The average shoemaker lived in a home worth £32, a value that represented the lower end of middle class respectability; it was certainly enough to provide tolerable, if somewhat cramped, shelter to a family.³¹ The city's shoemakers did not as a whole own secondary places of business, but the few descriptions of these places in the *Liber Manifesti* provide insight into shoemakers' domestic and working lives. Like the wealthiest *coriaterii*, three of the wealthier shoemakers also owned tanneries, indicating that they, too, were engaged in some production and possible wholesaling beyond the needs of their own business. At least two shoemakers owned buildings described as workshops. One of these was located in the *coriateria*, and it might indicate a business relationship between workers in the different leatherworking professions. Only one shoemaker owned of a separate *taula* (although some of the ten unnamed buildings owned by shoemakers might represent *taulas* as well), so presumably most of the city's shoemakers worked directly out of the bottom floor of their houses. As a whole, the shoemakers' economic priorities did not deviate from the norm for their wealth bracket, including the fact that they held 32.7 percent of their wealth in land. Shoemakers were also only half as likely as other members of their wealth bracket to lend money, showing a very conservative 2.8 percent in investments and loans versus 6.7 percent for their bracket.

When one omits the unique instance of an indigent vellum maker, the remaining two leather trades employed some 21 householders, and maintained them at an average wealth equal to the shoemakers, that is, around £150. These tradesmen

³¹ For home values and sizes, see Fynn-Paul, *The Catalan City of Manresa*, 193-97.

were divided into two occupations, the *blanquers* and the *assaonadors*. According to Jordi Bolós, the *blanquers* did the initial preparation of the skins, such as removing flesh and hair from them, using *calç* (lime) to bleach them, and tanning them. The skins were then handed over the *assaonadors*, who stretched them, removed wrinkles from them, greased them, and otherwise turned them into finished leather.³²

Table 7. Wealth, Stocks, and Places of Business in the Manresan Cloth Industry.³³

	Gross wealth	Capital stocks	Buildings owned in addition to home. (Value in £
Name	(£ Barc.)	(£ Barc.)	followed by description given in <i>Liber Manifesti</i> .)
<i>Drapers:</i>			
Conte, B.	1,201	300	70 (house and <i>taula</i> formerly belong to Pere Lobet, tailor); 35 (two workshops by the wife of F.
formerly owned			
Amargos); 25; 12 (workshop)			
Palacio, B.	248	0	13 (half a workshop on the plaza); 5; 2 (rent of 2 sous from a <i>taula</i> , value calculated at 5%)
<i>Tailors:</i>			
	Gross wealth	Capital stocks	Buildings owned in addition to home. (Value in £
Name	(£ Barc.)	(£ Barc.)	followed by description given in <i>Liber Manifesti</i> .)
Gamiçans, B.	4,098	1,900	10
Ripoll, B.	906	95	5
Solerii, B.	726	82	20; 18 (a house and a <i>taula</i> in the plaza); 3 (the tower of the Portal of the Friars
<i>Preachers)</i>			
Ripoll, F.	449	209	5
Podio, J.	319	0	None
Rourich, F.	239	0	8; 5 (a <i>taula</i> in the plaza)
Luppeti, B.	232	0	None
Coll, P.	198	0	None

³² Bolós, *Diccionari de la Catalunya Medieval*, 36 (*assaonadors*); 47 (*blanquers*).

³³ As in Table 6, above, “0” under capital stocks means that whatever limited stocks these individuals possessed were counted in the value of their household goods.

Gomar, G.	176	0	8; 4 (two <i>taulas</i> in the plaza)
Rossella, F.	173	0	None
Montserrat, P.	131	0	25; 5.5; 3 (botiga atop the <i>c. dels juheus</i>)
Serradal, D.	123	0	None
Voltrera, B.	116	0	13 (workshop in the plaza); 11 (<i>taula</i> in the plaza); 2 (another <i>taula</i>)
Coll, F.	102	0	None
Solerii, G.	98	0	15; 8
Luppeti, P.	97	0	None
Boscho, J.	71	0	None
Font, B.	59	0	None
Gruses, T.	57	0	None
Montserrat, P.	25	0	None

Source: *Liber Manifesti* 1408.

Manresa's second most important manufacturing sector was its woollen cloth industry. This industry employed 9 percent of the city's households and represented 10 percent of urban wealth, compared with 24 percent of the households and 19 percent of the wealth for the leather industry, thus it was only one third as important in terms of employment and one half as important in terms of wealth. This industry was not large enough to create a group of wealthy wholesalers and petty industrialists comparable to the leather industry's *coriaterii*. Instead, the industry was large enough only to maintain two drapers, one of whom, Berenguer Conte, was far wealthier (total fortune £1,201) than his rival Bernat de Palau (£248).³⁴ In this case, however, Conte's superior fortune had not earned him a *jurat*'s (town councillor's) seat as of 1413, while Palau's much older name and conciliar ancestry had helped him to become a *jurat* in 1406, and perhaps in 1410.³⁵

Apart from and, in terms of the city's cloth industry as a whole, more important than, the operations of the draper Berenguer Conte were those of Bernat Gamiçans. In 1410 Gamiçans was the wealthiest man in Manresa. He was listed in

³⁴ For Conte, see *Liber Manifesti*, 1408,107v; for Palau 72r.

³⁵ See Table 10-1.

the *Liber Manifesti* as a tailor. Gamiçans' investment of £1,900 in a company with Jaume Amargos has already been noted. It is also known that Gamiçans' ancestor had been included amongst the merchants in the list of *jurats* from 1365.³⁶ Unfortunately, little can be said of Gamiçans' relations with the cloth industry, since the *Liber Manifesti* gives few hints about his properties and activities. It has been shown that the wealthy *coriaterii* owned several workshops, tanneries, and other places germane to the pursuit of their profession. Although the entry for Gamiçans is disappointing in this respect, the properties of the draper Berenguer Conte show a similar pattern to the wealthy furriers. Conte owned a well-appointed (£70) tailor's house and stall, and he also owned at least three workshops.

Apart from Gamiçans and Conte, however, the remaining workers in the cloth trades maintained themselves as more or less average tradesmen. They generally worked from their homes, although some tailors operated a *taula* from which they sold their wares. The traditional location for these tailors' stalls was in the *plaça maior* of the city and the *plaça* must therefore have served as one of the city's principal retail clothing marketplaces. The two most numerous cloth trades were the tailors and the shearers, with nineteen and twenty householders practising them respectively. Surprisingly, the cloth workers were even more prosperous on average than the leatherworkers, and very significantly so: when Gamiçans' fortune is omitted, the tailors' average wealth was £226, and the shearers were worth a respectable £189. The tailors especially were almost upper middle class. Why these men were so comfortable, especially in comparison with the leatherworkers, is difficult to say at present, though perhaps the answer lies a difference between the intrinsic value of cloth and leather.

³⁶ See note to Table 10-5.

At the top of the list of tailors shown on Table 7, if Gamiçans is omitted once more) was Berenguer Ripoll, who is worth noting because he was both a tailor and a substantial *rentier*. Ripoll maintained £95 worth of stock in his trade, but he also invested a healthy £270 in *censals* from the city.³⁷ Although his *censals* paid only 5 percent, these *censals* brought a return of 270 *sous*, more than half a year's salary for a well-paid labourer.³⁸ Indeed, he had served regularly as a *jurat* in 1404, 1408, and 1412, though his family had yet to attain the consulship.³⁹ It is probable that Ripoll was investing the profits from his trade in *censals*, in the hopes of one day entering the ranks of the civic elite. It would be interesting to know what Ripoll did with his £95 worth of stocks; he may have played an entrepreneurial role in supplying the city's other tailors with goods, or perhaps he simply operated a very high-end business which accrued high profits. Unfortunately our sources do not say. It is known that Berenguer's relative was also a wealthy tailor.⁴⁰ His fortune was only half the size of Berenguer's, yet it was considerable in its own right. Together with that of Bernat Gamiçans, the two Ripoll fortunes dominated the upper ranks of the city's tailors, suggesting that in this craft, at least, there was little of economic homogeneity.

3. Conclusion: A Comparison with Venice.

Few guild records from Manresa have survived for the fifteenth century, and so little can be said about how the individual occupational sectors of the town under

³⁷ *Liber Manifesti*, 1408, 109v.

³⁸ See the discussion of wages in Chapter 4, section 2.

³⁹ For the sources of this information see the note to Table 10-4.

⁴⁰ Franciscus Ripoll. *Liber Manifesti*, 1408, 189r.

discussion were organized. We can, however, attempt to make comparisons with other craft sectors from other cities and times; whether or not they were formally organized into guilds need not matter for some types of analysis. One of the few data sets from southern Europe with which we might be able to make a direct comparison with our Manresan craft sectors comes from the mercers' guild of Venice for 1567-68, as described by Richard Mackenney. Like certain Manresan occupational sectors, the mercers included a broad variety of sellers under their nominal umbrella. They included sellers of dry goods of all kinds, ranging from haberdashery (items such as ribbon and buttons for finishing clothing), to finished cloth of various kinds, and the materials needed by dyers and tanners to conduct their business. Though many have puzzled at the logical reason for including such diverse sellers under a single guild umbrella, in the light of the Manresan evidence we can see that the Venetian mercers included much of the supply trade for the cloth and leather industries; it seems clear that such people saw the parallels in their economic functions. Moreover, it is interesting to learn that, by their own accounts, the mercers claimed to be 'the noblest trade in Venice and the richest,' by the fifteenth century. This is all the more interesting when we note, from Mackenney's wealth distribution tables, that the mercers included a great number of petty dealers and pedlars in their ranks. Thus, while the guild elite could claim to form the noblest trade in Venice, presumably because they were specialized merchants, and thus eager to arrogate some of the merchant's respectability for themselves despite their association with the world of menial crafts, it is interesting to note that their organization contained a great number of men who could never hope to present an appearance of 'nobility' to any dispassionate observer. In fact, we can see that the Venetian mercers' guild contained a far more inequitable distribution of wealth than any Manresan occupation, or even

the city as a whole. In the Venetian mercers' guild, the bottom 80th percent of the mercers held only 18.5% of the total wealth for all guildmembers, while even in Manresa as a whole, if it will be recalled from Table 5 above, the bottom 80 percentiles held 32.3 percent of the wealth. Although the disparity of wealth distribution found in the Venetian mercers' guild was extreme, we can expect that the distribution in Venice as a whole was even more so. Thus, in an unexpected way, the economic extremes of life in the metropolis versus life in the smaller cities can be quantified through a study of individual occupational sectors. And once again, it is those sectors which contained entrepreneurial members which show the greatest disparity of wealth: this is a logical, though in actuality seldom glimpsed, example of the power of entrepreneurialism within the ranks of the premodern craft sector.

Table 8. Distribution of Wealth in the Venetian Mercers' Guild: 1567-68.⁴¹

Percentile ranked by wealth	Number of Members (Cumulative)	Wealth by segment (e.g., 10-19 th percentiles)	Wealth (Cumulative)	% of Wealth Controlled (Cumulative)
100	428	237,700	470,795	100.0
95	407	56,700	233,095	49.0
90	385	88,890	176,395	37.0
<u>80</u>	<u>342</u>	<u>37,410</u>	<u>87,505</u>	<u>18.5</u>
70	300	15,280	50,095	10.6
60	257	12,040	34,815	7.3
50	214	12,040	22,775	4.8
40	171	4,320	10,735	2.2
30	128	2,138	6,415	1.3
20	87	2,138	4,276	0.9
10	43	2,138	2,138	0.4

⁴¹ Adapted from Richard Mackenney, *Tradesmen and Traders: The World of the Guilds in Venice and Europe, c1250-c.1650* (London, 1987), 95. All wealth values are in Venetian ducats.