



## Labour in thirteenth-century Genoa

Steven A. Epstein

To cite this article: Steven A. Epstein (1988) Labour in thirteenth-century Genoa, Mediterranean Historical Review, 3:1, 114-140, DOI: [10.1080/09518968808569542](https://doi.org/10.1080/09518968808569542)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518968808569542>



Published online: 02 Jun 2008.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 50



View related articles [↗](#)

# *Labour in Thirteenth-Century Genoa*

STEVEN A. EPSTEIN

Thirteenth-century Genoa offers an excellent opportunity for looking at the different demands for labour that shaped life in a Mediterranean port town. The city was one of the half dozen or so most important entrepôts in that period, and figured prominently in the crusades and long-distance trade. Genoa attempted to establish a hegemony in the western Mediterranean, and in the east her merchants were active in Constantinople, Acre, and other ports where they offered a stiff challenge to Venetian competitors. At home, this medium-sized city, by thirteenth-century standards, mustered its resources, principally men and ships, and played a larger role on the international stage than its size might at first glance seem to justify. Its thirteenth-century notarial records are among the most important sources for medieval social and economic history, and this body of detailed information in turn can answer questions that in other cities might only be addressed through narrative evidence or conjecture.<sup>1</sup>

This article considers the basic and unglamorous occupations of the work-force of Genoa – the rowers, carpenters, servants, and shoemakers whose collective endeavours made possible the better-known feats of Genoese commerce and colonization. Port life challenged Genoese labour because it brought the best products and competitive prices to Genoa from all over the known world. If someone hoped to make money in Genoa in the crafts or trade, the port would supply the stern test of competition. The city's economic vitality fostered a wide range of possible occupations, and able hands found there a host of jobs not available in other places. Genoa was, however, no capitalist paradise; the traditions of the marketplace often stifled competition. The city displayed a special aptitude, present throughout its history, for sometimes ignoring economic self-interest and pursuing local feuds to an extent that made it infamous even to the jaded sensibilities of the Mediterranean world. In the marketplace of the thirteenth century the position of labour, free or enslaved, remained complex. Within sight of the city there were subject peasants toiling at compulsory labour services, slaves from Muslim Spain and North Africa, spinners of gold thread with an international reputation, and some of the most intrepid seamen in the world. Genoese employers devised ways to utilize all these types of labour.

This study is based on a sample of some 300 apprenticeships and work contracts taken from Genoese notarial records.<sup>2</sup> While there are a few such documents from the twelfth century, almost all the evidence comes from the thirteenth century. In an apprenticeship a parent or guardian committed a young man or woman to a fixed term of service with a master, who in turn promised to teach a skill to his pupil. Depending on his trade and broader economic circumstances, sometimes the master agreed to house, feed, and clothe the apprentice and provide a small stipend; sometimes the parent or guardian paid a premium to place a youth in a lucrative trade. The distinctive feature of an apprenticeship was the obligation to teach and to learn, and this aspect always distinguishes it from a work contract. Most casual labour relied on oral agreements, but for longish terms of service, measured in months or years, the parties relied on a notary to draw up a work contract. The contract stipulated the terms and kind of work expected. Its most interesting feature is the way in which the employer agreed to pay for work. In the artisan trades the employee was of indeterminate age but beyond the years of apprenticeship, and often the contract presumes a level of specialized skills. The employer might offer a lump sum or pay by the day or piece-rate wages. His decision to pay in a certain manner depended on the traditions of the business as well as the practical realities of supply and demand for labour.

A very complex set of events affected the need for labour in thirteenth-century Genoa. The ordinary work of feeding and clothing the city's inhabitants, and the daily chores of urban life, formed the basis of the local economy. The contracts discussed below mainly relate to this kind of work. Long-distance trade was the life-blood of the city. The business of building, refitting, and provisioning ships employed many men in Genoa and in the small towns along the coast to the east and west of the city. Genoa's role in the Mediterranean and the rivals encountered there brought the city into numerous conflicts during this century, and these wars and crusades had a decisive economic impact. The fleets and armies Genoa mustered also soaked up a great quantity of labour, and these demands significantly changed the ordinary functioning of the economy, especially in the area of wage rates. In order to understand how daily work existed in this broader world, it is necessary to offer a brief sketch of how Genoa participated in the great events of the day. The city government maintained an official chronicle from the early years of the twelfth century, and while the chronicle tended to make light of internal discord and external humiliations, it is an accurate barometer of the city's military commitments in Liguria and the Mediterranean world. By the thirteenth century, teams of notaries had produced a detailed history of Genoa in an annalistic

format. A chronology of the demands for ships and armies is most helpful when we attempt to assess the market for labour and compile a rough index of wages.

Warfare was so commonplace in this century that it is not easy to point to a peaceful year. Even in a relatively quiet year Genoa might face a minor revolt in Liguria or some squabble with the Pisans or Venetians that required sending a small fleet to the East. In any given year some men and ships were busy defending the honour of the commune somewhere in the world, and this constant fighting became a regular option, one of the possible occupations in the city. Almost every year Genoa sent a small number of galleys to protect merchant fleets bringing the fruits of commerce back from places like Acre, Alexandria, Constantinople, Tunis, and Ceuta, and the less glamorous but equally vital grain shipments from Provence, Tuscany, and the Kingdom of Sicily also required protection. Genoa invested men in these ships because it could not afford to see its trade disrupted or food supply cut; hence these efforts were not luxuries of aggression but crucial to Genoa's prosperity. The main job of the commune was to raise men and ships to safeguard and foster trade. These efforts were so regular as to become a normal part of the overheads of doing business, and the daily market for labour adjusted to the fact that a number of men were more or less permanently employed for essentially military purposes. Periods of total or massive warfare more decisively affected the terms of employment. Serious warfare was also common, and it disrupted trade as galleys were hired, or in times of stress drafted, into military service. When war engaged a large proportion of the city's fleet, the commune quickly tried to augment its forces by building new ships and hence drawing off more men from ordinary occupations. When trade suffered the city usually experienced higher prices for wheat and occasional famines. Genoa could draw on the small towns and villages in Liguria, but there was already a constant stream of immigrants into the city and a limit to how much the rural areas could contribute. Higher wages might increase the numbers coming into the city, but there does not seem to have been any substantial pool of reserve labour. In times of intense warfare many Genoese artisans had to abandon their customary occupations and take up an oar in defence of their city. Economic activity in Genoa slowed down during these periods, but it did not cease, and those who remained in the port found themselves in a favourable position.

The 'normal' year in Genoa was one of some warfare rather than total tranquility. The task of putting these years into categories of relative stress and effort depends on the city chronicle and is in part subjective. Some periods stand out, during which Genoa mustered all

its available resources for some serious undertakings.<sup>3</sup> In 1210 and 1211 Genoa was at war with Pisa and sent several fleets to fight in the eastern and western Mediterranean. Genoa participated in the crusade of Damietta by sending a large fleet of ten galleys there in 1219, and at the same time faced a draining revolt in Ventimiglia. From 1224 to 1227 Genoa was involved in a series of land wars in Liguria against supporters of the emperor Frederick II, and by the last year the rebels were being blamed for a wheat shortage in the city. This intensity of general warfare resumed in 1238, and by 1241 became a life or death struggle. In 1242 the revolt of Savona forced Genoa to raise a huge fleet of 80 galleys, and by 1243 an imperial fleet off Liguria became a routine sight. King Louis IX of France informed the Genoese in 1246 that he needed 16 new ships and his agents were scouring the city for ships and crews for the great crusade to Egypt. This time of intense activity, which began in 1241, only ended with the emperor's death in 1250, and at that time a large number of ships were with Louis in the East. Genoa suffered humiliating defeats in 1258 at the beginning of a protracted war with Venice that would last until 1270. These were not years of constant conflict. The years 1261 and 1262 witnessed the most significant level of commitment of Genoa towards Byzantium, which managed to recover Constantinople. King Louis again relied on Genoa, in 1269–70, for many ships to transport his army on the crusade against Tunis. From 1282–84 Genoa was in conflict with Pisa, and while this bitter struggle ended in the complete triumph of the Genoese, it required all the forces the city was able to bring to bear. The second Venetian War (1294–99) demanded a similar effort, with less success. It should be remembered that these were only the major wars; the 'peaceful' times were ones of low level civil discord, local revolt, and naval skirmishing. Even at its most perilous moments, the Genoese would still find a way to send trade goods along with a war fleet in order to keep commerce alive. Periods of crisis did not interrupt trade.

Warfare was not the only potential disaster for the Genoese economy. During the years 1276 and 1277 Genoa experienced famine and pestilence, and many died. The occasional flood or storm in the port could cause severe loss of life and economic misfortune for some. The years of calm and prosperity are easier to identify; the city chroniclers pointed them out, as in 1253 when they noted that it was the most peaceful year in the last ten. The periods that stand out as peaceful, at least in comparison to the others, are: 1200–4, 1215–18, 1222–24, 1228–37 (with some troubles in Morocco and Acre), 1250–56, 1278–81, 1285–92. These are subjective judgments and again assume a low level of military or naval activity.

From another perspective, it is also difficult to distinguish periods of

peace and war because, as a rule, captains and shipowners had to provide for the dangers of piracy or sudden war. The shipping contracts by which merchants hired vessels for voyages reveal how the crew was expected to serve as both mariners and warriors. One example that illustrates this point is the contract by which Matteo Ceba and his associates hired out their ship (*navis*) to a consortium of merchants for a trip 'overseas' – to the eastern Mediterranean, in 1252 at a time of relative peace.<sup>4</sup> This sailing ship had a crew of 75 mariners, of which 15 were crossbowmen and 40 were *muniti ad ferrum* – armoured, and presumably with fighting skills as well. A contract for hiring a galley in the same years reveals that the crew numbered 116, of whom 30 were heavily armoured and of these 10 were equipped with crossbows.<sup>5</sup> The galleys had larger crews than the greatest of sailing ships in this century. When these ships and galleys were lost in warfare, the results could be calamitous. For example, the Venetians crushed a Genoese fleet of 32 galleys and 4 ships off Acre in 1258; Venetian sources reported that half the galleys of the Genoese were sunk, and Frederic Lane estimated that in this one battle Genoa lost 1,700 dead or captured men.<sup>6</sup> The estimates of Genoese population in this period remain guesses, but the city's population may have reached the 50,000 mark at this time.<sup>7</sup> Even with the resources of the Riviera and the colonies, this one loss was a clear disaster for Genoa. The numbers of men involved in routine Genoese commerce and special naval undertakings reveals that these were the two dominant consumers of labour, and that when these needs expanded or contracted they would decisively affect the total labour market.

These wars and conflicts occasionally produced some direct evidence on the way they affected the supply of labour. On 22 May 1248 all the master shieldmakers (*scudarii*) of Genoa agreed to terms for employing journeymen from outside the city and also to set prices on various shields and pieces of armour they would make.<sup>8</sup> The long period of warfare that characterized city life in the 1240s created a shortage of labour in the munitions trades, and hence the need to contract for foreign workers. The master shieldmakers recognized that it was in their interest to agree on how they would attract recruited labour to the city. Individual masters, free to strike their own deals, might easily steal a march on competitors and undermine any consensus on prices and wages. The masters chose a long term of employment, five years, in order to prevent these foreigners from shopping around for better terms once they were in place in Genoa, and also to make immigration more attractive to the prospective journeymen. The masters, thinking that the current wars would last for a while, paid fixed piece-rate wages, so much per shield, rather than a daily wage. The

newcomers might find the piece rate more appealing, since it would provide them with the opportunity to boost their income as long as there was a pressing need for arms in Genoa.

Before turning to the contracts of employment, we must look briefly at the value of money in this century in order to place wage comparisons in their proper context. This is a tricky question for Genoa, for while there is abundant evidence on particular prices, there is at the present time no way of assessing the standard of living of the various groups in society, or the inflationary pressures in the economy. The money supply itself was complicated by the great variety of coinages that circulated in Genoa and the widespread use of money of account, which had a value of its own not quite the same as the equivalent sum in bullion. Genoa began its own gold coinage in 1252, and after that date the problems of a bimetallic money supply became even more complicated. Giovanni Pesce and Giuseppe Felloni studied the price of gold and silver and their relation to the lire money of account.<sup>9</sup> They found that during the thirteenth century there was a steady increase in the price of gold per pound – L.37 s.10 d.8 in 1205, L.48 s.12 d.1 in 1254, L.61 s.14 d.3 in 1265, L.63 s.3 d.9 in 1291. The greatest jump in price took place in 1264–65, years of difficult warfare with Venice and factional violence in Genoa itself. It is not always possible to compare silver to gold in these years; the equivalent price series for a pound of fine silver is – L.4 s.8 d.7 in 1205, L.5 s.10 d.8 in 1253, L.5 s.6 d.11 in 1268, L.5 s.12 d.4 in 1291. The price rise of silver was less dramatic and hence it became progressively cheaper in relation to gold. These prices of gold and silver are no reliable guide to changes in the purchasing power of money; we would be in a better position to gauge this if comparable statistics on rent and bread prices existed. These series suggest, however, that prices remained more or less stable for the first half of the century, with a slight yearly upward drift, while in the second half gold increased in price by 50 per cent and silver kept to the pre-1250 pattern. Employers almost always paid wages in billon pennies, but it is not likely that wages remained immune to changes in the price of gold, especially after 1252, when Genoese gold coins were first issued. In comparing wages across the century we should note changes that parallel the increase in the cost of gold and pay particular attention to stagnant wage levels.

The 112 work contracts provide the first index of prevailing wage rates, but they relate to many trades and only few provide enough examples for a useful sequence. The wool industry supplies the largest number of examples for a single trade – 21 concentrated in the period 1224–56 and another 30 spread throughout the other years. These contracts suggest

that among the wool workers and weavers there was a fine division of labour that commanded different wages depending on the speciality. The wool combers and carders tended to be paid by piece-rate, in their case so much per pound of wool, while the weavers received a daily and in some cases a yearly wage. The highest paid wool workers earned the fairly constant wage of from 12 to 14 pennies a day, and this made them part of the 'aristocracy' of Genoese artisans. By way of comparison, in 1240 during a time of almost constant warfare, the *podestà* of Genoa, hardpressed for troops, recruited mercenaries on foot at L.15 and knights for L.50 to fight the imperial forces.<sup>10</sup> This salary was also piece-rate in the sense that it covered a late autumn campaign that in the end frightened off the enemy without a fight. A weaver would have to work for 300 days at 12 pennies a day to make what the foot soldiers earned in a brief campaign, but even at its worst, weaving was not as dangerous as serving in a Genoese army.

Other trades at the upper end of the wage scale included dyers and blacksmiths – some of the latter were the highest paid artisans in the city at 15 to 24 pennies a day. The lower end of the wage scale covers a wide range of occupations. The lower the pay, however, the more likely the employer was to contribute food and clothing along with the salary. The more highly paid craftsmen did not receive any payment in kind, so in order to maintain a valid comparison, here we will only consider work contracts without food and clothing, unless otherwise stated. It should come as no surprise that women occupied the lowest paying jobs of servant and wetnurse. Even in a well-paid business like dyeing, one woman only received 24 solidi for 15 months of work, and another only reached that level in the sixth year after starting at 10 solidi for the first year – a sum a male weaver earned in ten days.<sup>11</sup> No man worked for this derisory wage. At the bottom of the male hierarchy of labour were shoemakers (two to six pennies a day), muleteers (L.3 s.18 year, plus food and, interestingly, also shoes), and rock breaking (six to eight pennies a day). These were journeymen's wages; the organizers and employers of muleteers were often important and prosperous men who provided a vital service in Genoa's rugged and riverless terrain. A wool carder, usually paid piece-rate wages, often received six pennies a day from his employer when there was no work. This kind of minimal salary, acquired for doing nothing, compares favourably to the heavy work of breaking rocks for a living.

Another way of looking at the supply and demand for labour is to examine the lot of the apprentices. Of the 169 apprenticeship contracts only 49 record that the master paid his pupil; even fewer mention any payment the other way, so the normal bargain entailed service in exchange for lodging, food, clothing, and training. The contracts



stipulating some monetary reward for the apprentice reflect the general hierarchy of trades, and in the majority of cases (36) the apprentice did not receive food and clothing and probably continued to live with his own family. The pay of apprentices is a useful index of the basic wages available to beginners in different trades. Many of these apprentices were in their late teens, so the wages reflect adult standards, if rather low ones. Among the apprentices, the *lanerii*, dyers, smiths, beaters of gold foil, and spinners of thread predominate. Since most of these apprentices were bound to long terms of service, averaging four to five years, there were often sliding scales of wages with normal increases, but it was still common in these circumstances to pay by the day. The beaters of gold foil stand out as well paid – in 1236 one lucky fellow received L.11 a year for five years, and even the presumably young apprentice pledged to ten years of service in 1256 received L.5 a year for the last six years.<sup>12</sup> Working in gold was no guarantee of a high salary; a woman spinner of gold thread received five solidi a year in the last three years of a term of six.<sup>13</sup> Women were a significant part of the labour force in this trade, for which Genoa enjoyed international fame. In contrast, the wool-working apprentices received various wages depending on the level of skill required. Carders and spinners had the lowest wages, while the weavers commanded six to eight pennies a day, still less than the journeymen in the same line of work. At the top of the scale some apprentices earned a wage most journeymen would envy, while at the bottom the figure of two or three pennies a day was common, and this without food or clothing. We will defer examining changes in these wages over time until we have considered the slender information on the wages of mariners.

So many men in Genoa were engaged in shipping that the tiny number of surviving contracts suggests that the vast majority of captains made oral agreements with their crews. The contracts in the written record were all related to unusual circumstances that may account for why the parties went to the expense and trouble of going to a notary. On 6 September 1234, Simone the furrier of Genoa accepted from Pagano de Sumavilla da Recco the sum of L.3 s.16, for which he promised that he would go in one of the four galleys the commune of Genoa was sending to Ceuta in North Africa.<sup>14</sup> He agreed to perform all the duties that he might be ordered to discharge, to serve in the galley until it returned, and not leave without the permission of the admiral. The contract succinctly describes Simone's service as *pro remo* – he was an oarsman. On the next day the same notary recorded a similar contract, by which Gandulfo *filator*, the son of the late Filippo da Fontanabona, accepted L.3 s.15 from Guibaldo da Recco to go in the galley of Recco, commanded by Guido Policanias, with the other

galleys travelling to Ceuta.<sup>15</sup> This contract contains the same general services and obligations described above, but does not mention the oar, though in this case it should be assumed. The city chronicle for 1234 records that around 24 August word reached Genoa that the king of Morocco was attacking Ceuta.<sup>16</sup> Since many Genoese ships and large sums of money were in that port, there was fear in the city. The commune mustered 18 galleys and 4 ships to help the Sultan of Ceuta defend himself against a Muslim king who, at least according to the chronicle, employed Christian mercenaries. This expedition to Ceuta did not fare well, and one can only wonder whether any furrier or thread maker managed to stay alive. That year the peasants of the valley of Oneglia were in full revolt, and the commune had put a large army in the field to suppress it. Other than the problem in Ceuta, Genoa had no major naval commitments, but it is interesting that the subject town of Recco was recruiting Genoese artisans to man its galleys.

Another document indicates one way that Genoa found to fill its galleys, apart from requiring such help from the Riviera. On 17 November 1244 Rubaldo the cheesemaker, his son Bonacorso, and his daughter-in-law Giacoma together acknowledged that they owed Alessandrino the innkeeper twenty-three solidi which Bonacorso had received from Alessandrino.<sup>17</sup> Bonacorso had this money because he agreed to go for Alessandrino in the galleys of the commune of Genoa, and he seems to have reneged on the deal. The commune had mustered two large fleets that year – and so the demand for mariners was intense.<sup>18</sup> The neighbourhoods of Genoa were occasionally responsible for providing ships and crews, and it is not known how they found these crews. Some form of a draft is the probable answer. When Genoa was at war with Pisa in 1283 and required as many ships as possible in the water, the city historian Jacopo Doria noted that no one was excused from service in the galleys except the sick and the aged.<sup>19</sup> This stern measure suggests that the commune had a way to enforce military service. The contract reveals that it was possible to hire a substitute to take one's place on the galleys. The salary – if that is what it amounts to – of 23 solidi seems too low and in this case may represent some kind of partial repayment.

Two other contracts from the relatively quiet and triumphant year of 1251 describe the ordinary recruitment of mariners for merchant ships. On 18 March, Leo de Plaza committed himself to go on Giovanni Maceries' *tarida* (a heavy galley with sails) and perform the services of a *marinarius* on this voyage.<sup>20</sup> Leo had received L3 s.12 d.6 for his services and promised to return the money if he did not meet the terms of the contract. On 29 August Obertino, the son of Corso de Frascario,

obligated himself to Guglielmo delle Vigne Scriba to accompany him as a mariner on a *navis* (sailing ship), and to remain with the ship until its return to Genoa.<sup>21</sup> This contract was a more complicated arrangement. Guglielmo, in the previous notarial act, had assumed Obertino's obligation to pay Lanfranco de Fontana the innkeeper L4, and it was for this favour that Obertino agreed to sail. Guglielmo promised to pay Lanfranco this money one month after the ship *Leone* of Ansaldo Mallon returned to Genoa, at the rate of three Saracen bezants per lira, or in any event by September of the following year. Guglielmo, therefore, had not paid the debt, but instead turned it into a kind of commercial investment. The *Leone* must have been sailing for some part of the world where Guglielmo expected to acquire Saracen bezants, and so the most probable destination was the Holy Land. Obertino, for his part, swore that he was 18 years old, and stipulated the large penalty of L.25 if he failed to perform as expected, and his mother Agnese stood as guarantor. Guglielmo must have been acting on behalf of Ansaldo Mallon in some capacity to hire the crew for the *Leone*. The title of *Scriba* attached to his name makes it likely that he was the ship's notary. While merchants occasionally took on travelling companions or servants, they were not responsible for hiring the crew, and so these contracts seem to tie Obertino to service on the *Leone*.

Two features common to all four contracts merit attention. Not surprisingly they all fall into the two principal sailing seasons, the spring months of April and May, and the late summer months of August and September. The two artisans recruited in time of warfare, it seems, were new to the sea, as was Obertino; only Leo de Plaza appears to have been an experienced mariner. It may be characteristic of these contracts that the kind of men enlisted during the actual sailing seasons were novices; experienced sailors may have remained loyal to long-term ties to ships and shipmates. Perhaps the lack of experience accounts for why the parties committed these deals to writing; the rarity of mariner contracts and the large numbers of sailors in Genoa indicates that most men joined their ships without the benefit of a written contract. The other common denominator is the pay. Three salaries were in the narrow range of L.3 s.12 d.6 to L.3 s.16, and the fourth, the debt of L.4, on the basis of the other three figures might include some profit for the innkeeper's loan. In the first three cases the mariners received their pay in advance, and Obertino settled a debt that may have already been in arrears. I have found no other work contract of any kind where the entire salary was prepaid in a lump sum. An unusual work contract confirms the special status of mariners. In August 1226, Enrico de Vedario contracted with a French doctor practising in Genoa, Maître Jean de Paris, and promised to pay him the

sum of L.2. This was to be paid 15 days after he was completely freed of a stone in his bladder.<sup>22</sup> Enrico was no doubt wise to delay payment until he was clearly free of the symptoms: even a physician could not command his fee in advance. Tradition gave the mariners another incentive. They were permitted to carry a sea bag of their own goods to trade wherever their ship broke the journey, and this small capital, the salary they received in advance, allowed them to pick up some merchandise for the journey.<sup>23</sup> The dangerous work of the men on the galleys of Recco, and the usual perils of commerce, may also have required employers to pay their men in advance. After all, some might not live to see the ship's return to Genoa, and in any circumstances like that, a man would be in a good bargaining position to extract his pay in advance. The lowest-paid mariner made on a voyage what the cobbler earned in 435 days, and the mariner had the chance to make some money on the side. While the length of the journeys in question here is uncertain, in all of them the shipowners bore the expense of feeding the crew for the duration. These mariners had an attractive if hazardous berth.

Mariners were not the only people who took to the sea for employment. On 13 April 1237, Bergamino da Bergamo promised Bonaventura da Brescia to accompany him on a trip to Tunis or wherever he went, and perform all customary services.<sup>24</sup> Bergamino agreed to stay for the term of one year, safeguard his master's goods, and in return receive L.5 at the end of the term. Merchants frequently engaged servants who were actually apprentice merchants, and these two Lombards probably found each other to be congenial company. Five lire was a good salary, but the term was long and Bergamino did not receive his pay ahead of time. Another example of this kind of agreement concerns Guglielmo Ragio, who committed himself to serve Bertolino Basiacio de Finale on sea and land.<sup>25</sup> Guglielmo promised to stay in service for five years and work in good faith, in exchange for food and clothing, and for his part Bertolino paid nothing beyond these expenses. A previous *commenda* contract reveals that Bertolino was going on a commercial venture to the Maritima, so he intended to leave Genoa soon. The contract illustrates a general class of documents in which the kind of service is not explicitly specified. The phrase 'on sea and land' provides the key to understanding these work contracts as a kind of apprenticeship in overseas commerce and a means by which a young hard-working man might eventually become a travelling partner in a *commenda* of his own.

On 12 March 1252, Cipriano, the son of Floria the cook, made a long-term contract for two years with Marchisio Frandino.<sup>26</sup> Cipriano agreed to be in service on land and sea, and 'to prepare food for you to the best

of my ability' ('facere viandum ad melius quam scivero'). He also promised to protect Marchisio's goods and commit no fraud, all under a penalty of L.20. His mother Floria stood as principal guarantor for this sum, and Cipriano swore to observe all, and that he was seventeen years old. In return for all this, Marchisio agreed to keep him for the term, and to employ him, sick or well, and to impose no insupportable burdens. The salary of L.3 s.5 is not far behind the pay of a mariner. Cipriano promised to cook for his employer on land and at sea, so the merchant envisioned travel of both kinds. Aboard ship the merchant would normally be expected to provide his own food, so Cipriano the novice cook, who followed his mother's trade, would have ample opportunity to practise and learn his calling.

These contracts suggest that it is necessary to consider one additional factor in order to assess fluctuations in wages – the time of year when the workers were engaged. The rhythm of the sailing seasons imposed a certain pattern on the labour market. The commercial year began in March or April and peaked in late August and early September.<sup>27</sup> Few ships ventured out of harbour in the winter months. Spring sailings seem to have involved more local traffic, with destinations elsewhere in Italy and the western Mediterranean, including Provence, Spain, and North Africa. Ships sailing for the Levant and Romania (the Greek east, Constantinople) also left in the spring, but there was a significant number departing in August or September, and these would not be expected back until the following year. Mariners therefore might have two voyages a year, depending on how they managed their time and on what kind of ship they sailed. The spring months witnessed the return of ships and galleys that had wintered overseas, while departures were evidently continuous, with peaks in April and August. The trades associated with shipping, and particularly the important business of loading and unloading vessels, would follow the shipping rhythms and experience their most intense demands for labour in the same months. War fleets were also active in these months, partly because of the weather, and also because it was part of their job to protect merchant shipping. The fleets that went to the eastern Mediterranean would frequently be away from Genoa for the winter and news of their successes and failures would not reach Genoa until the subsequent spring.

The dates of the work contracts and apprenticeship agreements reveal some general and quite specific trends in the market for labour. A work contract from March 1244 casually reveals that the price of labour went up after the kalends (first) of August, and it offers a wool beater a higher salary from then till October 1, when the piece-rate wage reverted to what it had been before August.<sup>28</sup> The increment

during the autumn sailing season represents a raise of 14 per cent – a noticeable premium that shows the market reacting to the greatest demand for labour by offering higher wages. This market for labour also had to allow for some traditional features of the Genoese economy. One of the most interesting exceptions concerns chestnuts. When Viale the cooper of San Ambrogio placed his son Rolandino with a draper for five years, he insisted that the boy be allowed to return home every October in order to collect chestnuts, which produced a valuable flour, a staple of the rural diet in Liguria.<sup>29</sup> Other parents or guardians also required their sons' and daughters' return at 'the time of the chestnuts', and they provided that the time missed be made up at the end of the apprenticeship. One mother wanted her son home every year in time for the olive harvest.<sup>30</sup> The patterns of rural life affected the urban economy as country families tried to maintain a connection with children placed in urban businesses.

The work contracts are spread uniformly through the year, with a modest bulge in January and a corresponding drop in February. The Genoese New Year fell on Christmas Day, and the contracts of the last six days of December, and of January, suggest that for longer term agreements there was a tendency to start them at the beginning of the year. This was the slowest time for overseas trade and commerce, and perhaps it provided a useful benchmark for master artisans to calculate their labour requirements. The dead of winter was probably the time when wages were at seasonal lows, and hence employers could take advantage of what were, from their point of view, optimal wages. The contracts do not survive in sufficient numbers to permit an analysis by month of the wages prevailing in particular trades. Only the year 1251 supplies enough contracts for a detailed inspection of wages by the month. The notaries Matteo de Predono, Guglielmo da Pegli, and Bartolomeo Fornari worked during this year and they provide 51 work contracts and apprenticeships dated from January to September.<sup>31</sup> Matteo de Predono was the notary of choice for many people in the wool trades, and his work for them accounts for most of the documents concerning that trade. These 51 contracts, however, concern 12 different trades, only a few of which contain a sufficient number of examples to make a worthwhile comparison.

Apprenticeships to ironworkers in January, February, April, and August point to the power of tradition in certain trades; the masters never paid apprentices, and offered them long service, a technical education, and a set of tools at the end. Three work contracts for wool carders, two from January and one from April, paid piece rate wages of from 24 to 26 pennies, depending on the type of wool involved. Nothing in these contracts suggests that the Genoese masters made finely tuned

adjustments to wages based on monthly considerations. One problem of course was information – even this handful of contracts represents more statistical information than was in the hands of the masters. While they had potentially an exact and complete record of prevailing wages in Genoa, there is no evidence such a record was compiled or used. In the end, the one stray notice of an early autumn wage increase is worth more than dozens of contracts, and the masters would know this kind of market lore and how it related to their crafts.

Apprenticeships tell a somewhat different story. Here, too, January was the most active month, but there was also more than the average number of apprenticeships in April and November. In addition to February, which was expected, the low months were September and October. The same reasons probably hold for these agreements being at the start of the year, but April and November require a closer look. In a contract from 1256, a guardian placing a young man as an apprentice baker wanted to reserve for himself his ward's services for one month every year. The baker allowed this, but he stipulated that the month could not be December, March, or April.<sup>32</sup> The baker assumed that he would be busy during these months; in March and April there was presumably work in provisioning ships with hardtack. He may also have feared that his apprentice might run away to sea if he were permitted to be absent at that time. It may simply be that April was a month for deciding matters in Genoa. Parents or guardians, themselves leaving town on long voyages, would want to provide for the young people in their charge. These reasons do not hold for November, a slow month by most reckonings of the Genoese business or commercial cycles. Most of these apprenticeships involved work in the wool trades, and perhaps the indoor tasks of carding, spinning, and weaving wool had a special demand for artisans in November, when, at the end of the trading season, the stocks of raw wool in the city would be at their height until commerce resumed in the subsequent spring.<sup>33</sup>

The seasonal fluctuations in wages are not clear, except for the notice of higher wages from August to October 1. Most of the longer term contracts provided for some annual increase in wages, but these do not supply any information on the seasonal rhythms. The nature of the surviving source material makes it almost impossible to trace individual employers making more than one contract of hire. One rare instance of this concerns two apprentices taken on by Guglielmo Pelipario *lanerius*. On 2 February 1248, he accepted a certain Stefanino for six years and promised to pay him 36s. 8d. for a year in quarterly instalments.<sup>34</sup> On 9 April 1251, he took on one Nicolino as an apprentice for two years, and promised to pay him seven pennies for every working day in the first year and eight pennies in the second, to be disbursed every week.<sup>35</sup>

Even if Nicolino only worked 250 days a year, a conservative estimate of the number of work days that allows for Sundays and a generous supply of festivals and holidays, he would earn about L.7 s.6 the first year, a fine artisan wage and about four times the amount Stefanino received. The terms of the apprenticeship suggest that Stefanino was younger and presumably less experienced, while Nicolino was old enough to swear to keep the contract, so he must have been at least 17 or 18 years old. In a similar case, Giovanni de Lodi *lanerius* took on an apprentice for six years on 18 April 1251, and offered only food, clothing, and an education, while in February 1248 he had hired an assistant, who was also supposed to keep the records for him, for L.4 s.10 a year, but without food, clothing, and lodging.<sup>36</sup> The few journeymen able to keep records for their employers usually commanded a respectable wage. Here too we find a master artisan in the market for two different kinds of labourers. Even the most successful master would not have a large number of apprentices at the same time, and in other cities the guild set limits to the number of apprentices permitted.<sup>37</sup>

While there are not enough similar contracts to chart seasonal labour rhythms, these agreements in aggregate point to three useful indicators of how the labour market functioned. First, the age and skill of the employee were significant factors in coming to terms on wages, if any were offered. Of the contracts, 40 supply the ages of the apprentices and journeymen, and these suggest that the age-limit for swearing was 15. However, only two swore at that age and most notaries would only accept an oath from someone 17 or even 18 years old. The younger the apprentice or worker was, the longer the term of service. In general the apprentices were younger than the workers, and the youngest apprentices seem to have been between 10 and 12 years of age. The second indicator is the idea of a fixed term of service. The great majority of the contracts contain a set term, and only one contract explicitly states that the work should continue, in the words of the journeyman to his master, 'as long as you will want', but even here the salary was fixed for the year.<sup>38</sup> The Genoese masters tied down the apprentices for long terms – on average six years for the wool industry, five for a shoemaker, seven years for a smith, and terms of up to ten years in various trades are not uncommon. For the same three trades, no work contract lasted for more than two years, and one year was the most frequent duration. Some contracts lasted only for some months but never for less than six. The masters assumed that apprentices would not be very productive for the first year or two, and when they paid the apprentices they often did not pay for these early trial years. Workers had a measure of job security, and the masters had a dependable supply of labour. The customary penalty of L.5 for failure to observe the terms



of the agreement often amounted to more than the wages for the term, so either party would be reluctant to break a contract that might be dissolved only by mutual consent. The terms of apprentices are long, and suggest that most labour, more casual in nature and short term, did not require a written contract. This work may escape the sources, but so many of the contracts concern small wages and menial work that it seems reasonable to assume that in this century and in Genoa employers needed the security of long fixed terms and service from workers and pupils.

The last indicator of the labour market is the length of the term and how it affected wages. Apprenticeships had long terms and low wages, journeymen short terms and high wages. Within each group some other patterns emerge. The escalating wages over the term should reflect higher levels of skill and greater productivity in a particular trade. At the end of the century the masters also had to take into account the more rapid increase in prices. The work contracts were already short enough to discount both factors, and even in the longish ones, such as a three-year contract for work in a ropemaker's shop in 1291, the salary amounted to the lump sum of L.9 s.6 d.8 for the term.<sup>39</sup> Sometimes there would be fine gradations in salary, as when Contessa in 1272 apprenticed her son to a *filator* for four years. He was to receive three pennies a day for the first year, three and a half for the second, four for the third, five for the fourth.<sup>40</sup> When Antonio's father apprenticed him to a *lanerius* in 1293 for four years, the master agreed to pay L.5 s.10 for the term, 20 solidi for the first year and 30 solidi a year for the remaining three.<sup>41</sup> The escalating wages did not become more common in the 1250s precisely when inflationary pressures increased; these incentives are as old as wages themselves. In 1214 a six-year apprenticeship for a *filator* offered wages that increased in increments of one half penny a day from two pennies to four and a half pennies for the term.<sup>42</sup> In 1256 a five-year apprenticeship to a *lanerius* saw orderly raises of one penny a day, from six to ten for the term.<sup>43</sup> By the 1270s the increments, a penny a day, remained the same, despite the changes in the value of money. These wages indicate that the market for labour tipped in favour of the employers towards the end of the thirteenth century.

There were other ways for a person with little or no capital to secure employment without being an apprentice or journeyman. The *societas* was a flexible partnership of limited duration, in which both parties usually contributed capital to a joint enterprise. As a rule the *societas* was a part of the commercial world, but it could also serve the needs of artisans. The partners divided up the profits according to how much capital and labour each contributed. Two *maestri de antelamo* (stone-masons) made this kind of agreement in 1158.<sup>44</sup> One put up L.30, the

other L.10, towards a partnership lasting five years. They agreed to divide the profits in the same proportions, with a small bonus to one partner who did all of one specialized part of the business.

A more complicated arrangement for 1231 reveals that it was possible for a skilled artisan to find a partner to contribute all the capital, while the artisan volunteered only his skills.<sup>45</sup> In this case, Bertoloto *batifolius* made a *societas* with Nicola Navario, who supplied L.100, a house with a shop, and all the tools. Bertoloto was obligated to work himself, and he also recruited his brother and three *pueri* (boys) to work in the shop. Bertoloto also trained Nicola in the art, so this agreement has elements of an apprenticeship. Nicola's capital was always to remain his own, and the partners divided the profits every three months, with two-thirds for Bertoloto. They kept the income in a special box to which each partner had his own key. This interesting arrangement provided Nicola with way to increase his capital and learn a craft; Bertoloto became a master with a shop and the money to run it.

The *societas* between artisans was not a common type of contract; only a handful survive in the Genoese records. S.D. Goitein found the reverse situation in the Geniza records of Fustāt (Old Cairo); there, 'the normal form of industrial cooperation . . . was partnership, not employment'.<sup>46</sup> All the contracts from Genoa reflect an economy in which wage labour was the rule, and partnership the exception. The Genoese worker had the security of a wage rate that was guaranteed, even in hard times. The artisan working for a share of a shop's profit in Old Cairo would have to face periods of poor business, but he had the most direct incentive for his labour. The daily or piece-rate wages certainly brought men and women into the work force in Genoa, but the rare chance of a partnership probably condemned most journeymen to a life of wages – and not a share of the profit. A working capital of L.100 was not going to come the way of even a frugal *batifolius* for a long time. The importance of wage labour in Genoa, and its rarity in Old Cairo, point to one of the most crucial differences between the two economies; the concentration of Genoese profits in a smaller number of hands, where it served the capital requirements of a burgeoning economy.

The fate of two other groups in the labour market, women and slaves, reflects changes in the general situation of labour. These two groups occupied positions at the margin of Genoese society, and changes there help to explain the broader chronology of labour and the attitudes the majority had about working women and slaves. Twenty-three contracts involve women as apprentices or workers, but it would be a mistake to assume that they comprised less than ten per cent of the work

force. For example, the notary Bonovassalo de Maiori went to his colleague Matteo de Predono to draw up an unusual contract on 30 January 1248.<sup>47</sup> He hired a certain Beatrice to come to his home to nurse and wash his infant son. Beatrice agreed to perform other domestic services and in return she received food, clothing, and seven solidi a year. Beatrice, who presumably worked every day, earned a penny every four days. Wetnursing provided some women with money and in the end sometimes resulted in ties to wealthier members of society.<sup>48</sup> Other documents suggest that families of the middle and upper ranks regularly utilized their services. Only a fastidious notary would have bothered to record all this in writing. Many women survived in this way, and the contracts alone would not reveal this. Other documents also suggest that the homes of the wealthy contained many female servants, and the six contracts about this occupation reveal the menial status of domestic servants. The documents most often call the servant a *pediseca*, the classical term for a personal attendant, one who literally followed in a master's footsteps in attentive anticipation. In one of these agreements a mother placed her daughter Pauleta in service for 14 years in exchange for food, clothing, and lodging.<sup>49</sup> After that term it may have been Pauleta's fate to carry on in the household as she had done before. All the contracts for service but one concern very young girls, three committed by their mothers, a kind of apprenticeship as a domestic servant which probably accounts for the necessity of a written contract.

One father, Bonsegnore de Rossano, placed a son as a muleteer and a daughter as a servant in the same week in 1256, both for terms of four years.<sup>50</sup> The son received food, clothing, and a modest stipend of which his father pocketed the first year's pay. The daughter Genarima found herself working for Giovanna, the wife of Armanno the shoemaker. She was to serve as a *pediseca* for the term, but Giovanna promised to teach Genarima a *misterium* (trade), though the contract does not specify the craft. There were husband and wife teams in the same business, and others in quite different trades. The shoemaker's wife might be doing almost anything. Genarima received her food, clothing, and lodging, and her father wanted her at home in October to collect chestnuts. Genarima's life seems harder than her brother's, with less certain rewards. Bonsegnore de Rossano launched his children into the economy in a very modest way, yet it is significant that Genarima would learn some sort of skill that might help her to escape a lifetime of servitude.

The women workers were concentrated in a handful of trades or professions. Domestic service remained the single largest employer of women, and some unmarried women slipped into this role in their own

households. One father, Ottone di Bagno, struck such a deal with this daughter Richelda and committed it to writing; most of the time there was no need for so formal an arrangement.<sup>51</sup> The principal artisan industry of Genoa, wool, employed a significant number of women as combers, carders, and weavers. A new rule of the wool guild, agreed to on 2 October 1244, made the members subscribe to the guild and the list of 54 *lanerii* includes two women.<sup>52</sup> The guild allowed women to join, and they were more numerous as workers than their percentage as employers might suggest. The allied trade of the dyers also took in women, though this seems to have stopped by 1250. Women were also active in the specialized trade of gold thread, and one worked as a silk weaver. These basic categories of work, domestic service, wool, dyeing, and gold thread are the only ones for which the documents reveal any women working in the trade. Probably a few women were active in other fields, and we know that Floria was a cook, but it is significant that the same sample that contains 45 separate trades for men should confine women to four, with the fifth, wetnursing, obviously in a distinct category.<sup>53</sup> There would always be a market for domestic servants in Genoa, but as we will see, the female slaves were also numerous in the homes of the wealthy and they provided competition to free women. The women in the various lines of the wool industry in the thirteenth century would discover, as the century drew to a close, that they were in a business where foreign competition proved insurmountable.

Women occasionally took on apprentices, either in their own right or along with their husbands. The skills of these mistresses provide another way to measure the role of women in the labour force. Those women who accepted female apprentices taught the basic trades already mentioned, and about half these apprentices worked under women. Even when a woman possessed a skill worth passing on to another woman, men frequently controlled the contract. Guglielmo de Lavagna made a deal with Giovanni Grasso that Giovanni's wife Giovanna would teach Guglielmo's daughter Maiorina the art of weaving for a term of six years.<sup>54</sup> These women were not independent actors. Sometimes a woman might accept an apprentice on behalf of an absent husband, but more often the husband played a dominant role in his wife's business affairs. Men were as likely as women to hire young girls as domestic servants, but they were increasingly unlikely to train female apprentices, and none are mentioned in the sample after 1248. The constricted sphere of possible trades for women results both from the disinclination of men to take on women apprentices, and the fact that the women were only capable of training others in a limited number of skills. These tendencies in the market find confirmation in

the few cases in which a woman employed a man as a servant or apprentice. Women, especially widows, had need for male servants if they could afford one, and there are contracts to this effect in the notarial record. Apart from these agreements, there was a single instance, in 1226, of a woman teaching a young boy a skill and, predictably, it was weaving.

The main businesses of Genoa, those connected to ships, trade, and the sea, had no role for women, except as investors.<sup>55</sup> The buying and selling of female slaves was, as we will see, a lucrative trade, but this role was not an adequate substitute for rewarding involvement in port life. Even in those businesses ancillary to shipbuilding like sailmaking and provisioning, a male monopoly remained the rule. In the course of revising the terms by which an apprentice could become a member of their guild, the 42 *speziali* (spicers and druggists) of Genoa agreed in July 1449 to charge a newcomer L.5 for permission to own his shop.<sup>56</sup> The *speziali* applied these sums to their favourite charity, and one long close to the hearts of well-to-do Genoese, dowries for poor girls. The Genoese had been trying to deal with this social problem for more than two centuries, but it never occurred to anyone to broaden the opportunities for employment. In this world, marriage was the reliable antidote to poverty.

While there is some dispute about the exact numbers, slaves were numerous in medieval Genoa and were one of the mainstays of overseas trade.<sup>57</sup> Genoa was an important entrepôt of the slave trade, and acted as a clearing house and supplier of slaves to the Muslim states of North Africa. The Genoese were also adept acquirers of slaves, and the domestic market absorbed a fair number of them as well. These slaves merit attention in any analysis of the Genoese labour market. The slaves, their cost, and the expenses of maintaining them were a potential check on the wages that free men and women might expect at the bottom of the labour hierarchy. The effect of slaves on the labour market depended on two additional factors – the potential profit from slave labour, and the social acceptability of employing slaves rather than free persons.

The notarial record for the thirteenth century provides a reasonable enough number of slave sales to permit a calculation of the average price of slaves over time. Michel Balard has investigated this problem and found that the price increased from L.4–L.7 in 1239–40 to L.18–L.22 around 1300. He also considered the question of inflation, and the difficulties of calculating it, but came to the conclusion that silver depreciated by 28 per cent and gold by 41 per cent, another way of stating the more recent figures previously cited, and close enough to their price levels.<sup>58</sup> By any reckoning, the price of slaves was increasing

considerably faster than the general inflation of prices, and this points to a strong demand, though not necessarily in Genoa. The export market must be kept in mind. To place these prices in perspective, the usual measure of wages provides an instructive comparison. The skilled weaver of the 1250s would earn the price of a slave in 100 working days. A sailor who managed to hold on to his salary, a proverbial difficulty, and make a small profit on his trade goods, would be able to purchase a slave after one voyage. By the end of the century slaves were more expensive, and it took any artisan at least three times more the amount of labour to buy a slave than it did in the 1250s. For example, a twenty-five year old apprentice weaver in 1293, who did not receive any food or clothing, with a wage of eight pennies a day, would have to work 540 days to buy a slave at L.18, while a skilled worker might accomplish that at a much higher rate than in 1250.<sup>59</sup> Slaves were very cheap from the 1220s to the 1250s, and became progressively more expensive after that time. Female slaves were always more costly than men, but the premium they enjoyed remained small. For the period 1239–1300, Balard found that women comprised 62.9 per cent, and men 37 per cent, of his sample slave population.<sup>60</sup>

The market for slaves always reflected changes in supply. In general, the Reconquista in Spain and slave hunting along the shores of the Black Sea accounted for the most reliable supplies of slaves for medieval Genoa. Saracen slaves from Spain, and to a lesser extent North Africa, predominated in the market up to the 1270s, and they continued to be important after that period, when Circassians and others from the East began to appear in increasing numbers.<sup>61</sup> Notable events like the conquest of Valencia in 1238 and Seville in 1248 affected the supply and price of slaves in Genoa. Since the 1270s, some Genoese merchants supplied slaves from the Black Sea to Egypt, and the demand there was a significant part of the Genoese export market by the end of the thirteenth century, and contributed to the general increase in the prices of slaves in Genoa itself. Even as the pace of the Reconquista slowed towards the end of the thirteenth century, Spain still supplied slaves for the Genoese market, though evidently not quite enough to keep apace with demand. The considerable decrease in the price of slaves in the late 1270s, which Balard attributed to the first sizeable importation of slaves from the Black Sea, might also have resulted from the famine conditions in Genoa and the western Mediterranean in 1276, and the effects on the market of the high price of food.<sup>62</sup> However, slave prices rebounded by 1281 and continued their upward pace. There was a massive effort by merchants to ensure the availability of slaves, but while by 1300 they found the steppes of southern Russia to be a fruitful source, the presumably strong demand

in places like Mamluk Egypt and the increased costs of transport caused a significant rise in the price of slaves in Genoa.

Before turning to how the Genoese used slaves, profited from them, and ignored any criticism of their activities, we should inquire about the long term costs of maintaining slaves. The capital requirements for purchasing slaves became heavier by 1300, but some slave-owners could rely upon procreation to supply new slaves. Other potential slave-owners in Genoa would also take expenses into account, and compare them to the cost of free labour in the market. The evidence suggests that in part the luxury appeal of having slaves operated despite any rational calculation of the economic benefit of possessing them. The majority of female slaves were employed as servants in the households of Genoa's prominent families. A survey of Genoese wills, the most accurate index of slaves by household that we have, suggests that wealthy families brought female slaves into their households and presumably acquired them for reasons other than cheap service.<sup>63</sup> Poor women from the countryside, and some from the city as well, would work for nothing more than food and clothing, items the slave also required in addition to her initial price. So, some of the market for slaves had more to do with questions of status than profit.<sup>64</sup> For the rest, particularly those involved in the artisan trades, the issues were the initial cost and subsequent maintenance. Masters acquired apprentices for free in the marketplace; occasionally the parent or guardian paid the master to take a young boy into service. Most masters did not offer an apprentice any salary at all, and hence the only expenses they had were for lodging, food, and clothing.

It is possible to calculate the cost of basic maintenance by comparing the way some masters paid apprentices who received food, clothing, and a daily stipend, to those who did not. The difference, compared over a number of cases, should represent the approximate estimate of how much it cost to feed and clothe an apprentice. For example, a four-year apprenticeship for a *filator* in 1236, with food and clothing, involved the following wages: first year – two pennies a day; second year – two and a half pennies; third year – three pennies, and fourth year – four pennies.<sup>65</sup> In the same year another master *filator* took on an apprentice, offered no food or clothing, and paid wages over four years as follows: three pennies for the first year; three pennies for the second year; four pennies for the third, and five pennies for the fourth year.<sup>66</sup> Since these apprentices seem to have had the same level of skill and served for the same term, the difference appears to be related to the question of food and clothing. These comparisons become more difficult after 1250, because very few masters who paid their apprentices any longer supplied food and clothing. However, the available com-

parisons suggest that for the first half of the century food and clothing cost the master about one and a half to two pennies a day.<sup>67</sup> These figures fit nicely with the bottom wage of two pennies – the bare subsistence. At the yearly rate, and figured at the high side of two pennies a day, support cost the master L.3 d.10, a valid price more or less to the 1260s, when there was an increase in all prices.

By the 1270s, a typical *filator* apprentice without food and clothing was still making from three to five pennies a day over a four-year term, no increase over the wages of 1236.<sup>68</sup> All these salaries exclude the expense of lodging. Both slaves and apprentices were housed, and so this expense only concerned journeymen, who were normally obliged to provide their own shelter and clothe themselves. A document from 1246 reveals that it cost 12 solidi a year to provide clothing for an apprentice.<sup>69</sup> The difference here between the basic subsistence and the lowest wages of day labourers is virtually non-existent. Some workers made less than the bare minimum required to support themselves, and presumably remained with their families. In this environment, where so many hands waited for employment, the increasing capital costs of slaves must have weighed heavily in the calculations of masters who considered purchasing them.

The evidence on how owners used their slaves is fragmentary. The Genoese galleys in the thirteenth century relied exclusively on free labour, so one of the largest single sources of employment had no room for slaves. The high proportion of female slaves, and their mention in the wills of the affluent, suggest that many slaves were domestic servants. The role of slaves in the artisan trades remains the most important source of potential difficulty for the free apprentices and journeymen who may have competed with slaves. Balard thought that the male slaves were the key to this problem and he thought that 'the needs of the Genoese artisan therefore explain the higher proportion of male slaves', owned by masters in trades in which heavy physical labour was the norm.<sup>70</sup> He also cited a draper's will from 1296 which indicated that the master owned five male slaves, presumably employed in his business. Later guild statutes provide some clues as to the role these slaves played in manufacturing. The statutes of the silk guild, redacted in 1432, stated that masters were allowed to teach slaves an art, but the slaves could never be heads of shops (masters) or officials in the guild. The slaves were only permitted to work as day labourers – *laboratores ad iornatam*.<sup>71</sup> The masters envisaged slaves competing with free employees but never with themselves. The statutes of the dyers, from 1426, make the same points; in this case it was permissible to train slaves or foreigners, and again they only worked as journeymen.<sup>72</sup>

Slavery remained important in Genoa in the fifteenth century, and



the earliest surviving guild statutes date from this period.<sup>73</sup> The question of how old these rules on employing slaves might have been cannot be answered with certainty for Genoa, but some older statutes from Bologna provide some useful clues. When the *fabri* (smiths) of Bologna recorded their ordinances in 1252, they added the provision that no master was allowed to own a slave.<sup>74</sup> The smiths worked in the kind of trade in which a slave would be useful. In Bologna, a town where slaves were not as numerous as in Genoa, the masters were not willing to distinguish a male domestic slave from a slave in the business; they made the prohibition absolute.<sup>75</sup> In Genoa masters from a variety of trades owned male slaves and put them to work at the craft without any hesitation. The guild regulations on this matter are late and their genesis uncertain.<sup>76</sup> Since earlier redactions of the guild statutes do not exist, it seems likely that in the thirteenth century masters were free to use slaves as they wished. By the end of that century the price of these slaves would be a significant factor. A capital price of L.20 in the era of low wages of the 1290s, might have seemed too much to risk in the face of disease and other uncertainties. Guglielmo Cafaraina and his five slaves were the exception and not the rule; few wills by artisans reveal that they owned any slaves at all.

The thirteenth century was the heroic age of Genoese history; the city thrived and made its presence felt throughout the Mediterranean world. The overseas interests of the merchant élite brought prosperity to Genoa, but it also involved the city in various wars and along with the successful commerce came competition. Port life benefited both the artisans and mariners. Sea air also made some people free, though ironically it brought slavery to Genoa and offered nothing to women. As the century drew to a close, wages lagged behind the increases in other prices. Shipping was increasingly the backbone of the economy, and the sea lanes to distant colonies had to be protected at all costs. Those artisan trades connected to the sea, and principally to ship-building itself, the coopers, canvasmakers, and armourers, fared better than the local wool weavers and dyers.<sup>77</sup> The larger fleets after 1250 absorbed some displaced or adventurous artisans and enabled them to thrive apart from the entrenched masters of the urban guilds. Had Genoa been the only port in the Mediterranean, it would have been able to accept the withering of some local industries and suffer no ill effects as its maritime economy continued an unabated expansion. Genoa's serious rivals, Venice in the east and Barcelona in the west, faced similar predicaments however, and a number of smaller ports had ambitions of their own. The contest for markets encouraged the Vivaldi brothers in 1291 to sail to the Atlantic in search of India, and they were never heard of again.<sup>78</sup> To the end of his life, the city historian

Jacopo Doria believed that they would succeed and return to Genoa in triumph, because he knew that Genoa very much needed to make a success of her maritime activity.

# NOTES

I am grateful to James B. Given, David Herlihy, David Nicholas, and Kathryn Ryerson for their comments and suggestions.

1. For a catalogue of the thirteenth-century notaries, see Ministero dell'Interno, *Pubblicazioni degli Archivi di Stato, Archivio di Stato di Genova: Cartolari notarili genovesi*, Vols. 22 and 41 (Rome, 1956 and 1961).
2. These contracts come from the following sources: M. Chiaudano and M. Moresco, *Il cartolare di Giovanni Scriba* (Rome, 1935); M. Chiaudano, *Oberto Scriba de Mercato* (1186) (Turin, 1940); M. Chiaudano and R.M. Della Roca, *Oberto Scriba de Mercato* (1190) (Turin, 1938); M.W. Hall *et al.*, *Guglielmo Cassinese* (Turin, 1938); M.W. Hall-Cole *et al.*, *Giovanni di Guiberto* (Turin, 1939); H.C. Krueger and R.L. Reynolds, *Lanfranco* (Genoa, 1951-53). The unpublished cartularies are in the Archivio di Stato di Genova, Cartolari Notarili (hereafter ASG, CN) Cartolare N. 4, Lanfranco *et al.*; N. 14, Maestro Salmone; N. 18, parte II, Giannino de Predono; N. 21, parte I, Palodino de Sexto; N. 31, parte I, Matteo de Predono, N. 55, parte II, Azone de Clavica; N. 86, Giovanni de Corsio. Also, ASG, Sezione Manoscritti, Manoscritto N. 102, *Diversorum Notariorum*, ASG, Notai Ignoti, arranged by *busta* and not yet catalogued. Other cartularies were searched without result.
3. For these years, the city chronicle provides the details. See the series *Annales lanuenses, Annali genovesi di Caffaro e de' Suoi Continuatori in Fonti per la Storia d'Italia* (hereafter *FSI*) N. 12, 1174-1224, ed. Luigi T. Belgrano and Cesare Imperiale du Sant'Angelo (Genoa, 1901); N. 13, 1225-50, ed. C. Imperiale di Sant'Angelo (Rome, 1923); N. 14, 1251-79 (Rome, 1926); N. 14 bis, 1280-93 (Rome, 1929). See E. Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago, 1981), pp.60-65 for a discussion of city annals and their strengths and weaknesses.
4. E.H. Byrne, *Genoese Shipping in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, Mass., 1930), pp.99-102.
5. *Ibid.*, pp.102-4.
6. F.C. Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic* (Baltimore, 1973) p.75.
7. J.C. Russell estimates that the population of Genoa may have reached 60,000 at the height of its prosperity in the late thirteenth century; see his *Medieval Regions and their Cities* (Indiana, 1972), p.70, where he relies on G. Pistarino, 'Genova medievale tra Oriente e Occidente', *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 81 (1969), 44-73. Genoa was able to draw upon the considerably larger resources of the subject towns in Liguria and the villages in the valleys to the north.
8. ASG, CN, Cartolare N. 22, 122v, notary Bonovassallo de Maiori.
9. G. Felloni and G. Pesce, *Le Monete genovesi: storia, arte, ed economia delle monete di Genova dal 1139 al 1814* (Genoa, 1975), pp.223-34. See F.C. Lane and R.C. Mueller, *Money and Banking in Medieval and Renaissance Venice* (London, 1985), pp.105-33 for more on thirteenth-century coinage and money of account in Venice; such details are not available for Genoa.
10. *FSI*, N. 13, pp. 101-2, for details on the campaign of 1240.
11. ASG, CN, Cartolare N. 18, parte II, 191v., notary Bartolomeo de Fornari 1245, for 10 solidi the first year. Krueger and Reynolds, *Lanfranco*, No. 1734, for 24 solidi per year in 1225.
12. ASG, Cartolare N. 14, 312r., notary Andreas de Sacri Imperii (1236); Cartolare N.

- 31, parte II, 196r, notary Matteo de Predono (1256).
13. Ibid., 83r (1251).
14. ASG, Cartolare N. 18, parte II, 253v–254r, notary Lantelmo.
15. Ibid., 254v. An apprentice *filator* could earn five pennies a day in his second year, see Notai Ignoti, *Busta* 3.47, 17v, notary Bonovassallo de Cassino.
16. *FSI*, N. 13, pp. 72–4 for the campaign in Ceuta in 1234. For more on this campaign, see R. de Tucci, 'Documenti inediti sulla spedizione e sulla mahona dei genovesi a Ceuta', *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria*, 64 (1935). G. Pistarino, in his 'Gente del mare nel commonwealth genovese' in *Le genti del mare Mediterraneo*, ed. R. Ragosta (Naples, 1981), pp. 261ff., also looked at this expedition and found an average salary, based on de Tucci's documents, of L.3 s.13, close to the average calculated here. These contracts were not part of the sample cartularies I consulted. Pistarino's essay is filled with insights into the business of shipping.
17. ASG, CN, Cartolare N. 18, parte II, 369v, notary Matteo de Predono, '... causa eundi pro te in galeris communis ...'.
18. *FSI*, N. 13, pp. 150–52 for fleets of 1244.
19. Ibid., N. 14 *bis*, p. 33.
20. ASG, CN, Cartolare N. 31, parte I, 101r, notary Matteo de Predono.
21. Ibid., 170r.
22. Cartolare N. 14, 357r *bis*, notary Maestro Salmone.
23. See W. Ashburner, *The Rhodian Sea-Law* (Oxford, 1909), p. clxxiv on references to the mariner's *pacotille* – his right to carry some goods at no cost. There is no direct evidence for this right in Genoa, but it was practised in Zara and Venice.
24. ASG, CN, Cartolare N. 18, parte II, 177r, notary Bartolomeo de Fornari.
25. Cartolare N. 21, parte I, 140v, notary Bartolomeo de Fornari.
26. Cartolare N. 18, parte II, 54v, notary Januino de Predono.
27. See Byrne, *Genoese Shipping*, on the question of the sailing seasons, and for details on the unloading of ships, see L. Balletto, *Genova nel duecento: Uomini nel porto e uomini sul mare* (Genoa, 1983), pp. 219–90. For more on the seasonal nature of Genoese business, see my 'Business Cycles and the Sense of Time in Medieval Genoa', *Business History Review* (forthcoming).
28. ASG, CN, Cartolare N. 14, 180r, notary Maestro Salmone.
29. Ibid., 19 April 1224, 190 r–v.
30. Ibid., 25 Nov. 1222, 117r.
31. All the examples from Cartolari N. 18, parte II; N. 31, parte I, and the Notai Ignoti.
32. Cartolare N. 31, parte I, 245v, notary Matteo de Predono.
33. There are three from Nov. 1293, in Notai Ignoti, *Busta* 10, 107A, notary Lanfranco Cazano.
34. Cartolare N. 31, parte I, 118v, notary Matteo de Predono.
35. Ibid., 111v.
36. Ibid., 114r–v, and 123v.
37. For some contemporary limitations on the number of apprentices in Bologna, see A. Gaudenzi, *Statuti delle società di popolo di Bologna*, Vol II (Rome, 1896), p. 231.
38. ASG, CN, Cartolare N. 21, parte I, 72r, notary Bonovassallo de Cassino.
39. Cartolare N. 55, parte II, 144 r–v, notary Angelino de Sigestro.
40. Ibid., 10r, notary Bonovassallo de Maiori.
41. Notai Ignoti, *Busta* 10, 107A, 4v, notary Lanfranco Cazano.
42. Cartolare N. 4, 7v, notary Oberto Scriba de Mercato.
43. Cartolare N. 31, parte I, 234v–235r, notary Matteo de Predono.
44. Chiaudano and Moresco, *Giovanni Scriba*, p. 171.
45. ASG, CN, Cartolare N. 14, 333v–334r, notary Maestro Salmone.
46. S.D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of Old Cairo As Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*, Vol. I, *Economic Foundations* (Berkeley, CA, 1967), p. 87.
47. ASG, CN, Cartolare, N. 14, 129v, notary Maestro Salmone.
48. For the importance of wetnursing and social ties see S. Epstein, *Wills and Wealth in Medieval Genoa* (Cambridge, Mass., 1984), pp. 128–9.

49. ASG, CN, Cartolare N. 31, parte I, 191r, notary Matteo de Predono.
50. Ibid., 195r, daughter Genarima, 197v, son Bennacorco.
51. Krueger and Reynolds, *Lanfranco*, document 1480, 16 Aug. 1225.
52. ASG, Cartolare N. 18, parte II, 322 r-v. For this act, see R.S. Lopez, 'Le origini dell'arte della lana', *Studi sull'economia genovese nel medioevo* (Turin, 1936), pp.189-90.
53. K. Reyerson found that female apprentices in Montpellier 'were concentrated in the food trades, in needlework, and in precious metals'. See her 'Patterns of Population Attraction and Mobility: The Case of Montpellier 1293-1348,' *Viator*, 10 (1979), 257-81; on apprentices see 271-3.
54. ASG, CN, Cartolare N. 14, 35r, notary Maestro Salmone, 26 Aug. 1222.
55. G. Jehel, 'Le rôle des femmes et du milieu familial à Gênes dans les activités commerciales', *Revue d'histoire économique et sociale*, 53 (1975), 193-215, and G. Pistarino, 'La donna d'affari a Genova nel secolo XIII' in *Miscellanea di storia italiana per Nino Lamboglia* (Milan, 1962), pp.157-69.
56. ASG, Magistrato delle Arti, *Busta* 178, Fascie 18.
57. Ch. Verlinden, *L'Esclavage dans L'Europe médiévale*, Vol. 2 (Ghent, 1977), pp.427-549, for the most recent and comprehensive analysis of slavery in Genoa.
58. M. Balard, 'Remarques sur les esclaves à Gênes dans la seconde moitié du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle,' *Ecole française de Rome: Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire*, 80 (1968), 628-80, especially 660. 'The contrary is also true; the value of gold and silver in relation to billon coins was rising during the period under consideration'. I am indebted to an anonymous reviewer for this observation.
59. ASG, Notai Ignoti, *Busta* 10, 107A, 3v-4r, notary Lanfanco Cazano.
60. Balard, 'Les esclaves à Gênes', 650.
61. Ibid., 645 (table).
62. Ibid., 660, and for the famine of 1276 see *FSI*, N. 14, p.175.
63. Epstein, *Wills and Wealth*, pp.189-92 for notices of slaves in wills. Twenty-eight slaves were freed by testament or left as a bequest - 16 women and 12 men.
64. O. Patterson suggests the connection between the status or honour of the master as it relates to the dishonour of the slave - see his *Slavery and Social Death* (Cambridge, MA, 1982), pp.79-94, for some useful comments on the question of honour.
65. ASG, CN, Cartolare N. 14, 251r, notary Maestro Salmone.
66. Ibid., 316v, notary Andreas de Sacri Imperii.
67. This figure is based on a comparison of the similar cases from the 300.
68. ASG, CN, Cartolare N. 55, parte II, notary Bonovassallo de Maiori, 28 Jan. 1272.
69. Notai Ignoti, *Busta* 7, N. 12, notary Ingone Contardo.
70. Balard, 'Les esclaves à Gênes', 652.
71. G. Morazzoni, *Mostra de le antiche stoffe genovesi del secolo XV al secolo XIX* (Genoa, 1941), p.110.
72. ASG, Magistrato delle arti, *Busta* 178, Fascie 23, folio 10r.
73. For fifteenth-century slavery see D. Gioffrè, *Il mercato degli schiavi a Genova nel secolo XV* (Genoa, 1971).
74. Gaudenzi, *Statuti delle società de popolo di Bologna*, p.231.
75. ASG, CN, Cartolare N. 26, parte II, 19v, notary Bartolomeo de Fornari.
76. Epstein, *Wills and Wealth*, pp.289-92.
77. For more on the wool industry, see R.S. Lopez, 'Arte della Lana', in *Studi sull'economia genovese nel medioevo* (Turin, 1936).
78. For the ill-fated Vivaldi brothers, see *FSI*, N. 14 bis, p.124, and a discussion in B.Z. Kedar, *Merchants in Crisis: Genoese and Venetian Men of Affairs and the Fourteenth-Century Depression* (New Haven, 1976), pp.118-20, for more on this age of exploration.