

! We are currently experiencing an issue with search functionality causing the loss of some of the content that would normally be in the results. Our team continues to work to resolve the issue. Please contact [Support](#) if you have questions.

Have library access? [Log in through your library.](#)



JSTOR

[Advanced Search](#) [Browse](#) [Tools](#)

[Log in](#) | [Register](#)

[About](#) [Support](#)[Log in](#) | [Register](#)



JOURNAL ARTICLE

## The Economics of Guilds

Sheilagh Ogilvie

The Journal of Economic Perspectives

Vol. 28, No. 4 (Fall 2014), pp. 169-192 (24 pages)

Published By: American Economic Association

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/23973563>

[Cite this Item](#)

### Read and download

Log in through your school or library

### Alternate access options

For independent researchers



## Journal Information

The Journal of Economic Perspectives (JEP) attempts to fill a gap between the general interest press and most other academic economics journals. The journal aims to publish articles that will serve several goals: to synthesize and integrate lessons learned from active lines of economic research; to provide economic analysis of public policy issues; to encourage cross-fertilization of ideas among the fields of thinking; to offer readers an accessible source for state-of-the-art economic thinking; to suggest directions for future research; to provide insights and readings for classroom use; and to address issues relating to the economics profession. Articles appearing in the journal are normally solicited by the editors and associate editors. Proposals for topics and authors should be directed to the journal office.

## Publisher Information

Once composed primarily of college and university professors in economics, the American Economic Association (AEA) now attracts 20,000+ members from academe, business, government, and consulting groups within diverse disciplines from multi-cultural backgrounds. All are professionals or graduate-level students dedicated to economics research and teaching.

## Rights & Usage

This item is part of JSTOR collection

For terms and use, please refer to our [Terms and Conditions](#).

The Journal of Economic Perspectives © 2014 [American Economic Association](#)

[Request Permissions](#)

*Journal of Economic Perspectives—Volume 28, Number 4—Fall 2014—Pages 169–192*

### The Economics of Guilds

Sheilagh Ogilvie

Occupational guilds have been observed for thousands of years in many economies: ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome; medieval and early modern India, Japan, Persia, Byzantium, and Europe; and nineteenth-century China, Latin America, and the Ottoman Empire.<sup>1</sup> Guilds were most prevalent in manufacturing. Almost all urban craftsmen were guilded and, in parts of central and southern Europe, many rural artisans as well. But the service sector also had many guilds. Nearly all premodern economies had guilds of merchants and retailers, and some also had guilds of painters, musicians, physicians, prostitutes, or chimney-sweeps. Guilds were rarest in primary production, but some places had guilds of farmers, gardeners, wine-growers, shepherds, miners, or fishermen.

Although guilds have existed for millennia in economies across the world, the analysis of guilds as economic institutions is largely based on Europe between about 1000 and about 1800. This is partly because empirical findings on guilds are richest there, and partly because guilds showed interesting variation across Europe, gradually weakening after 1500 in some societies but surviving long past 1800 in others. Most significantly, Europe is where sustained economic growth first arose, raising

<sup>1</sup> Broadly speaking, a guild is an association formed by people who share certain characteristics and wish to pursue mutual purposes. Historically, guilds have also included religious fraternities for common worship and insurance, foreigners' guilds to represent migrants and visitors from the same place of origin, neighborhood guilds for local improvements and sociability, and militia guilds for public order and emergencies. However, the vast majority of guilds were formed around shared occupations, even if they also engaged in religious or social activities.

■ Sheilagh Ogilvie is Professor of Economic History, Faculty of Economics, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, United Kingdom. Her email address is [sco2@econ.cam.ac.uk](mailto:sco2@econ.cam.ac.uk).  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1257/jep.28.4.169> doi=10.1257/jep.28.4.169

**View Preview**

# Explore JSTOR

[By Subject](#)

[By Title](#)

[By](#)

[Collections](#)

[By Publisher](#)

[Advanced](#)

[Search](#)

[Data for](#)

[Research](#)

[Get](#)

[Access](#)

[Support](#)

[LibGuides](#)

[Research](#)

[Basics](#)

[About JSTOR](#)

[Mission and](#)

[History](#)

[What's in JSTOR](#)

[Get JSTOR](#)

[News](#)

[Webinars](#)

[JSTOR](#)

[Labs](#)

[JSTOR](#)

[Daily](#)

[Careers](#)

[Contact Us](#)

**For Librarians**

**For Publishers**

JSTOR is part of [ITHAKA](#), a not-for-profit organization helping the academic community use digital technologies to preserve the scholarly record and to advance research and teaching in sustainable ways.

©2000-2020 ITHAKA. All Rights Reserved. JSTOR®, the JSTOR logo, JPASS®, Artstor®, Reveal Digital™ and ITHAKA® are registered trademarks of ITHAKA.

[Terms & Conditions of Use](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Cookie Policy](#)

[Accessibility](#)

**Select Language**

