*Vocabularies of labour in a comparative perspective: assessing the Genoese case during the 13th century*

In pre-industrial Europe specialised and non-specialised labourers, as well as apprentices, were often engaged through a notary deed. Such a document set the terms of the relationship between employer and employee, master and apprentice, listing the conditions under which the employee had to carry out his work, his remuneration and the mutual obligations of the two parties. Despite the rigidity of notarial argot, the vocabulary of labour contracts, with its peculiarities and regional differences, holds the potential of tracing cultural differences and similarities as well as developments in the concept of labour and in the relationship between employer and employee, also through the lexicon used to describe the payment (*feodum*, *stipendium*, *merces*, *loquerium*, *salarium*, *pretium*). Recently, a series of studies (published in *Rémunérer le travail au Moyen Ȃge*), have defined the regional and chronological shifts and variations in such a lexicon, thus setting the groundwork for further research in the subject, even though the paucity of sources for the earlier medieval centuries entails that the bulk of the data considered covers the later medieval centuries.

With its 130 registers covering the period from the mid-12th to the 13th century, the Genoese notarial archive is the only available documentary series, which can yield extensive data on salaried labourers in the urban artisanal milieu for the earlier period. Keeping recent literature in the foreground, the discussion will focus on the 13th century – which in the case of Genoa is evenly covered by documentation – aware that in considering the precise moment when these contracts were increasingly being used and even reformulated, we can assess if developments in the vocuabulary of labour be detected and verify if the Genoese case fits within the model proposed by previous literature.

The paper will focus mainly on two main types of contracts:

1) the contract for remunerated apprentices: an intermediate form of agreement, midway between apprenticeship and labour contract, through which a youth who had not yet concluded his training period was engaged by a master craftsman, under the obligation for the latter to teach the craft to his apprentice/employee, additionally providing the youth with a salary.

2) the labour contract proper, which could be used to employ either a) specialised or b) non specialised workers (or servants).

The terms set by the above contracts will be described and the lexicon used in order to denote payment and the act of payment will be considered, with the aim: first to assess if any of the changes can be identified in the recurring use of certain terms and evaluate if this can be correlated to an evolving concept of labour, evident in other elements of the contract. Second, to evaluate the extent to which we can define the relationship between employer and employee through this lexicon. Third, to gauge if any differences can be detected in the status of workers employed according to one or the other contract.

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