

Kowalesky, Maryanne. *Local Markets and Medieval Trade in Medieval Exeter*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. Pp. xvi, 442. Annexes, tables, maps, bibliography, index

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[See table of contents](#)

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upon a growing number of small firms. The figures suggest that nearly three-quarters of London firms employed less than five men. As a consequence, the average master had little room for manoeuvre; economies of scale were not possible. Savings had to be found in lower labour costs, so that the brunt of change was, Green points out, borne by artisans and labourers. The most frequent response to growing competition from the cheaper provinces and from overseas was to simplify work tasks and to hasten the division of labour. The consequences were two-fold: the increased employment of lesser-skilled workers and the introduction of piece rates with the subsequent spread of sweated labour. The scene was set, between 1825 and the 1860s, for the transformation of skilled artisans into poor casual workers in unprecedented numbers. Silk weaving and watchmaking almost disappeared; shoemaking, clothing, and furniture-making all survived only by introducing cheaper methods of production.

Emphasis upon cheaper production invariably hit the eastern end of the city hardest. One cabinet-maker said plaintively: "I don't know that we have any great grievances to complain of except one and that's the East-end." (p. 176) While artisans did have friendly societies and trade unions, these failed, ultimately, to provide adequate protection against the market forces at work in nineteenth century industrial capitalism. Between 1825 and the late 1840's Green detected a significant decline in labour militancy as artisans turned to other means to protect wages in the face of growing economic pressure. Ultimately, labour turned inward, avoided conflict and hoped for the best. The best turned out, for the larger number, to be a significant decline in living standards, unchecked by either private philanthropy or by state-operated poor relief. The system of indoor relief introduced by the poor law of 1834, was augmented by the Poor Removal Act of 1846 which allowed ratepayers in wealthier districts to escape responsibility for maintaining non-resident poor. Consequently, Green found that the incidence of relief increased most dramatically in poorer, largely eastern, districts while it fell substantially in richer districts. "Faced," he notes, "by a rising tide of pauperism, boards of guardians throughout the capital, but especially in eastern districts, turned increasingly towards a stricter policy of indoor rather than outdoor relief." (p. 242)

This is interesting material. Much of it is new; all of it is clearly presented, well-organized and supported by substantial evidence. But, it is also curiously bloodless. When, finally, he does get to the "crisis of pauperism" which he says swept across London in the late 1860s, he notes that the subject belongs to a different period and to a different study. He rests content with his charts, his graphs and his distanced scholarly observations.

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Kowalesky, Maryanne. *Local Markets and Medieval Trade in Medieval Exeter*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. Pp. xvi, 442. Annexes, tables, maps, bibliography, index.

Until recently, models of economic development for medieval towns have presented them as foci of commercial activity derived from the concentrated demand of urban consumers. Since Henri Pirenne, historians using this model have studied the merchants involved in long-distance trade. This is because the sources for large scale trade are accessible, the trade had high status in the eyes of both contemporaries and their historians, and because this commerce emphasized international banking and transportation infrastructures which admirers believe to be hallmarks of sophisticated capitalism. Maryanne Kowalesky's study of later medieval Exeter challenges this model and this approach by focusing upon traders involved in regional and local commerce in South-east England. Following in the stead of recent work, notably that of R.H. Britnell, she shows how this small river port prospered despite a population too small (3,100 people in 1377) to affect demand patterns in a large region. In the trough of the late medieval economic depression, 1350-1450, Exeter channeled into its port the demand of a hinterland whose traditional mix of pastoral and cereal agriculture adapted well to the structural transition of the post-plague economy. Its markets served as a distribution center for an area including most of Devon and parts of eastern Somerset and Dorset. Thriving textile and pastoral activities in the hinterland gave Exeter the highest rate of economic growth of any town in England between 1334 and 1525, propelling it into the first rank of English towns in the late fifteenth century.

The heart of this study lies in a painstaking prosopographical study. Kowalesky reconstructs from some 105,000 references a social structure dominated by a narrow merchant oligarchy of some twenty families. After the Black Death, while politics remained the monopoly of this oligarchy, its efforts to limit retailing to those in the "freedom"—full citizens numbering 34% of householders in 1377—were thwarted. After 1400, artisan apprentices entered the "freedom", enlarging it beyond its merchant base, while in the same period the fines and penalties which had heretofore protected marketing privileges became regulatory rather than prohibitory. The effect was to lower transaction costs for all traders, both within Exeter and without.

This opening up of Exeter markets is reflected in the share of imports controlled by Exeter's elite. Because Kowaleski complements the normal source for English overseas trade—royal customs accounts—with municipal customs accounts which highlight coastal shipping, she will force historians to take a new look at this trade. Using these sources to compare the period 1302-20 with the period 1381-91, the author found that the merchant oligarchy continued to monopolize the most lucrative import trades. But the number of Exeter importers fell by 9% between 1302-20 and 1381-91, while the ranks of outside traders increased dramatically; they owned 60% of the value of imported goods in the later period. This loosening of the market

monopoly to accommodate outsiders allowed Exeter to benefit from a textile boom in Somerset and East Devon, and growth in demand for pastoral products from the Devon highlands; in the late fourteenth century, Somerset importers accounted for 75% of alum, a mineral essential for dyeing cloth. Within Exeter a wider spectrum of the population also may have become importers, enlarging the social base profiting from the prosperity.

Economic stability thus depended upon the hinterland in later medieval Exeter. The mechanisms of rural trade are described in a remarkable chapter focusing upon "internal" trade. Having demonstrated that "internal" and "outside" trade were closely linked, Kowaleski discriminates between them by focusing upon the trade in pastoral products and fish, dominated by rural producers and consumers. Her case study of fish marketing is original and remarkable. Religious obligations made this foodstuff essential to medieval society. In South-east England fish was imported mostly from the sea and distributed from Exeter through commercial networks dominated by village traders. This trade was sufficiently organized to make this perishable food available and affordable throughout the countryside of Devon and Somerset.

Few criticisms will be leveled at the author of such a well researched and finely argued book. One quibble might be raised about the discussion of occupations in chapter four wherein the author attacks problems of taxonomy. The chief problem involves unraveling the multiple occupations of individuals in sources which generally mention only principal occupations of heads of household. It is important to note that the domestic economy and its largely female component often escapes due consideration for this reason. But since the author concludes that the secondary pursuits of most householders concerned victualing, as did half of the primary occupations, the significance of nice distinctions between primary and secondary occupations dims, which is unfortunate given the prodigious effort she put into making them. She might have better devoted her talents to analyzing the implication that specialization was a less important characteristic of urban economic growth than the diversity of occupational categories might suggest. Those talents have otherwise produced a monograph which has revised the economic interpretation of urban history in medieval Europe.

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Rose, Mark H. *Cities of Light and Heat: Domesticating Gas and Electricity in Urban America*. University Park: Penn State Press, 1995. Pp. xviii, 229. 18 illustrations, 6 tables, bibliography, index. US\$34.50.

Books about urban energy systems are largely books about electricity, so I eagerly anticipate reading any book that even admits other forms of energy exist. The title to Mark Rose's book suggests an immense tome, but despite getting beyond electricity the book is really about the growth of gas and electricity systems in Denver and Kansas City up to 1940. Given this more modest goal he achieves some success.

Rose structures his narrative around the gas and electric corporations that served these two cities and their efforts to increase market penetration of gas and electric appliances in order to further sales of gas and electricity. Unfortunately the basic (and readily available) sales data necessary to evaluate the success of these endeavors are missing. He includes some data for these companies showing ever-increasing electricity "output" at five year intervals from 1920 through 1939, but which also include geographically separate subsidiaries. What he does not show are reductions between 1930 and 1934 and again in 1937 and 1938, nor does he evaluate sales to commercial, residential, and industrial markets in terms of sales per sector, number of customers, and sales per customer, which show very dramatically the effects of the programs he writes about. Each census after 1940 includes detailed information on appliances and fuels used in households in these cities and would have provided substantial evidence about the success of these programs. In Denver one company supplied both gas and electricity, while in Kansas City there were two competing systems. Some appliances (refrigerators, water heaters, cooking) were available in gas or electric models, and mention of how this played a role in the marketing efforts would have been useful.

Although Rose cites an enormous number of secondary resources, he inexplicably omits Ellen Kingman Fisher's 1989 history of the Public Service Company of Colorado, which plows much of the same ground for Denver. The minute books of Denver's early gas and electric companies are rich sources of materials on the highly competitive local energy market, and no mention is made of the bitter franchise battle there in the mid-1920s that forced the company to lower its rates. Rose also fails to notice other urban energy distribution systems, especially the district heating systems that have served significant portions of downtown Denver since 1880 (the oldest such system in the world) and Kansas City since 1889. The text is also marred by numerous typographical errors.

Despite these shortcomings, Rose has written an interesting account of the complex interactions that shaped gas and electric systems in these two cities. The book clearly shows the diffusion of gas and electric technology to be a slow and tedious business, and here the author is clearly master of the subject