

## About the guild monopoly: Toledo, 1700-1837

### *A propósito del monopolio gremial: Toledo, 1700-1837*

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#### ANALYTICAL SUMMARY

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This article analyses the craft guilds of Toledo in the eighteenth and first half of nineteenth centuries. Toledo is a medium-sized city which has aroused much interest due to its splendid sixteenth century and declining seventeenth century. However, little is known about its eighteenth-century manufacturing activities. In the context of the European debate on craft guilds, the contribution of these medium-sized cities is relevant for us to address the problems inherent in country-town relations, which include the role of artisans' migration from rural to urban areas, and that of the cities where most mastership licenses were issued.

Based on a sample of 3,044 guild master licenses issued in Toledo between 1700 and 1837, this article aims to gauge the extend to which Toledo's guilds complied with the so-called "corporate monopoly" model. Toledo's master licenses provide reliable data on the total number of new masters in different periods of time, mainly their age on entry and geographical origin. Information is less rich on the transmission of the handicraft among relatives. We have nonetheless contrived a methodology to overcome this shortcoming.

A database has been developed with the information contained in the mastership licenses of 34 guilds. This allows us to analyse corporate behavior, the formation of qualified artisanal labour markets and the type of migratory flow the city attracted. We have also compared, as far as possible, Toledo's data to that of other Castilian cities, which has evinced that Toledo's guilds did not put too many barriers to incorporating masters non born in the city.

In conclusion, the sources used in this study indicate that the pattern shown by Toledo's guilds differs from what has been described by the "corporate monopoly" view. Moreover, far from controlling their City Hall, Toledo's guilds were at the mercy of municipal politics. Some did, however, give surprising responses to the crisis during the declining period. With the exception of a handful of guilds, there was no accused endotechnics. The age of new masters was around thirty years old –save for the construction guilds–, which suggests that they did not have to wait long to be able to set up a workshop. Finally, there were many new masters hailing from localities in the province of Toledo who went to the city in order to obtain their mastership license, returning to their places of origin to exercise their trade. Others came from elsewhere in Spain.

In short, what we contend is that Toledo's guilds were not the cause of the city's economic downturn, but rather its proximity to Madrid where wages for ancillary workers were higher created a shortage of this workforce to Toledo's guild masters.

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