13. Crown, city and guild in late medieval London

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By the early seventeenth century it was common for the London livery companies to commission leading writers such as Anthony Munday and John Webster to design elaborate shows celebrating the election of their members to the office of lord mayor. In October 1605 it was the turn of the Merchant Taylors, who commissioned Munday to write a show entitled *The Triumphs of Re-united Britania* for their lord mayor, Sir Leonard Halliday. The opening speech was to be given by an actor portraying Edward III, who had given the company its first charter in 1327. This was linked explicitly to the overall theme of the pageant – the regaining and reuniting of kingdoms. Two years after the accession of James I, the pageant placed themes, characters and stories that were familiar to the audience in a wider context, emphasizing the coming together of the *British* peoples. One of these stories, very popular in pageants and chronicles in this period, was the idea of London as the 'New Troy', founded by the mythical Brutus, a descendant of Aeneas, a legend that first appeared in the work of Geoffrey of Monmouth in the twelfth century. The 1605 pageant presented Brutus as the father of Britain – the kingdoms of England, Scotland and Wales were given to his three sons to rule, and to their descendants ever after. The 'reuniting' of these kingdoms thus provided a contemporary backdrop to this mayoral election, and placed London and its merchants at the heart of this alliance of nations and the emergence of the 'British state'.[1]

The narratives present in such texts reflect strongly held notions of corporate history among London's livery companies, where connections with the crown and the monarch feature prominently. These connections, in turn, are part and parcel of debates concerning London's relationship to central government and to processes of 'state formation' in the middle ages and into the early modern period. Among Derek Keene's many contributions to the field of metropolitan history has been to emphasize the significance of this particular question for London historians of all periods, both in terms of how we perceive the city in relation to the state, and in terms of how we discuss it in comparison with other metropolises and capital cities

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[1] Anthony Munday, *The Triumphes of Re-united Britania* (1605), STC 18279.

in continental Europe and beyond.[2] For London guildsmen viewing and reading Munday's pageants, the connections between the city, its merchants and guilds and the crown resonated, lending a contemporary relevance to some of the main themes, characters and events of their early histories. The aim of this chapter, therefore, is to look back at the processes which shaped these relationships in the formative years of London's governmental history. It also seeks to show how the three-cornered relationship between craft, city and crown influenced the formation of ideas of guild history and identity.

To understand the involvement of the crafts in the business of governing London means setting their story in the context of a wider array of political and economic connections. It has long been understood that political structures and the exercise of lordly and kingly power had much to do with the differing ways in which guilds developed within towns and cities in medieval Europe; the interplay between urbanization and the proliferation of guilds on the one hand, and the realities of political power in different regions and kingdoms on the other.[3] The ways in which cities were to be governed, and their relationships to the 'state' or monarch, were the focus of debate and efforts by rulers in many instances to influence things to their advantage. In Italy there were various attempts in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to limit or forbid the activities of guilds, on the grounds that they infringed royal authority. In Germany, the banning by Charles IV of guilds in Nuremberg (1349) and Frankfurt am Main (1366) was intimately connected with his exercise of imperial power and the need for the support of those urban communities. Yet the emperor's endorsement of a guild-based constitution in Augsburg in 1374 appears to have been similarly founded on political calculation, after financial support was pledged to him by the town council. Maarten Prak's chapter in this volume, likewise, deals with the case of Arnhem, where government by guild filled a power vacuum, and was ratified by Maximilian of Austria.[4] In France, towns and cities were affected by the crown's need constantly to gain support from them in shoring up its position against powerful regional aristocrats, and at the same time make sure that it took into account opposition within many urban centres to the exercise of power by small, mostly mercantile, elites. In processes of state expansion, therefore, an opportunity arose for towns and

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[2] See, e.g., D. Keene, 'Metropolitan comparisons: London as a city-state', *Historical Research*, lxxvii (2004), 459–80.

[3] Still useful here is S. L. Thrupp, 'The gilds', in *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, iii: *Economic Organization and Policies in the Middle Ages*, ed. M. M. Postan, E. E. Rich and E. Miller (Cambridge, 1965), pp. 230–79.

[4] See M. Prak, 'Urban governments and their citizens in early modern Europe' (below, pp. 271–88).

cities, and in particular for guilds to establish themselves as part of urban governments, and also to engage directly with the crown.[5] The situation in Flanders was different again, with the often fractious relationship between the Four Members (Ghent, Bruges, Ypres and the *Brugse Vrije)* and the Burgundian dukes, as well as with each other, affecting the ways in which the guilds developed as integral parts of particularist urban governments.[6]

By comparison, England was politically unified and had had a strong monarchy relatively early compared with some of its continental neighbours. Given this, it is notable, as Keene has shown, that the crown was willing to see guilds of craftsmen as potentially useful organizations as early as the eleventh century, and was not content just to rely on 'gild merchants' in English towns and cities to perform services and collect revenue. Craft guilds in at least four towns, including London, were paying annual fees to the crown in 1130–1, with guilds of weavers particularly well represented.[7] The economic role played by London was becoming more and more significant for the royal government in this period, not least for the setting of national standards in aspects of commercial activity, to be followed across the kingdom, as well as for the supplying of essential goods such as foodstuffs and textiles. In this sense, a tendency for a strong, centralized monarchy to inhibit the development of guilds was clearly offset by an awareness of their advantages, and so here the development of the city's guilds, from the beginning, expressed aspects of 'London's character as a metropolis – not just a capital city but as a uniquely dominant social and physical organism'.[8] It is therefore important to emphasize from the start the long-established tradition of royal approval of, and engagement with, London's crafts and guilds. The London weavers and bakers had obtained royal recognition and economic privileges by 1160, while a royal enquiry

[5] On this see, e.g., H. Soly, 'The political economy of European craft guilds: power relations and economic strategies of merchants and master artisans in the medieval and early modern textile industries', *International Review of Social History*, liii (2008), 45–71; B. Chevalier, *Les Bonne Villes de France du XIVe au XVIe siècle* (Paris, 1982), pp. 74, 129–30; W. P. Blockmans, 'Voracious states and obstructing cities: an aspect of state formation in preindustrial Europe', in *Cities and the Rise of States in Europe, A.D. 1000–1800*, ed. C. Tilly and W. P. Blockmans (Boulder, Colo. and Oxford, 1989), pp. 235–6.

[6] See, e.g., W. Blockmans and E. Donckers, 'Self-representation of court and city in Flanders and Brabant in the 15th and early 16th centuries', in *Showing Status: Representations of Social Positions in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. W. Blockmans and A. Janse (Turnhout, 1999), pp. 81–111.

[7] For this background, see esp. D. Keene, 'English urban guilds, *c*.900–1300', in *Guilds and Association in Europe, 900–1900*, ed. I. A. Gadd and P. Wallis (2006), pp. 3–26.

[8] D. Keene, 'Livery companies: what, when and why?', in *Guilds, Society and Economy in London, 1450–1800*, ed. I. A. Gadd and P. Wallis (2002), p. 171.

of 1179–80 was undertaken in order to identify so-called 'adulterine' guilds – that is, those that did not have royal approval. Four of the London guilds listed were associated with particular crafts, including the pepperers, later the Grocers, whose guild, it has been suggested, was founded partly to protect their control of the valuable royal market in spices.[9] This background is important in relation to the two themes of this chapter. First of all, it demonstrates the deep historical roots of the connections between London's craft guilds and the crown, which helped to determine not only their attitude towards royal authority on a day-to-day basis, but also the importance that these connections had for their self-image and corporate identity. Second, it places in context the subsequent twists and turns in the evolution of London's government and the significance of guilds within the metropolis.

At the same time, of course, rapid urban growth meant that royal authorities in England and other countries increasingly had to decide whether, and in what ways, authority could be delegated to towns and cities, and in turn to groups and individuals within them – including guilds. It was this which provided the dynamic element in the relationship and led to both conflict and co-operation over the centuries. In England, the fluctuating relationship between the crown and London was critical to the political turbulence of the later thirteenth century – and particularly during the struggle of the barons with Henry III, which brought out some important differences in terms of how the crafts of London should fit into the broader structures of city government. How, for instance, should the court of aldermen and court of common council be made up? How should the trades be regulated? A conservative author of an important contemporary chronicle bitterly attacked a fellow alderman, the populist Thomas FitzThomas, during whose mayoralty (1261–5) the city had committed to the baronial cause. FitzThomas was said to have 'pampered' the city populace by encouraging the crafts to draw up their own regulations.[10] Another target of his polemic was Walter Hervy (mayor 1272–3), who was said to have granted charters to various (unnamed) crafts. These were revoked during the mayoralty of his successor, Henry le Waleys, who had Hervy arrested for good measure, a move which seemingly heralded a defeat for the crafts.[11] In the last decades of

[9] *The Great Roll of the Pipe for the 26th Year of the Reign of King Henry the Second, A.D. 1179–80* (Pipe Roll Society, xxix, 1930), pp. 151, 153–4; P. Nightingale, *A Medieval Mercantile Community: the Grocers' Company and the Politics and Trade of London, 1000–1485* (New Haven, Conn., 1995), pp. 556–7.

[10] *De Antiquis Legibus Liber*, ed. T. Stapleton (Camden Society, xxxiv, 1846), pp. 55–7.

[11] A. F. Sutton, 'The silent years of London guild history before 1300: the case of the Mercers', *Historical Research*, lxxi (1998), pp. 134–7.

the thirteenth century, partly because of a period of direct royal control, the city was encouraged to define its functions more explicitly, and this helped to clarify the position of the crafts. In particular, it was recognized that craft officials should have authority to regulate apprenticeship, which was becoming by far and away the most popular route to obtaining the freedom of the city. In 1274–5, according to one source, a new register of apprentices and redemptioners was begun, with enrolment of the names of apprentices and freemen made compulsory.[12] Further measures are noted in the city records over the next twenty years, and finally in 1312 it was reaffirmed that a newcomer to the city would not be allowed to take up the freedom until his 'condition and trustworthiness' had been certified by representatives of the trade he wished to practise. All these concerns were reflected in the charter granted to the city in 1319 which laid down that admission to the freedom could only be obtained through one of the recognized crafts or 'misteries'. This can be contrasted with the situation almost a century earlier when, as Keene has noted, an order to establish central registration of apprentices made no reference to crafts.[13]

Control over access to the freedom represented a coming together of the interests of craft, city and crown – the protection of London's influence, economy and labour market from outsiders being a particular concern. The corollary to this, of course, was that the city government, drawn from the most prominent crafts, became more interested in the rules and regulations which were being established by the guilds. More and more craft ordinances were brought before the mayor and aldermen for ratification during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and these quickly took on a common form, containing clauses about the election of masters and wardens, apprenticeship, and so on. Sets of ordinances that included apprenticeship regulations, for example, were presented to the mayor by more than fifty crafts between 1331 and 1497. It is worth pointing out that almost all the crafts that submitted ordinances in this period were artisan rather than mercantile: there was, as Caroline Barron has noted, a sense in which wealthier crafts such as the Mercers, Drapers and Grocers – who were by now supplying the vast majority of the mayors and aldermen – were in practice not subject to the same obligations because of their dominance of these offices. This was a pattern that was to continue into the fifteenth

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[12] *Chronicles of Edward I and Edward II*, ed. W. Stubbs (2 vols., Rolls ser., 1882–3), i, *Annales Londonienses*, pp. 85–6; *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls of the City of London*, ii: *1364–81*, ed. A. H. Thomas (Cambridge, 1929), p. xxviii.

[13] *Calendar of Letter-books Preserved among the Archives of the Corporation of the City of London at the Guildhall, A–L*, ed. R. R. Sharpe (1899–1907) (hereafter *Calendar of Letter Books: A, B* etc.), *B*, p. 241; *C*, p. 84; *E*, pp. 12–14; Keene, 'English urban guilds', p. 19.

century as distinctions between the greater and lesser crafts became more explicitly stated.[14]

It is important to remember that the main institutions of the government of London itself – the court of aldermen and the court of common council – continued to be drawn from the city's wards. Despite the advances made by the crafts in terms of the freedom and economic regulation, the tradition of government by ward survived, albeit with a shift away from some of the dynastic tendencies of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. London and other English towns and cities did not follow the path taken by some of their counterparts in other European kingdoms, where government based on 'corporatist' principles was either the norm, or was the subject of long-lasting 'experiments'.[15] In London, as a result, few men from artisan crafts found their way into the city's top tiers of government in the later middle ages. Instead, guilds such as the Mercers, Grocers, Drapers and Goldsmiths were most heavily represented as mayors, on the court of aldermen, and among the city's four members of parliament, and there was already emerging a distinction between the lesser and greater crafts. The greater crafts were still most numerous at lower levels of government, in the common council in particular: three-quarters of more than 400 common councilmen who attested the elections of London's MPs in the mid fifteenth century were drawn from just nine, mostly mercantile, crafts – there were only a very few representatives of the thirty or so other crafts such as the Girdlers, Cordwainers and Founders, even though some of these had already been recognized by royal charters.[16]

A government drawn specifically from the guilds was only introduced on a few, short-lived occasions, all of them in the fourteenth century. The most famous of these phases, well documented by historians, began in 1377 when radical reforms were introduced by a 'party' within the city government, headed by a draper, John of Northampton, who, it was claimed, sought his support from the 'small people'. The practice of electing aldermen for life was abolished and replaced with annual elections, and it was decided that the common council should henceforth be drawn from the crafts rather

[14] S. Hovland, 'Apprenticeship in later medieval London' (unpublished University of London PhD thesis, 2004), app. 8; C. M. Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages: Government and People 1200–1500* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 207–8.

[15] On Florence, see, e.g., J. M. Najemy, *Corporatism and Consensus in Florentine Electoral Politics, 1280–1400* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1982), pp. 3–17, 217–62.

[16] Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages*, pp. 207–8; The National Archives of the UK: Public Record Office, C 219/13/1–5, 14/1–5, 15/1–7, 16/1–6, 17/1–3. I carried out the analysis of parliamentary attestors while working on the constituency survey of London for *The History of Parliament: the Commons, 1421–61* (forthcoming). I am grateful to the History of Parliament Trust for allowing me to reproduce these figures here.

than from the wards.[17] The reforms were swiftly reversed in October 1383 with the election as mayor of Nicholas Brembre, a grocer, royal favourite and staunch opponent of Northampton. The primacy of the wards was reaffirmed in 1384. Over the ensuing century or so, the pattern set by the leading guilds as institutions, and in terms of their connections to the crown and the city government, was replicated by many of the so-called 'lesser' crafts who, although active in a collective sense in earlier periods, had not yet acquired things such as charters, company halls and property endowments. Participation in the formal structures and processes of government gradually became more clearly defined – by the late fifteenth century the masters, wardens and liverymen of all the crafts were allowed to attend the election of the mayor, affirming the value of the guilds as organizations which embodied, in a way that wards could never do, the economic and political muscle of London's civic elite.[18]

Meanwhile the organized crafts were also becoming involved in other aspects of urban governance. Finance was one area in which the crown had a clear interest, although requests for money were normally channelled through the city government rather than made directly to the crafts. A 'gift' of just over £450 given to Edward III in 1363 was raised from a variety of craft groups as well as individuals in London. Some were well-established guilds such as the Drapers, Mercers, Tailors and Fishmongers. Others, however, were not, and seem to have been sub-sets or local 'clusters' of craftsmen, such as the butchers of Eastcheap and the butchers of St. Nicholas Shambles, a group of four dyers and the 'tanners without Newgate'.[19] This is a good illustration of the variety of craft associations and groups which still existed at local level. Such gifts and loans reflected the ways in which the companies and their members were gradually becoming central to revenue-raising in London, and by extension to the fortunes and policies of the crown itself. With formal organization within many crafts increasing, associations of craftsmen, headed by their respective 'good men', were seen as useful tools of urban government, taking upon them the delegated authority of the mayor and sheriffs in relation to economic regulation (particularly apprenticeship), but also becoming a convenient means to organize the collection of revenue.

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[17] R. Bird, *The Turbulent London of Richard II* (1949), pp. 30–43; P. Nightingale, 'Capitalists, crafts and constitutional change in late 14th-century London', *Past & Present*, cxxiv (1989), 3–35; C. M. Barron, 'London: 1300–1540', in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, i: *600–1540*, ed. D. M. Palliser (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 405–6.

[18] *Calendar of Letter Books: L*, pp. 73, 132; Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 217. And see M. Davies, 'Artisans, guilds and government in London', in *Daily Life in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. R. H. Britnell (Stroud, 1998), pp. 134–6.

[19] *Calendar of Letter Books: G*, pp. 171–2.

This was to become even more central to the role of the guilds in the fifteenth century, particularly once they began to acquire significant wealth in the form of property, and to develop robust organizational structures. In 1435, for instance, the mayor and aldermen received an appeal for help from their counterparts in the besieged city of Calais. By July the next year an expeditionary force led by Humfrey, duke of Gloucester was being organized and writs were sent to the sheriffs of London requesting them to make proclamations concerning the provision of weapons and food for the army. Meanwhile, 'by the good a-vyse and consent of craftys', the mayor raised contingents of soldiers who were to join the force at Sandwich at the end of July.[20] When London prepared its defences against a feared assault by the forces of Henry Tudor in 1485, 3,000 men were drawn not from the wards, but from 73 crafts in proportions relating to their status. Two years later all the crafts were required to contribute to a loan of £3,000 to the new king. The Mercers, Grocers and Drapers were to pay just over £500 each, the Goldsmiths, Fishmongers and Tailors £315, and an unspecified number of other guilds were to provide the remaining £1,438 6s 8d. The guilds were therefore central to the city's ability to demonstrate its influence in national politics, and the stock of the guilds themselves could only rise as a result.[21]

Despite the city's progress in gaining a greater degree of independence, the crown itself seems to have continued, albeit with varying intensity, to view some London crafts in the broader context of royal policy relating to the kingdom, and not just London. There were close economic and financial connections between the crown and crafts such as the Goldsmiths, Fishmongers and Vintners, reflecting the longstanding roles which they had played in inspecting coinage and regulating the price and quality of food and drink in the capital, as well as supplying the royal household in times of both peace and war. These ties were renewed in the early fourteenth century: Edward III, for instance, granted charters to several crafts with royal associations, such as the Skinners, Girdlers, Tailors and Goldsmiths.[22] The provisions of most of these early charters were not particularly extensive or controversial: they generally just confirmed their right to hold an annual feast, and to regulate their particular trades. However, in some cases the extension of rights of search to cover the kingdom as a whole was already

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[20] *Calendar of Letter Books: K*, pp. 190, 205–6; *The Historical Collections of a Citizen of London in the 15th Century*, ed. J. Gairdner (Camden Society, new ser., xvii, 1876), p. 178.

[21] London Metropolitan Archives (hereafter LMA), COL/CC/01/09 fos. 81v–82, 85v.

[22] *Memorials of London and London Life in the XIIIth, XIVth and XVth Centuries*, ed. H. T Riley (1868), pp. 153–6; *The Charters of the Merchant Taylors' Company*, ed. F. M. Fry and R. T. D. Sayle (1937), pp. 12–13; E. Veale. 'The 'Great Twelve': mistery and fraternity in 13th-century London', *Historical Research*, lxiv (1991), 237–63.

being pursued. This was the case with the Goldsmiths, who wished to formalize and protect a longstanding national role in regulating the quality of gold- and silver-ware. Less ambitious, but equally well connected, were the London Tailors, who benefited from the involvement of prominent members of their craft in the supply of clothing, tents and other equipment for military campaigns in France and Scotland; as well as a charter from Edward III they acquired the site of their hall in London from the king's tent-maker, John de Yakeslee. One of their later benefactors, Thomas Carleton, was the king's embroiderer.[23]

The example of the Tailors illustrates the ways in which the London guilds were intimately connected with sections of the royal government and household, links which their counterparts in other English towns and cities found much more difficult to foster. London had become essential as a centre of production, supplying materials and labour for the royal households and great wardrobe, which was by the mid fourteenth century firmly established at Baynard's Castle on the western edge of the city. Royal occasions such as coronations created significant short-term demand for fine cloth, furs and other goods, and the permanent staff of the wardrobe (such as the king's skinner and tailor) were augmented by large numbers of London guildsmen who worked on the garments in their own workshops. At these times, the ability of the guilds to mobilize their members must have been useful: John de Cologne, a leading figure in the London Tailors' guild at the time of the granting of their charter of 1327, was also the king's linen-armourer, and was commissioned to supply clothing for more than 100 foot soldiers who were to go on campaign with Edward III in Scotland in 1334. The coronation of Richard III involved the employment of seventy-two London tailors for a total of 412 days' work, anticipating the even greater degree of mobilization of labour and materials that came to be required for state occasions in the later sixteenth century.[24] Aside from such events, the normal operations of the wardrobe came to be overseen by experienced and senior London craftsmen, who occupied the positions of king's skinner and king's tailor from the mid fourteenth century onwards.

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[23] M. Davies and A. Saunders, *The History of the Merchant Taylors' Company* (Leeds, 2004), ch. 1. For Carleton, see H. Kleineke, 'Carleton's book: William FitzStephen's "Description of London" in a late 14th-century common-place book', *Historical Research*, lxxiv (2001), 117–26.

[24] Riley, *Memorials of London*, p. 190; *The Coronation of Richard III: the Extant Documents*, ed. P. W. Hammond and A. F. Sutton (Gloucester, 1983), *passim*; Davies and Saunders, *History of the Merchant Taylors' Company*, pp. 61–2; I. W. Archer, 'Conspicuous consumption revisited: city and court in the reign of Elizabeth I', in *London and the Kingdom: Essays in Honour of Caroline M. Barron*, ed. M. Davies and A. J. Prescott (Donington, 2008), pp. 38–57.

Even when, on occasion, those appointed were foreign craftsmen, these men almost always came to join their respective guilds in London, often rising to become warden or master.[25] These kinds of contacts were, of course, not uniformly created by all London's guilds, and here one might identify one of the reasons for the tensions between certain crafts which periodically arose, and the differing success rates of guilds in engaging with the crown to pursue their objectives. Yet, leaving these aside for the moment, it is clear that London's status as a site of skills, finance and materials enabled it to plug in to networks of power and patronage at the centre of government. We also know, for example, that the western areas of the metropolis, particularly along Fleet Street and the Strand, were locations for aristocratic and ecclesiastical town houses, which also served as sources of demand for goods and services provided by Londoners. Noblemen such as John, duke of Bedford, brother of Henry V, sited their own wardrobes in the city itself. The presence of gentry and aristocracy was important to the prestige and economy of London and the fortunes of its trades, but as we will see it also enabled the guilds to build effective networks of patrons and well-wishers.[26]

The pursuit of royal charters was to become a significant theme in the subsequent histories of the London companies, and one which helped to create a historical narrative where royal patronage formed a continuous thread. In this sense the London guilds differed somewhat from their counterparts in other English towns and cities, such as York or Exeter, where it was less common for guilds to obtain charters and even rarer for them to seek confirmations or extensions of their provisions.[27] That said, not all London guilds sought royal recognition of this kind in the middle ages, and there were many (mostly the 'lesser' crafts) that, as we have seen, were happy to deal primarily with the city government in terms of getting their ordinances approved and so on. Nevertheless, the pursuit of charters (or letters patent, strictly speaking) does represent one aspect of the tensions that occasionally surfaced in the relationship between crown, city

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[25] Davies and Saunders, *History of the Merchant Taylors' Company*, p. 61; and see M. Hayward, *The Great Wardrobe Accounts of Henry VII and Henry VIII* (London Record Society, forthcoming); M. Hayward, *Dress at the Court of King Henry VIII* (Leeds, 2007), pp. 317–43.

[26] C. M. Barron, 'Centres of conspicuous consumption: the aristocratic town house in London 1200–1500', *London Journal*, xx (1995), 1–16; J. Stratford, *The Bedford Inventories: the Worldly Goods of John, Duke of Bedford, Regent of France, 1389–1435* (1993), p. 44.

[27] E.g., the Mercers and Tailors of York obtained their only medieval charters in 1430 and 1453 respectively (see *The Merchant Taylors of York: a History of the Craft and Company from the 14th to the 20th Centuries*, ed. R. B. Dobson and D. Smith (York, 2006), pp. 40–1; *The York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers, 1356–1917*, ed. M. Sellers (Surtees Society, cxxix, 1918), pp. 33–6).

and guild, in that it preserved the longstanding connection between the crown and guilds that was apparent as early as the twelfth century, albeit now expressed through activities such as lobbying as well as institutional and personal networks. By doing so, the guilds were inevitably drawing attention to the limitations of the authority of the city government itself, at a time when that government was asserting its independence and resented interference from the crown. The actions of the crown, while not often in direct contradiction to those of the city, nevertheless implied that it was the crown that granted legitimacy to associations such as guilds and fraternities, whereas the practical day-to-day supervision of the crafts was the function of the city government, even if delegated to the representatives of the crafts. The problem was, of course, maintaining this balance. From the point of view of the Londoners, the crown could not always be relied upon to have the interests of the crafts in mind. The wool trade, for example, became a focus of intense conflict as London's merchants sought to have control of the staple at Bruges and subsequently Calais, while the crown was increasingly prepared to grant trading privileges to alien merchants.[28] When dealing with the crown, therefore, some hedging of bets is in evidence early on: it is notable, for instance, that three of the guilds which obtained charters in 1327 opted to have them copied into the city letter books, tacitly acknowledging that the city government had an interest in their contents.[29] In other words, these royal documents were being treated in a similar way to craft ordinances, which were regularly presented to the mayor for approval. Such ambiguity became less and less common, however, and the guilds (often at their own doing) could find themselves caught between the competing claims of city and crown.

An example of this occurred during the mayoralties of Nicholas Brembre (1377–8, 1383–5), which were notable for the resentment and bitter divisions between his government and many of the crafts – both mercantile and artisan. Petitions were drawn up against him during the parliament of 1388 by at least twelve of the city's crafts, and one of the charges was that in 1377 he had seized royal charters belonging to some of them, in order, he had claimed, to investigate whether they infringed powers vested in the mayor. The parliamentary petitions – that from the Mercers, written in English, being the most famous and remarkable – were clearly coloured by the mutual hostility between Brembre and his opponents, yet they are very revealing about the attitudes of the guilds to royal and mayoral authority. Brembre

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[28] Nightingale, *Medieval Mercantile Community*, pp. 563–4.
[29] Barron, 'London in the later middle ages', p. 208, n. 49; Riley, *Memorials of London*, pp. 153–6.

was accused of exceeding his authority as mayor, of creating a claustrophobic and fearful city where a word out of place could result in imprisonment or worse by a tyrannical regime. He was accused moreover of having accroached royal authority, through his exercise of summary justice in the city.[30] In their petition, the Saddlers claimed that Brembre had attempted to seize their charter but they had refused, saying that they would only yield it up on the command of king or parliament – a telling statement. They only complied when Brembre threatened them, promising to 'fair lever tout la d[i]te citee sur la d[i]te mestier'.[31] The Mercers' petition sought both to draw attention to the wider crisis, but also to repair their own reputation in the face of Brembre's attempts to question their loyalty to Richard II:

> And we ben openlich disclaundred, holden vntrewe & traitours to owre Kyng, for the same Nichol[as Brembre] sayd bifor Mair, Aldermen, & owre craft ... that xx. or xxx. of vs were worthy to be drawen & hanged, the which think lyke to yowre worthy lordship by an euen juge to be proued or disproued, the whether that trowthe may shewe, for trouthe amonges vs of fewe or elles no man many day dorst be shewed.[32]

According to the petitions, Brembre managed the neat trick of accusing the guilds of treason against the king, but at the same time alleging that their royal charters – ostensibly an indicator of royal favour – infringed the liberties of the city. It was suggested by at least two contemporary writers that representatives of the guilds appeared at Westminster to give evidence shortly before Brembre was executed. This took place after the petitions were presented and is another indicator of the status of London's guilds by this time, and the sense in which they could be dealt with as institutions independently of the city government.[33] Royal charters were, therefore, a reminder of the extent to which crafts looked outwards to the crown as well as inwards to Guildhall. They were not only practical devices, conferring sets of rights and privileges, but were also symbols of the particular relationship which the guilds had with the crown, which

[30] For the revised dating of the petitions, see W. Scase, *Literature and Complaint in England, 1272–1553* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 68–73; M. Turner, *Chaucerian Conflict: Languages of Antagonism in Late 14th-Century London* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 13–14. The Mercers' petition is TNA: PRO, SC 8/20/997; 'Richard II: February 1388', *Parliament Rolls of Medieval England* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=116490> [accessed 23 June 2011]; Bird, *Turbulent London*, p. 69, n. 6.

[31] TNA: PRO, SC 8/20/999.

[32] *A Book of London English, 1384–1425*, ed. R.W. Chambers and M. Daunt (Oxford, 1931), p. 35; for a discussion of the idea of 'trowthe', see R. F. Green, *A Crisis of Truth: Literature and Law in Ricardian England* (Philadelphia, Pa., 2002), pp. 1–2.

[33] Scase, *Literature and Complaint*, p. 70.

characterized their development and influenced their evolving sense of their own histories. At the same time, of course, a mayor such as Brembre could perceive them as running contrary to what he felt were the rights and privileges of the city government, and his own conception of the place of the guilds.

In the event, the charters seized from the guilds were not finally handed back by the city chamberlain until January 1389.[34] The timing is significant, because it is clear that these guilds needed their charters in order to respond in chancery to the national enquiry into guilds (of all kinds) that the crown had initiated in 1387–8. The enquiry is a reminder that royal and civic government sometimes shared similar concerns. Both thought that guilds should not be allowed to flourish unhindered because of the potential threats they posed to order as well as to economic and political stability. The circumstances and results of the enquiry show that this was a period when craft organizations could still vary significantly in terms of their functions and activities, and hence reflected a broad spectrum of relationships with each other, and with the city government and the crown. The forty-two returns that survive for London include a number from craft guilds, although interestingly none from any of the 'greater' crafts such as the Mercers, Drapers and the like. The Girdlers and the Saddlers were among those which attached their charters to their returns, while other guilds mentioned them explicitly.[35] In addition to the historical narrative being presented by these guilds, it was undoubtedly important for them to show that their connection to the crown had some contemporary meaning and importance, not least because it was the crown which was investigating their affairs.[36]

The self-confidence displayed by some of London's guilds in their dealings with the crown increased in the fifteenth century. This was partly because of their own institutional development, driven in many cases by the acquisition of property holdings in the city and elsewhere. Professional company clerks were recruited from the ranks of the city's scriveners and attorneys, and they became critical figures for the guilds when it came to petitioning parliament or drawing up legal agreements. Their literary as well as legal skills were indispensable, as the author of the Mercers'

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[34] *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls*, iii: *1381–1412*, ed. A. H. Thomas (Cambridge, 1932), p. 149.

[35] TNA: PRO, C 47/42/216, 46/467, 468.

[36] For discussion of the role of such documents in creating historical narratives, see M. Davies, '"Monuments of honor": clerks, histories and heroes in the London livery companies', in *Parliament, Personalities and Power: Papers Presented to Linda S. Clark*, ed. H. Kleineke (Woodbridge, 2011), pp. 158–52.

petition of 1388 had so ably demonstrated.[37] Economic changes were also responsible, though, with some older guilds seeking to hang on to, or extend, monopolies acquired many years before in the face of the rise of crafts which became organized more recently and which were carving out territory for themselves. An example was the debate which took place in the 1470s and 1480s over whether Londoners should attend provincial fairs, with the Mercers supporting a ban, and the upstart Haberdashers, who were encroaching on the Mercers' country business, opposing it.[38] The ambitions of some of the crafts, and their propensity for looking to the crown for answers, brought them into conflict with one another and with the city government. The Mercers and Grocers were at odds over the wool staple, an issue which also pitted them against the crown.[39] Charters once again took centre stage, principally because they were more and more being used as part of strategies to advance the economic and political status of particular guilds. They were an alternative, and often in fact complementary, to the lobbying of parliament to obtain changes in national legislation dealing with economic questions. Of course, it is important to remember that there were different kinds of letters patent being granted for different purposes. Some were simply confirmations of existing charters: the accession of Edward IV and the change of dynasty prompted several guilds to use *inspeximus* charters as a means to forge good relations with the crown, without adding to their privileges. Other charters were concerned with the extension of rights of search into the surrounding region, or even nationally – controversy here was connected, therefore, to perceptions of London's economic and political importance. The Pewterers, for example, embarked on a successful campaign in the 1460s for a 'charter for þe craft to haue serche thurgh England'– one of the few guilds in the city to gain recognition of this kind at this time, echoing some of the privileges accorded to London guilds in the twelfth century. The Pewterers' account books record numerous instances of the wardens travelling to the south-west to inspect pewter production and the stannaries.[40]

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[37] See Turner, *Chaucerian Conflict*, p. 17; L. Mooney, 'Chaucer's scribe', *Speculum*, lxxxi (2006), 97–138. For the clerks employed by the Tailors, see M. Davies, *The Merchant Taylors' Company of London: Court Minutes 1483–93* (Stamford, 2000), pp. 8–12.

[38] For further discussion of these themes, see: Davies, 'Artisans, guilds and government', pp. 125–50; M. Davies, 'Lobbying parliament: the London companies in the 15th century', *Parliamentary History*, xxiii (2004), 136–48.

[39] Nightingale, *Medieval Mercantile Community*, pp. 563–4.

[40] Davies, 'Lobbying parliament', pp. 140–1; C. Welch, *History of the Cutlers' Company of London and of Minor Cutlery Crafts* (2 vols., 1916–23), i. 64–5.

These grants rarely provoked opposition from other guilds, because in the main they benefited the status and wealth of London as a whole, without affecting other trades. Problems for the city started when companies began seeking charters that seemed to undermine the rights of the mayor and aldermen to govern the city (echoes of Brembre here), or which cut across the rights of other crafts to inspect the shops of their members and generally regulate their trades. A case in point was a bitter dispute between the Goldsmiths and the Cutlers, provoked by the Goldsmiths' request for confirmation of a charter granted by Edward III which allowed them to scrutinize the work of the Cutlers – who, of course, often used silver and gold in their products. The Cutlers petitioned parliament in protest, but to no avail and the confirmation was granted. The Cutlers then tried another tactic, claiming this time that the charter infringed the rights of the city, because the right to correct faults belonged in the first instance to the mayor, who was meant to act on presentments made by the wardens of the particular crafts. But again they were unsuccessful.[41] So what we have is not only a disagreement about the powers of particular guilds, but also about where, ultimately, the source of regulatory authority came from. An even more serious dispute between the Drapers and Tailors in the early 1440s, discussed by Caroline Barron, also centred on a charter which appeared to give tailors the right to search the shops and stalls of drapers – particularly at the prestigious annual St. Bartholomew's Fair in Smithfield. In both cases, the crown seems to have adopted a partial attitude, favouring a long-established vested interest, in the case of the Goldsmiths, and a lobbying campaign on behalf of the Tailors in which the influence of Humfrey, duke of Gloucester (member and patron of the Tailors' fraternity) seems to have been crucial.[42]

Such examples were rare, and need to be put into context. At no point did the efforts of the guilds to secure new privileges, however controversial, seriously undermine London's stability as a self-governing commune, whereas in France (for example) guilds in towns and cities often appealed directly and vigorously to the crown for new powers and charters, sometimes undermining and changing the basis of urban governments.[43] The incidents involving the London Tailors and Goldsmiths were probably less serious in their ramifications than a broadly similar dispute involving the city

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[41] Welch, *History of the Cutlers' Company*, i. 108–10, 277, 289–91. For the petitions, see TNA: PRO, SC 8/102/5070, 198/9889 (Cutlers), 121/6042 (Goldsmiths); 'Henry IV: January 1404', *Parliament Rolls of Medieval England* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=116510> [accessed 23 June 2011].

[42] Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages*, pp. 209–11.

[43] Soly, 'Political economy', pp. 45–71.

of Exeter, where the guild of Tailors obtained a new charter in 1466 that presented a direct challenge to the rule of the merchant elite.[44] Nor was the crown, as a rule, keen to exploit guild ambitions as a means to divide and rule, or destabilize London's government. Inevitably, despite London's undoubted, and growing, economic importance within the kingdom as a whole, the interests of the crown were not always the same as those of the guilds, and policies continued to be enacted which undermined as well as enhanced the positions of the London crafts.[45] Henry VI's government, for example, was notorious for rewarding household men with offices, some of which directly affected London's guilds. An example was the post of garbeler of spices in the city, which Henry granted to a yeoman of the chamber in 1457. The Grocers saw the post as an essential means to preserve their monopoly over the distributive trade against the ambitions of Italian spice merchants. Their involvement in the wool trade also continued to be threatened, and not just by the influence wielded by Italian merchants. Five years earlier Henry had granted to the merchants of Newcastle the right to export wool directly to Bruges or Middleburg. It is significant that on the accession of Edward IV the Grocers took no chances and ensured that their preferred candidate for the post was put forward by Sir John Fogg, treasurer of the household. [46] Indeed the early years of Edward's reign were significant for the ways in which the London guilds sought to re-engage with the crown after a period when some had been adversely affected by royal policies: a number of guilds gained confirmation of their charters, and even entertained the king to dinner in their halls.[47]

There were, as already noted, fluctuations in London's broader relationship with the crown. The city's liberties had briefly been seized by Richard II, but this was not motivated by any desire to extend crown control over the capital city in ideological terms, along the lines favoured by some other European princes. It was instead a rather extreme reaction to the city's typical wariness in the face of demands for funds. Likewise even the political uncertainties and conflict of the dynastic struggle between 1450 and 1485 were navigated safely, although there were some nervous moments for the citizens. Indeed,

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[44] M. Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade in Medieval Exeter* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 156.

[45] For London's economic significance in the later middle ages see, e.g., D. Keene, 'Changes in London's economic hinterland as indicated by debt cases in the court of common pleas', in *Trade, Urban Hinterlands and Market Integration c.1300–1600*, ed. J. A. Galloway (Centre for Metropolitan History Working Papers Series, iii, 2000), pp. 59–81; Barron, 'London: 1300–1540', pp. 416–20.

[46] Nightingale, pp. 502, 505, 519–20.

[47] Davies, 'Artisans, guilds and government', pp. 127, 132.

what was perhaps most significant about London in this period was its careful negotiation of political difficulties, and also the sense in which, in general terms at least, the crown continued to accept and endorse London's position as capital city, with a significant and by now well-established tradition of self-government, and an economic importance which justified the extension of broad powers to some of its guilds.[48] By contrast, the dukes of Burgundy and Guelders were much more aggressive in their dealings with the towns of Flanders, and this extended to the assertion of corporate identity by the guilds, particularly in the context of urban ceremony. In 1407, for example, Duke John the Fearless issued a decree in Bruges that guild banners were not to be shown in popular gatherings or elsewhere without the express order of the duke or his officers. The duke's own banner was to be unfurled in the main square before one of the guild banners could be displayed. Any infringement would be punished by execution in front of the town hall and confiscation of all possessions. This rather draconian step was a response to the powerful role which guild banners played as a means to rally opposition to ducal rule, and a symbolic assertion of authority over the town and its guilds.[49]

For the London guilds, the expression of guild identity took place within a rather different context, even if some of the means of expression were similar. As well as royal charters, guilds increasingly began to obtain grants of arms from the crown, the first being given to the Drapers in 1438. These devices were becoming common among European urban guilds in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, with trade guilds frequently combining religious iconography (such as patron saints) with depictions of tools or products associated with their occupations and heraldic elements. They reflected the way in which London's civic society increasingly drew on chivalric and courtly culture, interweaving it with the religious aspects that had long been part of corporate life in the later middle ages. It is particularly striking that in fifteenth-century London many of the companies acquiring arms were outside the ranks of the greater guilds – such as the Cooks, Girdlers, Upholders and Tallow-Chandlers – who perhaps saw these as

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[48] See J. L. Bolton, 'The city and the crown', *London Journal*, xii (1986), 11–24; C. M. Barron, 'London and parliament in the Lancastrian period', *Parliamentary History*, ix (1990), 343–67.

[49] Blockmans and Donckers, 'Self-representation of court and city', p. 97; P. Arnade, 'Crowds, banners and the marketplace: symbols of defiance and defeat during the Ghent war of 1452–3', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, xxiv (1994), 471–97. For Guelders, see G. Nijsten, 'The duke and his towns: the power of ceremonies, feasts, and public amusement in the duchy of Guelders in the 14th and 15th centuries', in *City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe*, ed. B. A. Hanawalt and K. A. Reyerson (Minneapolis, Minn., 1994), pp. 235–70.

quick and relatively cheap ways to ape the successful connections forged by the leading guilds.[50] This was a gradual process. London's guilds were not as 'militaristic' in their origins or outlooks as guilds in towns in Guelders or Flanders for example: occasions such as royal entries, marriages, funerals and so on were relatively few in number in London, and did not have such explicitly feudal or military overtones as they did in other cities, for example in Bruges where archery contests and tournaments were common. Perhaps even more crucially, although the London guilds became involved in raising forces for civic defence, they were rarely deployed in anger by the city or the crown.[51] For Londoners, the adoption of chivalric elements undoubtedly increased in the later fifteenth century as part of a revival of interest in these themes. But in some senses it was less to do with political considerations, and perhaps more about nostalgia and aspirations: Caroline Barron examines this sense of nostalgia to argue that, with 'modern' warfare so far removed from its earlier incarnations, merchants could safely aspire to some of the virtues and trappings of chivalry, now that these were associated with an age gone by rather than present-day realities.[52]

For the guilds, the practical application of chivalric culture was perhaps less important than the significance of charters, arms, liveries and other iconographic devices in enabling them to express publicly a sense of corporate identity which drew heavily on their historic and ongoing connections to royal authority. Disputes over precedence in processions were one side-effect of this, as they were elsewhere, but they never seriously destabilized the city's government or jeopardized law and order. Creative solutions such as the 'Billesden award', which allocated sixth and seventh places in processions to the Skinners and Tailors in alternate years, were one way to keep the peace, and in general mayoral authority was sufficient to do this.[53] By the end of the fifteenth century a number of guilds had accumulated a great deal of cultural and historical 'capital', which drew attention to their royal connections and wider significance. The successive charters acquired by the Goldmsiths, Tailors and others were already providing a historical narrative for these guilds, which through their ceremonies, prayers and iconography tied them in closely

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[50] Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 211.

[51] A. D. Brown, *Civic Ceremony and Religion in Medieval Bruges c.1300–1520* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 174–5, 179; C. Barron, 'Chivalry, pageantry and merchant culture in medieval London', in *Heraldry, Pageantry and Social Display in Medieval England*, ed. P. Coss and M. Keen (Woodbridge, 2002), p. 219.

[52] Barron, 'Chivalry', pp. 239–42.

[53] M. Davies, 'Governors and governed: the practice of power in the Merchant Taylors' company in the 15th century', in *Guilds, Society and Economy in London 1450–1800*, ed. I. A. Gadd and P. Wallis (2002), pp. 67–9.

with English kingship and the state over several centuries. So too did the establishment of 'heroic' figures within the guilds' historical consciousness, for example the vintner Henry Picard, who allegedly entertained several kings to dinner at his mansion in London in the mid fourteenth century. Another such figure was, of course, William Walworth, whose role in defeating the rebels of 1381, and especially in the death of Wat Tyler, came to be celebrated not simply in terms of defending the city, but specifically for keeping Richard II on the throne. This was used by the Fishmongers and by the city as a whole to demonstrate their longstanding loyalty to the crown.[54]

The deployment of historical narratives and imagery played an important part in the guilds' reaction to the interventions of Henry VII in London's affairs, especially in the first decade of the sixteenth century. Accounts of these events have drawn attention to the hostile reaction in the city to the new charter granted to the Tailors in 1503, which allowed them to call themselves 'Merchant Tailors', and to a statute initiated by the king which was passed the following year and which required the guilds to have their regulations inspected and approved by the lord chancellor, on behalf of the crown. It was claimed that an earlier statute of 1437 which had delegated this responsibility to local justices of the peace (the mayor in the case of London) had lapsed – to the surprise of the Londoners.[55] It remains a point of debate whether Henry's actions stemmed from short-term opportunism or from a more coherently formulated policy to extend the royal prerogative, but a consequence of the new statute was that it threw into sharp relief the historic relationships between the guilds and the city, on the one hand, and the crown, on the other. To what extent did the guilds actually regard the measure as a threat? Clearly, the short-term reaction was often vehement and provoked defensive measures: the Founders made considerable efforts to have their ordinances 'corrected and ordered' by the lord chancellor 'that the craft mytte be harmeles ayenste the Kyng ouer Soveryg' Lord'.[56] However, in the case of the greater guilds, soon to be the 'Great Twelve', it is worth recalling that very few of them actually ever bothered to get their ordinances approved by the mayor and aldermen in the first place. These organizations, as we have seen, were much more prepared to look outside

[54] For these and other examples, see Davies, '"Monuments of honor"'.

[55] See H. Miller, 'London and parliament in the reign of Henry VIII', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, xxxv (1962), 130–43; P. Cavill, 'Henry VII and parliament' (unpublished University of Oxford DPhil thesis, 2005), ch. 11, esp. pp. 248–51; and S. Harper, 'Divide and rule: Henry VII, the Mercers, Merchant Tailors and the corporation of London', *The Fifteenth Century*, XI (forthcoming, 2012).

[56] *Wardens' Accounts of the Worshipful Company of Founders of the City of London, 1497–1681*, ed. G. Parsloe (1964), p. 23.

the city for new rights and privileges. Indeed, it has been suggested that the effects of the statute were not as damaging as feared, and that a number of the London guilds, while reverting gradually to inspection by the mayor and aldermen, may indeed have come to see the advantages of royal inspection as another means to extend their rights of search outside London.[57]

Another consequence of the statute was that some guilds took the opportunity to produce compilations of their records, suitable for presentation to the royal government. The Skinners, according to their accounts of 1508–9, spent a total of £26 8*s* 8*d* on

> suying to my Lord Chancellor, the Lord Steward, the Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench, and the Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, for the renewing and ratifying of the old acts and ordinances belonging to the Craft and Company as by the particular parcels of the same written in a 'pamflete' more plainly doth appear.[58]

The precise nature of the 'pamflete' is not made clear. However, it has been suggested that this evidence was incorporated into one or both of the lavishly illuminated books of the fraternities of Corpus Christi and the Assumption of the Virgin, which had been established by the Skinners for their liverymen and yeomen respectively.[59] The Tailors at about the same time produced a similar illuminated book, and what both have in common, in addition to an emphasis on spiritual and charitable activity, is a highlighting of connections beyond the city of London. The Skinners, for instance, wrote in lists of distinguished honorary members, including monarchs such as Edward III and Richard II (both of whom granted the guild charters), while the Tailors' clerk included transcriptions of charters and their confirmations, as well as the guild's grant of arms of 1480. The Pewterers' illuminated charter, ordinance and record book dates from the same period, and may also have begun in response to the statute.[60] The work of the clerks proved invaluable as a means of establishing a historical narrative which emphasized royal connections: in 1607 the Merchant Taylors entertained James I to dinner at their hall, and presented to him a roll containing the names of all their honorary members. When John Gore, a member of the same company, was elected lord mayor in 1624 a show was commissioned from John Webster featuring a chariot which

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[57] Cavill, 'Henry VII', p. 251; I. Archer, 'The London lobbies in the later 16th century', *Historical Journal*, xxxi (1988), 26.

[58] *Records of the Skinners of London*, ed. J. J. Lambert (1933), p. 157.

[59] E. Veale, *The English Fur Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1968; repr. by the London Record Society, 2003), pp. 101, n. 2, 108–14.

[60] LMA, CLC/L/MD/A/004/MS34004; Davies and Saunders, *Merchant Taylors*, p. 19, and plates IIIa, VIb; LMA, CLC/L/PE/A/027/MS07114.

depicted the arms of the company and figures of eight kings of England, all of whom had been made honorary members of the company and had granted it charters.[61]

The evolving sense of identity and history of the London guilds was therefore related to their complex and shifting relationships with the crown and the city: they were sufficiently self-confident and connected with the crown to be able to seek its patronage, but at the same time they were integral components of a proud, self-governing urban community. Ultimately, the ways in which the guilds perceived and represented themselves to each other and the wider public reflected these connected identities, whether through literary compilations, iconography or formal documents such as charters and ordinances. From the fifteenth century onwards, foundations of schools and other charities in the provinces were another reflection of their unique reach and influence. These were a reminder of the enduring connections between London and the regions that were forged through migration, which were evoked in heroic, 'rags-to-riches' tales.[62] A final example, also from Webster's show of 1624, is illuminating. As an international trader with interests that extended throughout Europe and beyond, Gore was celebrated not only by depictions of the figures of English kings but in addition by representations of famous seafarers and explorers, such as Francis Drake, John Hawkins and Martin Frobisher. This emphasized the international reach and prestige of English mercantile exploits, as embodied in the careers of London guildsmen who were involved in the East India Company and in other overseas ventures.[63] The unique set of connections which the London guilds had with the crown, both institutionally and through their members, therefore allowed them to identify themselves with broader themes in national history. Their ability to do this ultimately stemmed from London's sheer size and importance, in both political and economic terms, and also from the relative stability of crown-city relations in the medieval and early modern periods, compared with some other European states. Although, as we have seen, there were fluctuations in this relationship, which often

[61] John Webster, *Monuments of honor Deriued from remarkable antiquity, and celebrated in the honorable city of London, at the sole munificent charge and expences of the right worthy and worshipfull fraternity, of the eminent Merchant-Taylors* (1624), STC 25175.

[62] See, e.g., J. P. Ward, 'Godliness, commemoration, and community: the management of provincial schools by London trade guilds', in *Protestant Identities: Religion, Society, and Self-fashioning in Post-Reformation England*, ed. M. Macdonald, M. C. McClendon and J. P. Ward (Stanford, Calif., 1999), pp. 141–57; R. Tittler, 'Sir Thomas White of London: civic philanthropy and the making of the merchant-hero', in R. Tittler, *Townspeople and Nation: English Urban Experiences, 1540–1640* (Stanford, Calif., 2001), pp. 100–20.

[63] Webster, *Monuments of Honor*. For this theme, see R. T. Barbour, *Before Orientalism: London's Theatre of the East, 1576–1626* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 89, 97–9.

placed the guilds in the spotlight, it seems that on the whole they were able to navigate their way through these difficulties and to profit from their dual allegiances.