CHAPTER THREE

RURAL MARKETS C. 1200–C. 1350: A LATE START?

3.1 Introduction

Around 1280 the villages of Akersloot, Uitgeest and Wormer in Kennemerland received exemption from the river tolls in Holland as a reward for supporting Count Floris V in his war against the Frisians.¹ The toll privilege suggests an early involvement of the villages in regional or even interregional trade, but for the next fifty years or so the sources remain silent on the subject of rural commerce in Kennemerland. Then, in the year 1347, at the outbreak of the succession conflict between the later Count Willem V and his mother Margaretha, Willem signed a document that prohibited weekly markets in the villages of Kennemerland and ordered the villagers to come to the urban market of Alkmaar instead. The privilege was most likely intended to gain the much-needed support of Alkmaar at this time of political upheaval. As we shall see, it is doubtful that it was ever effectuated.²

The commercialisation of Holland’s countryside was briefly a subject of debate in the 1970s and 1980s. In his pioneering work on the rural economy of the Netherlands, De Vries reported a proliferation of rural trade venues in the 16th century, which—he believed—reflected the beginning of a process of rural commercialisation. In a critical reaction, Noordegraaf claimed that this process had begun much earlier. Noordegraaf pointed out a number of village markets with medieval origins, but did not attempt a systematic survey.³ Since then, little attention has been paid to rural trade venues in Holland. In Reinoud Rutte’s work on town formation in the high Middle Ages, for instance, markets are referred to as a precondition or accompaniment to the

¹ OHZ III, no. 1764 (Akersloot and Uitgeest); OHZ IV, no. 1926 (Wormer).
² Brokken, Ontstaan Hoekse en Kabeljauwse twisten, 50; Noordegraaf, ‘Internal trade’, 16; NA AGH, inv. no. 220 f 29 nos. 226 and 227.
emergence of towns. That markets also existed outside an urban context is not mentioned.4

The case of Kennemerland demonstrates two important aspects of the process of commercialisation of the Holland countryside. Firstly, the toll privilege for the three villages and the reference to village markets suggests that even by the middle of the 14th century this process was already underway. Secondly, the Kennemerland example also indicates that an attempt to investigate the early stages of rural commercialisation must include more than just formal markets and fairs (the village markets that Alkmaar wanted to put an end to were most likely unchartered).

This chapter compares the organisation of rural trade in Holland to both England and Flanders in the 13th and early 14th century. The differences between the social and political characteristics of the societies in the three regions have been outlined before. Here the implications of these diverging paths of development for the commercialisation of the countryside will be explored by focusing on two elements: the relations between town and countryside on the one hand, and the role of lordship on the other.

In shaping the relation between town and countryside, urban coercion (in the form of regional trade monopolies) plays a vital part. For 15th- and 16th-century Holland, Peter Hoppenbrouwers has demonstrated that the increasingly powerful towns did not develop into coercive city-states because their ambitions were kept in check by three elements: the power of central government, resistance of village lords to urban intrusion, and the continuing competition between towns.5 Here it will be argued that this situation had older roots. A comparison between Holland, England and Flanders shows that in Holland even in the 14th century a balance of powers between the count, the towns and rural communities on the one hand, and between groups in the towns on the other, gave rise to a framework of market institutions that was favourable to rural commercialisation.

The role of lords will be examined here by comparing their involvement with trade and trade institutions in Holland with the situation in England. In England seignorial power and ambition were an important stimulus to the development of a dense network of markets and

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4 Rutte, *Stedenpolitiek en stadsplanning*, 123–139.
fairs in the countryside in the 13th and early 14th century. As we shall see, the English multiplication of rural trade venues was not mirrored in Holland. It is argued that while this may have involved a disadvantage in the short run, it laid the foundations for a tradition of informal rural trade that made it easier for the inhabitants of Holland’s countryside to take advantage of new economic opportunities once these opened up.

First, however, the thin dividing line between town and village requires attention. The distinguishing criterion that is easiest to use is legal urban status: if a settlement possessed a charter of urban liberties it was a town, if it did not have such a charter it was a village. But some places that did not have official urban status nonetheless possessed some of the physical characteristics of a town, such as high density or walls, or they displayed economic, administrative, and religious functions commonly associated with towns. Conversely, there were also settlements that did have a charter of urban liberties, but were not fortified and had only few urban functions. To complicate matters even further, the situation was not static: a village could gradually grow into a town, and although this did not happen as often, a place that had urban characteristics at a certain point in time could lose them afterwards. Ideally, a combination of juridical, physical and functional elements should be taken into consideration at different points in time. This, however, requires an in-depth investigation such as the study made by Peter Stabel of the Flemish urban network. For Holland such a study is not available.

Therefore we have to resort to a method of distinguishing between towns and villages that is not as sophisticated, without reverting to an approach based on legal status alone. Settlements that were granted urban liberties between the early 13th and the middle of the 15th century—the time period covered in the book—have been identified as urban, but an exception has been made for the many evidently rural West-Frisian communities that all received urban liberties around 1400 (the backgrounds of this remarkable development will be discussed in more detail below). In addition, The Hague, which never received urban liberties but clearly functioned as a town in virtually

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6 For the problems of defining urbanity and distinguishing towns from villages, see Ennen, *Europäische Stadt*, 11–12; Stabel, *Kleine stad*, 14–16; Dyer, ‘Small towns’, 505–520.

7 Stabel, *Dwarfs among giants*. 
every other way, has also been identified as urban. Obviously this approach does not solve all problems. It excludes, for instance, from the list of towns some large villages that may have had one or more urban characteristics: Katwijk and Noordwijk are good examples. However, in the absence of detailed information, the chosen method at least has the advantage of being consistent and objective.8

3.2 Urban intrusion or urban attraction

When the development of trade venues in 13th- and early 14th-century Holland is compared to England and Flanders, clear differences become apparent. In Holland before the middle of the 14th century, rural fairs (and a few weekly markets) are recorded in only nine villages. Egmond, Voorschoten, Valkenburg and Ouderamstel each had annual fairs (already mentioned in Chapter 2). Giessen and Alblas should be added to this short list—the fair of Giessen was first mentioned in 1259 and a fair in Alblas was recorded in the comital accounts for the year 1331. Ammers was granted a weekly market in 1327 as part of a failed attempt by Count Willem III to allow this river toll-post to develop into a town.9 Rijsoord and Heerjansdam each received licenses for one or two fairs and a weekly market around 1340. We shall return to them shortly.

Even taking into account that some of Holland’s rural markets and fairs may not have left any traces in the sources, the figures pale in comparison with, for example, the counties of Essex and Suffolk in eastern England, each more or less comparable to Holland in size although not quite as populous. Here the impressive numbers of 66

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8 It results in the following list of 38 towns in Holland before 1450: Haarlem, Alkmaar, Beverwijk, Hoorn, Enkhuizen, Medemblik, Edam, Monnickendam, Amsterdam, Muiden, Weesp, Naarden, Leiden, The Hague, ‘s-Gravenzande, Delft, Vlaardingen, Schiedam, Rotterdam, Brielle, Goedereede, Geervliet, Dordrecht, Geertruidenberg, Zevenbergen, Heusden, Woudrichem, Gorinchem, Heukelum, Asperen, Vianen, Nieuwpoort, Gouda, Schoonhoven, Haastrecht, Oudewater, IJsselstein, Woerden. This coincides with the list of Holland towns published by Lourens and Lucassen, *Inwonertallen*, 54–71, 100–123, except for the fact that Lourens and Lucassen include Purmerend and Heenvliet, which both received liberties (and urban functions) only in the second half of the 15th century, and that they mention Geertruidenberg, Heusden, Zevenbergen, Woudrichem, and IJsselstein in the sections on the provinces of Noord-Brabant and Utrecht, to which these towns now belong.

(Essex) and 77 (Suffolk) non-urban settlements with one or more annual fairs, or a weekly market, or both, were recorded before 1348. These two counties belonged to the most commercialised part of England. But even in Staffordshire in the West Midlands, a more traditional and also a smaller and much more sparsely populated county, a total of 25 rural settlements with a market or a fair before 1348 can be identified.\(^{10}\) Certainly, it is unlikely that all these villages survived as market centres until that date, but as we shall see some of the village markets in Holland also disappeared in the course of time. The difference is striking, especially since—as the previous chapter has shown—in 13th- and early 14th-century Holland a solid foundation was laid for the development of a network of urban fairs. However, this increase of urban trade venues was not balanced by a similar increase in rural markets and fairs.

Unfortunately, no systematic inventory of early rural fairs and markets is available for Flanders. Nevertheless, it is clear that here, perhaps even more so than in Holland, numbers were small. Weekly markets in particular were a strictly urban phenomenon. There were a few early rural fairs, but their number only began to increase in the 16th century. Moreover, by that time some villages, despite urban protests, also managed to obtain a license for a weekly market.\(^ {11}\) The Ghent region provides an example. Only three rural market settlements are reported here in the 16th century: Zottegem, Izegem, and Sint Niklaas. In all three, the markets were formalised only in the 16th century, although they may have functioned as informal trade venues somewhat earlier.\(^ {12}\)

\(^{10}\) The numbers have been calculated by comparing the settlements with markets and fairs before the year 1348 in Essex and Suffolk as recorded in Letters, ‘Online Gazetteer of Markets and Fairs’, with the lists of urban settlements in Essex and Suffolk composed by Christopher Dyer (I am grateful to Professor Dyer for allowing me to use this information) and with the survey of urban settlements in Staffordshire given by Terry Slater (Slater, ‘Plan Characteristics’, 24–26; 2nd, 3rd and 4th order towns). Concerning size and population numbers: Essex covers 3,885 square kilometres, Suffolk 3,804, and Staffordshire 2,620; the area of medieval Holland was about 4,600 square kilometres (see Chapter 2, note 42). The population of Holland in 1348 is estimated at 235,000 (Van Bavel and Van Zanden, ‘Jump-Start’, 505). The population of Essex in the year 1290 is estimated at 144,000, that of Suffolk at 185,000, and that of Staffordshire at 56,000; fifty years later, figures may have been somewhat higher (Campbell, ‘Benchmarking Medieval Economic Development’, 31).

\(^{11}\) Stabel, Dwarfs among Giants, 159; Stabel, Kleine stad, 259, 275; Sabbe, Belgische vlasnijverheid, 201–202.

\(^{12}\) Stabel, Kleine stad, 20, 274.
The pace and pattern of urbanisation probably provide part of the explanation for the scarcity of rural markets and fairs in Flanders and Holland. Flanders was already highly urbanised by the middle of the 14th century: at that point, the percentage of the population living in towns was probably even higher than the 35% estimated for the year 1469, when the first reliable figures become available. The urban network was dominated by the cities of Ghent and Bruges—and in the 13th century also Ypres. In addition, about 50 medium-sized, small and very small towns functioned as market centres on a more modest scale. Under these conditions there may have been less need for additional trade venues in the countryside. For Holland, however, the situation was different. Urbanisation had started much later than in Flanders, and although the urban ratio was rising rapidly, on the eve of the Black Death no more than about 23% of Holland’s population was living in towns. Admittedly, by pre-modern European standards this is a very respectable percentage. It indicates, moreover, a higher level of urbanisation than in England: estimates for the share of the English population living in towns (including small towns) vary between 15 and 20% around the year 1300. Ratios probably changed little afterwards. Nevertheless, the difference in urban ratio between Holland and England seems small when compared to the difference in the number of rural markets in the two countries.

It is true that Holland’s pattern of urbanisation was decentralised: Holland had no metropolis like London. In the middle of the 14th century, even Holland’s largest city Dordrecht, with its approximately 7,500 inhabitants, did not equal the size of England’s second-tier towns like York, Bristol or Norwich. Instead, the county was dotted with small and very small towns, almost all of them endowed with urban liberties, even though some harboured no more than a few hundred souls. Despite their modest size, most of these towns had a weekly market and many also had one or more annual fairs, providing ample

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13 Prevenier, ‘Démographie’; population numbers in the towns have been slightly revised by Stabel, ‘Demography and Hierarchy’, 210–213. Here Stabel’s figure for the urban population (just over 224,000) and Prevenier’s for the countryside (just over 423,000) have been combined to calculate the urban ratio of 35%.

14 Stabel, Dwarfs among Giants, 159–160; Stabel, Kleine stad, 256–258.


16 For population numbers of English towns, see Campbell, ‘Benchmarking Medieval Economic Development’, 13–14; for a survey of towns in Holland and their population Lourens and Lucassen, Inwonertallen, 54–71, 100–123.
market opportunities for people living in their immediate hinterlands. However, this decentralised urbanisation pattern cannot fully account for the near absence of rural markets either. After all, England, or at least certain parts of the country, also had its fair share of small urban settlements, even if borough status was not granted to all of them. Staffordshire, for instance, numbered 22 urban settlements, Essex 23, and Suffolk as many as 34—in all cases, fewer than Holland's 38 medieval towns, but not in an entirely different range.\textsuperscript{17} For a more solid explanation for the absence of a dense network of markets and fairs in the Holland countryside, we must also look at the social and political context.

In the past, scholars have stressed the limited control of English medieval towns over rural trade. Because they did not usually have extraterritorial jurisdiction, these towns could rarely do more than restrict access by outsiders to the urban market by conferring trading privileges and toll exemptions on their own burgesses.\textsuperscript{18} Could the absence of urban coercion explain why rural markets and fairs proliferated in England but not in Flanders and Holland? In order to answer this question, the relationship between town and country will be examined here from two perspectives. The first concerns the instruments towns had at their disposal to concentrate trade within their walls and inhibit commercial activities in the surrounding countryside. The second looks at the accessibility of the urban markets for non-burgesses in general and the inhabitants of nearby villages in particular.

\textit{Towns and rural trade}

A closer look at the English situation suggests that relations between towns and countryside were not as consistently devoid of coercion as they have sometimes been made to look. In the 12th and 13th centuries some English towns did have extraterritorial powers allowing them to control rural trade. The 12th-century Nottingham charter of urban liberties, for example, required peasants from the hinterland to bring their products to the town’s weekly market. The port towns on the eastern coast involved in the herring trade also claimed monopolies—and sometimes even resorted to violence in their attempts to

\textsuperscript{17} Dyer, ‘Small Towns’, 507 (plus the large towns in each county not included in this list).

guard their position as herring-trade centres against any upstart neighbours.\textsuperscript{19} Despite the rise of many rural alternatives, some towns claimed trade monopolies even in the 14th century. In 1327 the establishment of new markets within a seven-mile radius (11 kilometres) of London was forbidden, and fifty years later Great Yarmouth was granted a market monopoly for a region of the same dimensions.\textsuperscript{20}

The pioneering work of Maryanne Kowaleski on the Devon regional trade network allows for a more detailed analysis of the role of coercion in the relationship between town and countryside for one particular city: Exeter. Kowaleski stresses the natural attraction of the Exeter market for peasants and merchants from villages and small towns in the hinterland, and no doubt the urban market did offer better facilities, a wider range of commodities, and a much larger circle of potential buyers and sellers than could be found in the countryside.\textsuperscript{21} Even so, Exeter apparently felt the need to employ non-economic means in its attempts to dominate trade in the Exe estuary. Here the interests of the city clashed with those of the earls of Devon, who tried to exploit the favourable location of their manors in the estuary by stimulating the development of fairs, markets, and port facilities. Although Exeter was never able to fully control trade along the length of the estuary, the city did enjoy a considerable degree of jurisdictional control over the manor of Topsham, which served as Exeter’s outport. The urban authorities levied customs on all import commodities landed at Topsham (except for one third of the wine custom, which had to be handed over to the earl of Devon) and they prohibited unloading elsewhere in the estuary unless by special license. Moreover, royal writs for custom collections in Topsham were enforced by Exeter officials and not by the manor’s bailiff.\textsuperscript{22}

From the 13th century onward, Exeter also tried to gain control over the fish trade in the estuary. The city even resorted to military means to achieve this, raiding two small estuarine communities that were believed to have transgressed Exeter’s rights. In the early 15th century,

\textsuperscript{19} Alsford, \textit{Florilegium Urbanum} (Nottingham); Kowaleski, ‘Commercialization of the Sea Fisheries’, 180–181 (herring port towns); for more examples, Ballard and Tait, \textit{British Borough Charters} II, 241–246.


\textsuperscript{21} Kowaleski, \textit{Local Markets}, Chapter 7, esp. 297–298 (cattle), 303 (hides), 311–312 (fish).

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 196, 223–224.
after lengthy judicial proceedings, Exeter was granted the right to tax the fish trade at the busy, although unchartered, fish market of Exmouth. The urban authorities also prosecuted forestalling of fish in villages situated on the roads between the coast and the town, thus extending the town’s jurisdiction well outside its walls. The Exeter example shows that some English towns did use non-economic means to enforce their central position in trade. Still, extraterritorial privileges like the ones Exeter claimed were limited in their geographical range. They were, moreover, difficult to maintain, especially when markets multiplied in the 13th and early 14th century.

The situation in Flanders was different. In the late 11th and 12th centuries, Flanders had rapidly risen to a position of economic primacy in northwestern Europe. By the middle of the 13th century, the towns of Flanders were booming. In particular, Bruges as a trade centre, Ypres as an industrial centre, and Ghent in both capacities had expanded rapidly. The economic success of these three towns gave them considerable political leverage. Between the late 13th and mid 14th century, triggered perhaps by a crisis in the urban draperies, Ghent, Bruges and Ypres step by step acquired a series of instruments to control the economies of the surrounding countryside. At the end of the 13th century, they gained the right to levy taxes and regulate trade and industry in the ‘ban mile’, stretching some six kilometres outward from the city walls. In the first half of the 14th century, industrial and trade monopolies in a much wider area were added. The towns also gained control over many roads and waterways, and they used the position of their courts as courts of appeal for the region to subordinate villages and small towns to their rule. The control of the three cities was at its peak during the decade of the Artevelde regime in the middle of the 14th century, when Ypres, Bruges and especially Ghent governed the county by themselves. During these years, the cities’ respective spheres of influence, which until then had been informal in character, were transformed into official administrative ‘quarters’.

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23 Ibid., 223–224, 308, 309–310. Fish markets will be discussed in more detail in section 4.2.
25 This paragraph is based on Nicholas, Town and Countryside, esp. 53, 59–65, 76–78, 98, 125–126, 142–146, 178–181, 187–189. For the 15th-century development of the political, judicial, fiscal, and military control of the cities over their quarters, see Blockmans, Volksvertegenwoordiging in Vlaanderen, 107–127.
The three cities never intended to completely destroy rural industry and trade. After all, the links between urban and rural economy were vital. Most of the preparatory work for the urban wool industry—such as combing, carding, and in particular spinning—was undertaken in the countryside and organised and controlled by urban merchant-entrepreneurs. For the small towns, in particular, the incorporation into an urban network dominated by the big cities brought advantages as well as restrictions: these towns had an important role as intermediaries between the metropoles and the countryside, and they often managed to acquire some profitable regional monopolies and privileges for themselves.

Nevertheless, the effects of urban domination over the countryside on rural trade were deeply felt. We will look at the vital cloth sector first. In 1314 the count of Flanders, whose political foothold was not strong, had granted Ghent a monopoly on textile production over a five-mile zone extending from the city walls (about thirty kilometres). Eight years later, Ypres and Bruges acquired the same monopoly, Ypres in a three-mile zone and Bruges in the Franc, its own hinterland of comparable dimensions. Cloth production in these zones, which together covered most of Flanders, was only permitted in the small towns that had pre-existing privileges for this purpose. Initially, the sale of this cloth was to take place only in the local cloth hall (sometimes directly to foreign merchants, but more often to Bruges brokers acting in their name) or at the annual fairs in other Flemish towns. Later, much of the cloth was sent directly to the Bruges international staple market. Ghent in particular was adamant in protecting its industrial monopoly—if necessary by force. Bruges was more lenient when it came to production, but did not permit any transgressions of its staple rights.

As a consequence of the urban cloth monopolies, rural cloth industry and cloth trade—in the 13th century common in many parts of the countryside—were now suppressed, except for a very few villages that could claim ancient rights. One of them was Thourout, in the Bruges region, the scene of one of Flanders’ famous international fairs. Despite

27 Nicholas, Town and Countryside, 115–116; Stabel, Dwarfs among Giants, 163–164, 271–272. The Flemish mile was approximately six kilometres.
28 Nicholas, Town and Countryside, 98, 119; Stabel, Kleine stad, 89–91.
29 Ibid., 102–109, 196–197.
its urban status, Thourout was no more than a large rural bourg. It probably owed the continued existence of its fair to the protection of the powerful Benedictine abbey under whose walls it had originally emerged.30 Another example is the annual fair held in Sint-Lievens-Houtem (in the southern part of the Ghent region) in the 14th and early 15th century. Here woollen cloth was sold in addition to various other products.31 Likewise, in the village of Jabbeke (in the Franc of Bruges) a ‘marchiet’ existed where cloth made in the nearby villages was sold—merchants from Holland were among the buyers. In the early 15th century, the cloth trade in Jabbeke apparently attracted the attention of the authorities in Bruges.32 As later references to the Jabbeke market are lacking, Bruges may well have been successful in its attempts to suppress it. Thourout, Sint-Lievens-Houtem and Jabbeke were exceptions. In general, village cloth markets were rare in the 14th and 15th century. Rural venues for textile trade did not really develop until the 16th century, and then it was not woollen cloth but linen that dominated them—the towns did not monopolise the linen industry to the same extent as they did the production of woollen cloth.33

Urban monopolies were also common in the victualling trade. Here they were often induced by concern of the urban authorities for the town's food supply. Several small towns compelled peasants living nearby to bring the grain they produced to the urban markets; some even actively suppressed grain trade in the countryside.34 Sometimes other victuals were also included in the monopoly. Late 14th-century Ghent, for example, did not allow grain, meat, and fish sales in a wide region (three to five ‘miles’, or 18 to 30 kilometres) from the city. The prohibition on grain sales was related to Ghent’s staple privilege for all grain transports on the Scheldt and Lys. David Nicholas has pointed out that the staple itself was not a serious problem for the surrounding countryside. This part of Flanders was not producing much grain anyway, and peasants were free to purchase grain for personal consumption from their neighbours; in fact, restrictions on the amount of grain they could buy on a visit to Ghent even encouraged them to do so. The staple mainly affected long-distance trade. Food provisioning of

31 Theo, Landbouwekonomie, 1012.
33 Sabbe, Belgische vlasnijverheid, 200–202, 74–78.
34 Stabel, Kleine stad, 226–227.
the towns of Flanders was dependent on grain imports from northern France, and Ghent—because of its geographical position and its economic and political supremacy—was in a position to dominate this trade.35

The grain staple, however, did allow Ghent to extend its control over the other towns in the region and to acquire a dominant position in water transport.36 The existence of the grain staple also illustrates once again how much towns were bent on concentrating every important and profitable line of trade within their walls. Certainly, there must have been informal trading in daily products in the countryside.37 As long as no more than local exchange was at stake, the towns probably did not bother too much, but attempts at anything else were carefully kept in check.

The attitude of the towns of medieval Holland towards rural trade is much closer to the English than to the Flemish situation. In 13th- and early 14th-century Holland, coercion exerted by towns was rare. Only a few towns were able to acquire extraterritorial privileges that allowed them to compel people to visit the urban market. The most outstanding exception is, no doubt, the staple of Dordrecht. In the late 13th century this town—favourably situated at the confluence of Rhine and Meuse—acquired a staple privilege for the river trade in wine, grain, wood, and salt, which gave it, at least for the trade in these commodities, a position not unlike Ghent or Bruges. The background to and the effects of the Dordrecht staple will be discussed in Chapter 5. Here it suffices to say that, until the early 15th century, Dordrecht claimed monopoly rights only over the transit trade and did not force people from the surrounding countryside to visit the urban market.

Regional trade monopolies did exist in some small towns in Holland’s few grain-producing regions. Naarden (in the Gooiland region) and Goedereede (on the island of Westvoorne in the Meuse delta) both boasted official privileges—dating from 1376 and 1332 respectively—that made them the compulsory market for their district’s agricultural products. Goedereede’s nearest neighbour, Brielle, may have had a similar position on the island of Westvoorne, for in

36 Stabel, *Kleine stad*, 119–120.
37 Ibid., 256–257, n. 8; see also 265, 267, 269 for purchases by 15th-century religious institutions in villages.
1477 the regional monopolies of both Goedereede and Brielle were officially confirmed.\(^{38}\)

A second and more important category of towns with regional trade monopolies in the 13th or early 14th century had a different profile. They were situated in border areas and were therefore able to profit from their strategic position and the count’s need for their loyalty and political support. Geertruidenberg is a good example. We have seen in the previous chapter that in the early 13th century Geertruidenberg was granted a charter of urban liberties, a charter that made its weekly cattle market the compulsory venue for cattle trade for the entire region of Zuidholland, the rural district around Geertruidenberg, and Dordrecht.\(^{39}\) In his work on medieval town planning, Rutte has pointed out that in the border region between Holland and Brabant Geertruidenberg was not the only place to receive liberties around this time. Similar privileges had recently been given by the lords of Breda to nearby Breda and Bergen op Zoom. Further to the east, the duke of Brabant had founded Den Bosch in much the same way. Between Den Bosch and Geertruidenberg, the lord of Heusden promoted the rise of this small river town. All these lords were taking advantage of the rise of trade to further their political goals, and they did this by founding market centres.\(^{40}\) By making Geertruidenberg into such a centre, the count of Holland established his authority in the region and prevented a shift of economic activity and fiscal gains to his adversaries.

Political conflict continued to determine the position of Geertruidenberg as a market centre throughout the 14th century, as is demonstrated by the reaction of Count Willem III to the installation of a weekly market in Heusden in 1307: he forbade his subjects to visit it.\(^{41}\) In 1398 Duke Albrecht of Bavaria once more declared Geertruidenberg to be the compulsory market for cattle. He too was probably motivated by a wish to bind the town to Holland and keep the duke of Brabant out, just like his 13th-century predecessor.\(^{42}\)

\(^{38}\) Van Mieris, *Groot charterboek III*, 320 (Naarden); Niermeyer, *Bronnen Beneden-Maasgebied*, no. 271 note 1 and Pols, ‘Rechten der stad Goedereede’, 295 (Goderede 1332); Van Alkemade, Van der Schelling, and Matthijssen, *Beschryving Briele* I, 39–40 (Brielle and Goedereede 1477). The rules usually stated that farmers had to offer their products for sale at the urban weekly market first; if they were not sold, they could take them elsewhere afterwards.

\(^{39}\) *OHz* III, no. 1154; Korteweg, ‘Stadsrecht van Geertruidenberg’, 67–68.


\(^{41}\) Niermeyer, *Bronnen Beneden-Maasgebied*, no. 177.

It is doubtful if the obligation to conduct all cattle trade in Geertruidenberg was very effective. Geertruidenberg’s strategic location did help: overland travellers from Zuidholland to the south could hardly avoid the town. The fact that the prohibition to sell cattle anywhere else than in Geertruidenberg had to be repeated several times is significant, however; it was clearly not easy to maintain. Apart from the fact that the pull of market centres dominated by other lords could not be easily neutralised by prohibitions, policing the entire countryside for illegal private cattle transactions must have been an impossible task.

More examples of attempts to use monopolies as an instrument of political strategy can be found in the border region between Holland and Utrecht. When in 1326 a conflict arose between the count of Holland and the bishop of Utrecht over the Woerden region, Count Willem III ordained that all butter from that region had to be marketed in the town of Oudewater. No doubt, he had the same double agenda as in the case of Geertruidenberg: to keep trade and the profits it brought out of the bishop’s reach and to gain the support of the burgesses of this small border town. The compulsory market for hemp, grease, and hides established in the town of Woerden by Duke Albrecht in 1396 illustrates in more detail how far the sovereign was willing to go in order to consolidate his position in a contested region. The charter, which explicitly refers to Woerden’s border location, suited the requirements of the entrepreneurs in Woerden’s emerging rope industry, as it guaranteed the supply of raw material in the form of locally produced hemp. Moreover, around this time Woerden’s defences apparently were a point of serious concern to the duke: he made several attempts to hasten their improvement and to help the town to raise funds. He even allowed Woerden to have buitenpoorters (people living in the countryside but enjoying—in return for payment—the formal status of burgesses) for three years to cover the expenses of the fortifications.

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43 Apart from the two editions of the charter of liberties in 1213 and 1275, the compulsory character of the market is also emphasized in a charter dated between 1247 and 1256 (OZH III, no. 1075) and in 1257 (Ibid., no. 1154).
45 NA AGH, inv. no. 228, f 199.
47 Plomp, *Woerden*, 49–51. This was exceptional: in Flanders, buitenpoorters were very common (Verbeemen, ‘Buitenpoorterij’, 85–96), but in Holland the count had
In spite of these cases, urban monopolies in 13th- and early 14th-century Holland are restricted in number and in range: they relate to a limited number of towns in regions with specific characteristics. That coercion was not used more widely had nothing to do with a lack of enthusiasm on the side of the towns. Events during the civil war in the middle of the 14th century show that at times when the power of central government was at a low ebb, towns did try to take advantage and attempted to extend their domination over the surrounding countryside. After the death of Count Willem IV, the two contestants for power, Willem and his mother Margaretha, were prepared to grant towns almost anything they wanted in return for their support. In 1351 the towns of Leiden, Delft, Haarlem, and Amsterdam all acquired the right to prohibit textile industries within a distance of three ‘miles’ (15 to 18 kilometres) from the town walls; this suggests an attempt to copy the industrial privileges of the Flemish cities.\textsuperscript{48} Alkmaar was apparently more interested in trade than in industry. As we have seen, it acquired a market monopoly, which forced the people of Kennemerland to offer their products for sale at the Alkmaar weekly market.

Although this privilege offers an illuminating perspective on the ambitions and wishes of the town, it was of little relevance in everyday life. Most of the privileges dating from the years of civil war were repealed in 1355 and 1356, when Willem was firmly established as the new Count Willem V and decided on a revocatio generalis. He revoked all privileges granted for political reasons by either himself or his mother in the previous years, based on the argument that many of them weakened the unity and strength of the state. The extraterritorial rights of the towns mentioned above, including Alkmaar’s market monopoly, were no doubt among the privileges that had to be handed back. Certainly, the revocatio required extensive negotiations and some towns were more successful in this respect than others. The Zeeland town of Middelburg, for instance, succeeded in having the restrictions on weaving and fulling in the surrounding countryside renewed. For the Holland towns, however, there is no evidence of a renewal, and it is

\textsuperscript{48} Van Mieris, \textit{Groot Charterboek} II, 807; Van der Laan, \textit{Oorkondenboek van Amsterdam}, no. 131. Niermeyer, \textit{Delft en Delfland}, 92. In Holland various local varieties of the mile were used, ranging between approximately five and six kilometres.
likely that Alkmaar lost its formal market monopoly only a few years after it was granted.\footnote{Leupen, \textit{Philip of Leyden}, 128–132. According to Leupen (131), the Leiden privilege was also renewed, but the texts Leupen refers to (a passage in the treatise of Philip of Leyden in which Philip expresses his disapproval of this kind of privileges and the edition of the 1351 charter by Van Mieris) do not mention this. For Middelburg see Unger, \textit{Bronnen Middelburg} III, no. 42 note 5.}

The first sets of by-laws of Holland’s larger towns that have survived come from Haarlem and Leiden. They date from the late 14th century, although many of the regulations incorporated in them are older. These by-laws confirm the impression that restrictions on rural trade were not common. Leiden forbade its burgesses to buy fish between Rijnsburg (situated a few kilometres west of the town) and Ter Waddinghe (just south of the town). This prohibition may have been related to the fact that the fishing rights on the Rhine and its tributaries belonged to the counts, who usually leased them out to members of the Leiden elite; the lessees may have discovered that illegal fishing was taking place near the two villages.\footnote{Hamaker, \textit{Middeleeuwsche keurboeken Leiden}, 54, 91.} Haarlem imposed a similar restriction on the purchase of grain at Spaarndam.\footnote{Huizinga, \textit{Rechtsbronnen Haarlem}, 58.} The reason is not clear; perhaps it was a reaction to an incident that had caused commotion among the local vendors. There is no indication the prohibitions reflect a general policy of suppression of rural trade.

It is true that this was to change in the 15th and especially the 16th century, when many towns, Dordrecht being the most notable example, tried to monopolise regional trade in agrarian products (this process will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter). But most 14th-century towns were simply not in a position to impose coercive policies on the countryside: the count of Holland, except for the short lapse in the middle of the century, did not permit them. Therefore, whereas in Flanders a link between the absence of rural markets and urban trade monopolies can safely be assumed, in Holland we will have to look for another explanation.

\textit{Accessibility of urban markets to outsiders}

Complementary to the attitude of towns to trade in the countryside is the degree to which they allowed ’foreigners’—including merchants from other nearby towns and country folk—to sell products at the urban market. Once again England, Flanders and Holland show
distinctive paths of development. The differences should not be overstated. They were prominent in certain branches of trade, especially those dominated by guilds, but much less so in other sectors. The grain trade, for instance, vital for urban food provisioning, was relatively free everywhere. In London, cornmongers from market towns in the region and foreign merchants were active besides their London colleagues. Even in Ghent, foreign merchants had no problems selling part of their grain in the urban market to the local bakers, brewers, and individual burgesses; in fact, the Ghent staple regulations compelled them to do so, simply because this was the most efficient way to guarantee a steady supply of grain.

However, in England burgesses were often privileged when it came to access to the urban market in other branches. Outsiders—and for that matter also people who lived in town but did not have full burgess status—had to deal with all kinds of restrictions and impediments. In many English towns, merchant guilds had emerged in the 11th or 12th century. These guilds enjoyed important privileges, allowing them to enforce trading regulations. Only guild members were permitted to trade toll-free, and in some trades they had exclusive monopoly rights. As a consequence, access to the market for outsiders (and for non-members living in town) was restricted.

Admittedly, there were ways around this obstacle. Outsiders could sometimes gain access by joining the local merchant guild as a ‘foreign member’. Based on an analysis of the 13th-century membership lists of the Shrewsbury merchant guild, James Masschaele has shown that joining the guild was a popular option among peasant fishermen, butchers, bakers, and traders from nearby villages. But this privilege did not come for free: an entrance fee had to be paid, which of course meant that transaction costs (i.e. mainly search costs) were higher for outsiders. Moreover, there are clear indications that the Shrewsbury guild only admitted outside members when it was in its own interest to do so: victuallers were very welcome because of their role in food provisioning, but traders in wool and wine, who might compete with the most powerful urban merchants, seem to have been refused.

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In Exeter the privileges of the merchant guild were probably assumed by the ‘freedom’ of the city in the early 13th century. The effects were much the same as in Shrewsbury. Only burgesses—in 1377 no more than 21% of all households belonged to this category—could engage in retailing without having to pay the regular market tolls on all sales. In certain trades, such as the retailing of fish, clothing, and hides, burgesses had monopoly privileges.\(^56\) In the course of time the exclusion of outsiders was mollified in more than one way. Firstly, several small towns and villages in Exeter’s hinterland acquired toll exemptions on purchases for personal use and on the sale of their own agricultural products. Secondly, by the late 14th century the fines imposed on illegal retailing by non-burgesses appear to have developed into retrospective licensing fees. However, this illustrates once more that even if the urban market was not as inaccessible as the official rules made it seem, there was a price to be paid for entering it. People from the surrounding countryside coming to trade in Exeter bore the heaviest burden of urban trade taxation.\(^57\)

Sometimes local conditions did bring about exceptions to the rule of urban dominance. Whereas in London the powerful fishmongers’ guild claimed a monopoly on the retailing of fish, in many other towns retail sales of fish by non-burgesses were allowed, albeit under strict conditions.\(^58\) Late 14th-century Winchester went further than most: the urban authorities, motivated perhaps by a concern for the food supply of the poor, actively encouraged fish traders from out of town to come to the urban market by offering them better places for their stalls and more favourable hours of sale. In practice, however, the urban fishmongers still dominated the retailing trade; and despite repeated fining for forestalling and regrating, they continued to buy in bulk from the outsiders and resell at high profit to the consumer.\(^59\) Thus, in a circuitous way, the Winchester case actually reinforces the impression that outsiders were usually on the receiving end of trade restrictions.

That the exceptions and mitigations had not solved the fundamental problem of limited access to urban markets is demonstrated by the fact that the demand for freedom of trade in towns was a (secondary)

\(^{56}\) Kowaleski, *Local Markets*, 96, 185, 300–301.

\(^{57}\) Ibid., 198, 186, 200, 221.


factor in the Peasant Revolt of 1381. This demand was apparently triggered by the privileges granted to the town of Great Yarmouth, which had successfully claimed a trading monopoly within a seven-mile radius. In June 1381 country folk occupying Great Yarmouth tore up the hated charter. In July, at their meeting with King Richard II, the rebels secured the promise that all the king’s subjects would be allowed to buy and sell freely in all cities, boroughs, market places, and everywhere else in the realm. Needless to say, the promise was not kept.60

The institutional arrangements in Flanders were even more exclusive and protectionist than those in England. Once again the cloth trade deserves special attention because of its vital importance to the Flemish economy. In keeping with the urban production monopolies, in general only locally-made cloth could be sold in the town cloth-hall. Ghent provides an illuminating example. The Great Charter granted to the city in 1297 stipulated that only cloth that had been fulled within the city (or its ban mile) could be sold in the town. Some years later the rules were tightened: not just the fulling, but also the weaving of the cloth had to be performed in the city.61

Regulations on the sale of cloth were usually strictly enforced by inspectors of the local cloth guilds policing the urban markets.62 Here too, in the course of time the rules were relaxed to some extent. The sale of cloth from the town’s hinterland (presumably only from the places that had production privileges) was often permitted, and allowances were also made for types of cloth from elsewhere that were not manufactured locally.63 Moreover, Bruges had been something of an exception from the beginning: it had always welcomed cloth produced in the Franc at its export market.64

Just as in the cloth trade, protection of the urban market also characterised the trade in victuals. Because of the importance of a regular food supply, much of this trade was submitted to strict regulation and close corporative control. Selling victuals was, officially at least, the privilege of guild members, who by definition had to be burgesses. The official line was strictly carried through for the trade in meat, fish and bread. The sale of meat, in particular, was almost completely

60 Britnell, Commercialisation, 224; Fryde, ‘Peasant Rebellion’, 779–780.
61 Nicholas, Town and Countryside, 110–111.
62 Stabel, Kleine stad, 142–143.
63 Stabel, ‘Markets and Retail’, 813.
64 Nicholas, Town and Countryside, 105–106, 159.
monopolised by the butchers’ guilds. As the membership of these guilds had become hereditary in many towns—a development unknown in England—the meat trade was virtually inaccessible to outsiders. To a lesser extent, this was also true for fishmongers and bakers. Only in times of dearth were exceptions made to this rule.65

In other branches of victualling, however, the regulations were not so strict. Vendors of fruits and vegetables, for example, were often permitted to sell their merchandise in town, although they did have to buy their way in by paying a recognition fee to the vendors’ guild and had to put up with less convenient hours and locations. Peasants were almost always permitted to sell their own agricultural products, but only if they did so in bulk.66 In practice that would have meant, much as in the Winchester fish trade, that local traders bought up the stocks for retailing at the urban market.

The markets of the 14th-century towns of Holland were more easily accessible to outsiders than their English and Flemish counterparts. It is hard to say how and when this situation developed, as the 13th-century sources are almost entirely silent on the subject. We know that around 1200 Dordrecht had a merchant guild that monopolised the cloth trade in the local market, but most likely the guild disappeared at some point during the 13th century: later references are lacking.67 Because it is mentioned in the urban charter of liberties of the mid 13th century, we also know that the authorities in Delft tried to restrict the activities of foreign merchants to the annual fair. At the weekly market, only local traders were allowed to sell their merchandise.68

But in the late 13th or early 14th century these restrictive policies seem to have given way to a more liberal regime. The charter of urban liberties of Brielle (1343) is very explicit on this issue. It states that everybody can come to the weekly market and sell whatever he wants, while paying the same excises as the burgesses of Brielle have to pay.69 The late 14th-century by-laws of Haarlem and Leiden display a similar

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64 Stabel, ‘Markets and Retail’, 804–805.
65 OHZ I, no. 241. For a more detailed discussion of the Dordrecht merchant guild, see section 7.2.
66 OHZ II, no. 680 art. 59.
67 Cappon and Van Engen, ‘Stadsrechtsoorkonden van Brielle’, 157 art. 38. (‘Item soe wie den markedach ten Briele versoeken willen, die moghen vercope(n) up dien dach wat goede dat si daer bringhen, up sulken asis als die porters van binnen.’)
attitude. In these towns people from the countryside were free to come and sell their products in town at the weekly market, although usually not on other days of the week.\textsuperscript{70} By-laws from later periods show that this also was customary in other towns, and not just for agricultural commodities. In mid 15th-century Goedereede, for example, outsiders were allowed to sell food, cloth, clothing, shoes, and ‘small items’ at the weekly market. The early 16th-century by-laws of Hoorn have a similar paragraph.\textsuperscript{71} Likewise, 15th- and 16th-century markets for firewood and peat in the towns in the central part of Holland were usually open to all sellers, whatever their origins.\textsuperscript{72} Where restrictions did exist, they seem to have been relatively mild. In early 15th-century Gouda, foreign cloth merchants and butchers from out of town were given less favourable places for their stalls than the locals, but during the fairs and at the weekly market they paid the same excises. Delft used a system of reciprocity: it was prepared to allow foreign merchants in if their hometowns did the same for Delft merchants.\textsuperscript{73}

Only at the end of the Middle Ages did restrictions on market access become more common. It is likely there was a relation with the rise of guilds, especially retailers’ guilds. In contrast to the southern Low Countries, in Holland most guilds of craftsmen and retailers did not emerge until the 15th century. Due to the late rise of urbanisation and industrialisation—but probably also because of the hostile attitude towards guilds adopted by the authorities after the guild revolts in the south in the late 13th and early 14th century—very few guilds were established before 1400.\textsuperscript{74} Only Dordrecht, Holland’s oldest and largest town, already had an elaborate system of guilds in the 13th century. Dordrecht was also the only town in Holland where (in 1367) the guilds were able to acquire access to the ranks of urban government. In this light it is not surprising that in this town the sale of meat and

\textsuperscript{70} Hamaker, \textit{Middeleeuwsche keurboeken Leiden}, 49, 96; Huizinga, \textit{Rechtsbronnen Haarlem}, 56 (art. 55), 62 (art. 80).

\textsuperscript{71} E.g. Pols, ‘Rechten der stad Goedereede’, 314 (Goedereede); Pols, \textit{Westfriesche stadrechten} II, 98 art. 124 (Hoorn).

\textsuperscript{72} Cornelisse, \textit{Energiemarkten}, 281.


fish was monopolised by the butchers’ and fishmongers’ guilds in much the same way as in Flanders. Membership of these two guilds even had a hereditary character, common in Flanders but unique in Holland. At the end of the 14th century, a butchers’ guild also existed in Haarlem. The guild regulated the sale of meat in the meat hall and it seems that only guild members could rent a stall there. Elsewhere, however, trade monopolies for guilds were rare. The Gouda situation mentioned above makes this clear: butchers from out of town may have had to put up with stalls in the back of the hall, but they were not refused entrance.

In the second half of the 15th century, more towns began to introduce restrictions on retailing by non-burgesses, at least for certain commodities. While in Amsterdam retailing of fruit on the weekly market had been open to everyone in the early 15th century, it now became the privilege of the members of the guild of St. John, the guild of the fruit vendors. Likewise, retail trading in meat and fish, equally free in the beginning of the 15th century, was in 1488 restricted to the members of the guild of St. Peter, the guild of the butchers and fish vendors. Rotterdam had adopted a similar regulation regarding the sale of fish in 1465. At the end of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th century, newly emerging bakers’ guilds in Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Leiden succeeded in monopolising the sale of bread, banning rural bakers from the urban market—although these restrictions usually did not apply to the weekly market and were lifted altogether in years of dearth. According to W. van Ravesteyn—who studied the regulation of trade and production in 16th- and early 17th-century Amsterdam—measures intended to protect craftsmen and retailers against competition, especially competition from outsiders, gained ground after 1500, as long as they did not damage the interests of wholesale trade.

Perhaps the liberal regime of the 14th and early 15th century can partly be attributed to the rapid increase of urbanisation and the large number of small towns. This may have induced urban authorities to

75 Niermeyer, Bronnen Beneden-Maasgebied, 276 (guild charter 1367); Fruin, Oudste rechten Dordrecht I, 97, 227; Van Werveke, 'Ambachten en erfelijkheid', 14–15; Van Vollenhoven, Ambachten en neringen, 44.
76 Huizinga, Rechtsbronnen Haarlem, 97–99.
77 Breen, Rechtsbronnen Amsterdam, 22 and 23 (the by-law on page 23 is a later addition to the otherwise early 15th-century collection of by-laws).
78 Ibid., 23–24 and 232–233 (Amsterdam); Van der Schoor, Stad in aanwas, 74 (Rotterdam); Unger, Levensmiddelenoorziening, 146–147.
79 Unger, Levensmiddelenoorziening, 96–103.
80 Van Ravesteyn, Onderzoekingen, 162–163.
provide potential suppliers of victuals with a warm welcome. The risk that they would turn to another town that offered better conditions was certainly very real. The comparison with Flanders and England, the position of Dordrecht and also the partial change of attitude that took place in some towns in the late 15th and early 16th century, strongly suggests a second determining factor. The fact that, in most Holland towns, guilds emerged late and had little political influence most likely also contributed to the openness of urban markets. In keeping with the model of institutional development outlined in the introductory chapter, it seems that when guilds acquired the power to dictate conditions, a self-reinforcing process of restricting access to urban markets was set in motion.

Holland was not immune to this process, but for reasons connected to Holland’s late rise it did have a favourable starting position, and until the late 15th century urban markets were relatively open to outsiders. The effects are clear: the towns of Holland offered easily accessible opportunities to peasants and farmers wanting to sell their products, thus lowering search costs. Easy access to urban markets certainly helps to explain the scarcity of rural markets but, as we shall see in the next section, there were more reasons for the absence of a dense rural market network.

3.3 Lords and their involvement with rural markets

So far we have focused on the relationship between town and countryside. There is, however, a second element conditioning the institutional framework that determines opportunities for rural trade: the role of lordship and its implications for commercial activities in the countryside. It is this aspect that will be discussed in this section, based on a comparison between England and Holland. We have seen before that in Holland the manorial system had disintegrated at an early stage. When in the 11th to 13th centuries the peat district was reclaimed, the emerging pioneer communities were placed directly under comital authority. The count of Holland was represented either by the schout (sheriff), an appointed functionary with lower jurisdictional authority, or by an ambachtsheer, a village lord who was granted the same authority, often as a hereditary right. By the end of the 13th century, perhaps half of all villages had an ambachtsheer, and their number may have grown slightly in the 14th and 15th centuries. Most of these local lords were noblemen and many owned at least some land in the village, but
what made them *ambachtsheer* was the fact that they owned the banal right of lower justice in the seignory, as granted by the count.\(^{81}\) There were regional differences—we will return to them in the next chapter—but in the greater part of Holland the local lord did not have any authority over the villagers beyond the rights to certain revenues, granted to him by the count.\(^{82}\) His powers were much more limited than those of a manorial lord in England. How this affected his involvement with trade is illustrated here by looking at two aspects: market licenses and seigniorial impositions on rural trade.

**Lords and licenses**

In Chapter 2 it was argued that Holland's oldest rural fairs may well have developed at or near manorial centres, at a time when parts of the manorial system were still functioning. All of these fairs were—as far as we know—unlicensed. Only a few of them survived to the end of the Middle Ages, Voorschoten and Valkenburg the most prominent among them. The prolonged success of these two fairs should probably be attributed to the fact that they had also acquired a financial and administrative function: it was here that people from the surrounding countryside paid their taxes and tithes, as well as their rents.

Licensed rural trade venues were rare before the middle of the 14th century. As we have seen, in this respect Holland was very unlike England, where in the 13th and the first half of the 14th century thousands of lords acquired a royal license for a market or a fair. In Holland, seigniorial competition over markets seems to have been almost non-existent. In the late 13th century the counts of Holland began to regularly issue market licenses to towns, but grants to lords were rare. We have information about two of these grants from the late 13th century, both set in a semi-urban context. In 1270 Count Floris V issued a license for a fair and a weekly market in Schiedam to his aunt and former guardian, Aleid. Six years later the same Count Floris gave Lord Gerard of Velsen permission for a weekly market in Beverwijk.\(^{83}\) Both settlements were already showing signs of urban development at the time these market rights were granted, and both received charters of urban liberties afterwards and developed into small market towns.

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\(^{82}\) Enno van Gelder, *Nederlandse dorpen*, 28–29, 70.

\(^{83}\) OHZ III, nos. 1524 and 1738.
In both towns lordly ownership of the market turned out to be temporary: control over the market and its revenues eventually came back to the counts through inheritance.\footnote{Van der Feijst, \textit{Geschiedenis van Schiedam}, 13–14; Alders et al., \textit{Ontstaan van Beverwijk}, 15–16, 21.}

Two more cases of market licenses granted to lords, in the countryside proper, date from the reign of Count Willem IV (1337–1345). At first sight they are reminiscent of the English competition for market rights, which makes it worthwhile taking a closer look at the circumstances. The villages of Rijsoord and Heerjansdam are both situated in the Zwijndrechtse Waard. This river island west of Dordrecht was diked in 1332 after severe flooding. The count organised the funding for these extensive works by promising potential investors seignories on the island. One of these investors was Gerard Alewijnsz., a prominent burgess of Leiden and senior clerk at the count’s chancellery.\footnote{Van Kan, \textit{Sleutels tot de macht}, 175–179.} Alewijnsz. received lower jurisdiction in Rijsoord (as this part of the Zwijndrechtse Waard was called) in 1333. In the years to come, this grant was followed by a series of additional privileges: the right to build a church and nominate its priest, the right to issue by-laws, fishing rights in the river Waal, toll exemptions for the people living in Alewijnsz.’ seignory, and finally, in July 1339, a license for a weekly market and two annual fairs in Rijsoord.\footnote{NA LLRK, inv. no. 232 f 500v, 501v, 502v; inv. no. 225 f 230.}

About a year later, in July 1340, the count granted seignorial rights over Heerjansdam (another part of the Zwijndrechtse Waard) to Tielman Jansz., an influential member of the Dordrecht elite, later to become the count’s steward in Zuidholland and a member of the comitonal Council.\footnote{Van Herwaarden et al., \textit{Geschiedenis van Dordrecht}, 267.} Jansz. also received a license for a weekly market and a fair in Heerjansdam, together with some other rights, including the tithes of the count’s lands in the seignory. This twofold accumulation of banal rights was rounded off with the donation, in August 1340, of some rents in Rijsoord to Gerard Alewijnsz. and the grant of fishing rights in the Waal to Tielman Jansz. in March 1342.\footnote{NA LLRK, inv. no. 232, f 503v-504.}

At first sight the situation resembles the ‘scramble’ for market rights taking place in England, but in Holland seignorial actions like this were exceptions, not the rule. We do not even know if Alewijnsz. and Jansz. really wished to establish trade venues in their respective
seignories or perhaps just tried to outbid each other in collecting status-enhancing seignorial rights. In both cases, there are no indications the licenses were ever put into effect. The two men probably owed their exuberant series of privileges to the readiness of Count Willem IV to sell rights in exchange for some much-needed cash.\footnote{Brokken, \textit{Ontstaan Hoekse en Kabeljauwse twisten}, 21–22.} Alewijnsz. and Jansz., wealthy, influential, and moving in government circles, were the perfect candidates to take advantage of the situation—or perhaps we should say the count was in a good position to take advantage of them and their ambitions.

During the reign of Willem IV’s predecessors as well as his immediate successors, circumstances were apparently different: there are no signs of lords obtaining market licenses. This points to a second reason why a proliferation of rural fairs and markets did not take place in Holland: the absence of a strong feudal aristocracy, the group that in England used market licenses to improve its own position.

\textit{Seignorial profits from trade}

Since lords established markets in order to gain from them, we should be aware that even if in many respects rural markets facilitated exchange, at the same time they facilitated seignorial surplus extraction. Trade was certainly taxed both in Holland and in England; however, related to the distinctive position of lords, there were differences between the two countries. Here the mechanisms of taxation of trade will be explored by comparing two aspects that illustrate these differences: the regulation of the sale of bread and ale in villages and the attitude to informal trade venues, in particular the Sunday gatherings of buyers and sellers around parish churches. The issue at stake here is not an outright denial of the favourable effects of a network of rural markets outlined by, among others, Masschaele.\footnote{Masschaele, \textit{Peasants, Merchants, and Markets}, 57–58, 83.} However, it is clear that taxation can significantly raise transaction costs. Taking this reverse side of the regulation of rural trade into account will allow for a more balanced view of the contribution of seignorial power to commercialisation.

In the English countryside regulation and taxation by the manorial lord of the sale of locally prepared bread and ale was very common.
Bread and ale were offered for sale in village markets by large producers, such as the baker Adam Pistor, who owned several stalls in the market of Botesdale.\textsuperscript{91} They were also sold informally at an inn, or simply at a door or window, or in the street. Many people, especially married women, engaged in baking and brewing to supplement the family income. The majority did so only occasionally and infrequently, but some were active as bakers and brewers on a more regular basis.\textsuperscript{92}

Regulation in this line of trade rested on the Assizes of Bread and Ale, a series of late 12th- and 13th-century national ordinances that regulated the prices of bread and ale by connecting them to the market price of grain.\textsuperscript{93} If a market license was granted, the enforcement of the royal assizes was usually considered to be part of that grant.\textsuperscript{94} In practice, this came down to the annual or bi-annual fining by the manorial court of everybody engaged in the sale of bread and beer for ‘breaking the assizes’, whether he or she was guilty of any real transgression of the rules or not. These amercements in turn evolved into a system of retrospective licensing fees. Much like the fines paid by retailing non-burgesses discussed earlier, they legalised the commercial activities of the bakers and brewers since the previous session of the court.\textsuperscript{95}

The literature on the subject usually stresses the modest level of the amercements, which amounted to no more than a few pennies.\textsuperscript{96} That, however, implied that small-scale and infrequent producers could lose much of their profits, since they made only a few pennies per brewing or baking anyway.\textsuperscript{97} Large producers made much higher profits, of course, but in their case the fines to be paid appear to have been also much higher. Adam Pistor, the baker from Botesdale, was amerced a total of 68\textsuperscript{s} 6\textsuperscript{d} for ‘breaking the assizes’ of bread and ale in the course of the twelve years between 1282 and 1293: on average, a sum of 5\textsuperscript{s} 8\textsuperscript{d}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{91} Smith, ‘Periodic Market’, 477.
\item \textsuperscript{92} Bennett, \textit{Women in the Medieval English Countryside}, 120–129, 190–191; Bennett, \textit{Ale, Beer and Brewsters}, 19–20.
\item \textsuperscript{93} Britnell, \textit{Commercialisation}, 94–95; Davis, ‘Baking for the Common Good’, 465–466. The price of a loaf of bread was fixed while its weight was allowed to vary with grain price fluctuations; for ale, each grain price was associated with a set price for a gallon of ale.
\item \textsuperscript{94} Masschaele, \textit{Peasants, Merchants, and Markets}, 61.
\item \textsuperscript{96} Davis, ‘Baking for the Common Good’, 489.
\item \textsuperscript{97} Bennett, \textit{Ale, Beer and Brewsters}, 23–24.
\end{itemize}
per year.\textsuperscript{98} In 1385, at the leet court of Brandon, Richard Cook paid a total of 7\textls{12}s, and Reginald Chapman and his wife a total of 4\textls{12}s 6d.\textsuperscript{99} Therefore it is safe to assume that the amercements, even if not an insurmountable barrier to trade, could significantly raise transaction costs.

In the Holland countryside, baking and brewing must also have been common by-employments, and here too female participation in this line of trade was probably high.\textsuperscript{100} But seignorial taxation on these activities was virtually non-existent. Certainly, in the 13th and most of the 14th century a comital tax on brewing (the \textit{gruitgeld}) was levied everywhere in Holland, in the countryside as well as in the towns. The \textit{gruitgeld} originated in the \textit{gruitrecht}, the comital monopoly on the sale of \textit{gruit}, the mixture of indigenous herbs used in brewing before the introduction of hops. In many towns, the counts had leased or granted the \textit{gruitgeld} to the urban community at an early stage. When in the course of the 14th century \textit{gruit} was largely replaced by hop, the \textit{gruitgeld} made way for, or developed into, a series of urban excises on the production and also on the sale of hop beer.\textsuperscript{101} But in the countryside events took a different turn. Some village lords did manage to get hold of the \textit{gruitrecht} when \textit{gruit} was still commonly used, but apparently few were able to turn it into an excise on hop beer afterwards. When, in the early 16th century, Habsburg central government had the fiscal potential of all towns and villages investigated, it turned out that only in a limited number of villages was a seignorial excise levied on the sale of beer. Evidence for seignorial taxation of brewing is lacking altogether.\textsuperscript{102}

For bread the situation is even more straightforward. Some villages did have local regulations fixing the weight of a loaf of bread. In early 15th-century Grootebroek (in West-Friesland), for example, each loaf

\textsuperscript{98} Smith, 'Periodic Market', 477.
\textsuperscript{99} Bailey, \textit{English Manor}, 229. The currency units refer to the English shilling (s) and penny (d); one shilling equals 12 pence, one pound sterling equals 20 shillings.
\textsuperscript{100} Unger, \textit{History of Brewing}, 16. For an example of women engaged in brewing and baking in an urban context (13th-century Haarlem), see Hoogewerf, \textit{Haarlemse stadsrecht}, 223–226.
\textsuperscript{102} For an example of a village lord in possession of the \textit{gruitrecht}, see Van Miers, \textit{Groot charterboek} II, 619–620. A list of villages that paid beer excise to their lord in 1514 is given by Naber, \textit{Terugblik}, 48–49. In the Heusden district, this excise is referred to as \textit{gruitgeld}, which suggests continuity with an older seignorial imposition.
of rye bread had to weigh eleven pounds. In Assendelft (Kennemerland) the compulsory weight was twelve pounds.\textsuperscript{103} However, there is nothing to indicate these regulations developed into a system of licensing fees similar to the English system, nor is there evidence for any other imposition on baking or selling bread in villages.

This absence of seigniorial taxation on baking and brewing can probably be attributed to a combination of two factors. Firstly, 13th- and 14th-century Holland had no national ordinances regulating the prices of bread and ale. Town authorities, especially in times of dearth, did control bread prices from at least the late 14th century onward.\textsuperscript{104} The regulations of the weight of bread in Grootebroek and Assendelft mentioned above suggest that villages followed the same strategy. However, price regulation was always a strictly local responsibility. A national standard that might have served as a starting point for a system of licenses was simply lacking. Considering the fact that Holland’s pace of political centralisation was much slower than England’s, this is hardly surprising.

Secondly, Holland’s local lords were usually not strong enough to bend regulations to serve their own purposes. The fact that Egmond Abbey demanded moutgeld (probably a tax on making or selling malt) from its villein tenants is a telling sign. In the 14th century the Abbey was one of the very few manorial lords left in the county. Manorial lordship, with its superior degree of control over tenants, gave the Abbey possibilities for taxation that most local lords in Holland did not have.\textsuperscript{105}

Seignorial profits from the sale of bread and ale were not restricted to chartered markets, but taxation of trade in many other commodities was. Successful rural markets could provide an attractive addition to manorial revenues. At the end of the 13th century the market of Botesdale, for example, rendered its lord, the abbot of Bury St. Edmunds, a total of £ 8 to 9 per year in rents, tolls, and fines—a little under 10% of the total revenues of the manor of Redgrave to which the market belonged.\textsuperscript{106}

\textsuperscript{103} Pols, \textit{Westfriesche stadrechten} II, 255; \textit{Handvesten Assendelft}, 61–63.
\textsuperscript{105} Meilink, \textit{Archief abdij van Egmond}, 60.
According to Masschaele, market tolls on transactions were usually no higher than about 1% of the value of the goods. However, it should be borne in mind that tolls on transactions were often only part of a package of payments to be made to the lord. Stalls or shops had to be rented, and services like weighing had to be paid for. The adjudication of trade disputes by the court also required the payment of a fee. Fines were levied on transgressions of market regulations such as forestalling or the use of incorrect measures and weights.\(^\text{107}\) For Exeter, Kowaleski estimates that in total a peasant paid perhaps 1–2d for his weekly trip to the urban market in taxes and tolls, or 4–8s a year. This was not a negligible sum, it amounts to 5 to 10% of the £ 4 the ‘average’ yardlander was able to make each year by selling his farm’s surpluses.\(^\text{108}\) Taxation levels were probably lower at rural markets, which had fewer facilities to offer, but there still was a price to be paid for selling one’s products at the market.

The issue here is the degree of formalisation of rural markets. Informal trade venues did exist in both England and Holland. For England, Dyer’s exploration of late medieval ‘hidden trade’ has revealed the existence of many venues besides licensed fairs and markets: trade took place at or near large estates, on the fringes of towns, in country inns, and at quays or bridgeheads.\(^\text{109}\) Holland must have had similar informal trade venues. The attempts by Alkmaar to have markets in the neighbouring villages prohibited suggests that rural trade did take place, despite the scarcity of official and licensed trade venues in the countryside. The Kennemerland villages of Akersloot, Uitgeest and Wormer mentioned in the introduction of this chapter may offer an example of informal centres of regional or even interregional trade.

By their very nature these informal trade venues were not systematically recorded. A quantitative comparison between the two countries is therefore not feasible. There is, however, one aspect of informal trade that does allow for a comparison, albeit of a qualitative rather than a


\(^{108}\) Kowaleski, *Local Markets*, 200. The estimate of the revenues of a yardlander is provided by Dyer, *Standards of Living*, 114–115. The sum of £ 4 is the higher of the two estimates given by Dyer and includes 1s for the sale of poultry and garden produce.

\(^{109}\) Dyer, ‘Hidden Trade’, esp. 147–150.
quantitative nature: the attitude towards informal local gatherings at the parish church. Both in England and in continental northwestern Europe some of the oldest markets can be traced to informal gatherings of people buying and selling foodstuffs on a Sunday near the local church. In 13th-century England most of these Sunday assemblies were converted into chartered markets on another day of the week. This was partly due to the views of the Church, which in the early 13th century vigorously promoted a strict separation of commerce and worship.\(^\text{110}\) On this issue England seems to have been several years ahead of the continent: the teachings of Eustace of Flay—a Norman abbot preaching in England in 1200 and 1201 on the need to observe the Lord’s Day—apparently fell on fertile ground.\(^\text{111}\)

Perhaps the abbot’s admonitions would not have met with so much enthusiasm if there had not been a financial motive involved as well. That this was the case is demonstrated by an example quoted by Salzman: in 1306 the collectors of the measures and tolls complained that if the gathering of buyers and sellers taking place every Sunday at the church of Crosthwaite was allowed to continue, there would be no revenues. In fact, Crosthwaite is a late example; even though informal Sunday *congregaciones* never entirely disappeared, by 1300 many of them had been either successfully suppressed or transformed into formal markets.\(^\text{112}\)

In Holland the attitude towards informal Sunday commercial gatherings seems to have been more lenient. A mid 14th-century comital ordinance did prohibit the Sunday market of Middelburg (Zeeland) and the surrounding region on religious grounds.\(^\text{113}\) By that time, the influence of canon law was probably also felt in Holland (in 1388 the market of the small town of Woudrichem was moved from Sunday to Wednesday).\(^\text{114}\) But several 15th- and even 16th-century examples testify to the fact that although the authorities objected to informal

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\(^\text{110}\) Britnell, *Commercialisation*, 10, 84–85; Britnell, ‘Proliferation’, 212; Sawyer, ‘Early Fairs and Markets’, 64–68.

\(^\text{111}\) Cate, ‘English Mission’, esp. 78, 87.

\(^\text{112}\) Salzman, ‘Legal Status’, 207; Britnell, ‘Proliferation’, 211–212. Admittedly, there were also several cases of existing formal markets being moved from a Sunday to another day of the week. These moves were obviously not motivated by financial considerations, especially not if the owners were ecclesiastical institutions (Cate, ‘English Mission’, 84–85).


\(^\text{114}\) Korteweg, *Rechtsbronnen Woudrichem*, no. 179.
Sunday trading, the practice did not disappear easily. Around 1400 the local authorities in the West-Frisian village of Grootebroek prohibited buying and selling in the church or at the churchyard, a clear sign that it was still going on. In the middle of the 15th century, an informal market seems to have developed around the church of the village of Schagen. In this case seignorial involvement transformed the informal gathering into a formal market, and in 1463 Schagen received a license from its lord for a weekly market on Thursday. But in the middle of the 16th century the lord of Naaldwijk, near The Hague, prohibited the sale of victuals in the village during Mass—which suggests that if only people would postpone their commercial activities until after Mass, there would be no objections.

In fact, this is a telling sign: it suggests that in Holland restrictions on Sunday trading were probably as much influenced by religious motives as in England, but much less by seignorial aspirations to extract money from trade. It must have been the combination of these two elements that contributed to the early suppression of informal trade in England. From this perspective, Dyer’s conclusion that the decline of many chartered markets after 1350 was accompanied by an increase of informal trade is not surprising. By that time the power of lords to channel trade through venues profitable to themselves was declining.

The presentments in the manorial courts for transgressions of the Assizes of Bread and Ale and the early attempts to gain control over informal Sunday trading demonstrate that English lords put their superior possibilities for profiting from rural trade to good use. That, certainly, does not automatically mean the advantages of the English network of rural markets and fairs were offset by cost-raising seignorial taxation. In the short term, they were probably not. Even if in practice the options of going to a market with more favourable trading conditions were limited by urban protectionism and by the expenses of transport and travelling, competition between lords and markets must have maintained taxation of market exchange within reasonable bounds. But in the long run the effects may have been different.

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115 Pols, Westfriesche stadrechten II, 272.
116 Bregman, Schagen, 17–18.
117 Groenewegen, Naeltwick, 46.
119 Masschaele, Peasants, Merchants, and Markets, 68–69.
Whereas in England an institutional framework based on formal trade venues and seignorial control had developed, in Holland a tradition of informal rural trading, free from lordly involvement, was established. By its nature it was easily adaptable to changing circumstances.

3.4 Conclusions

At first sight it looks as if Holland in the middle of the 14th century had developed hardly anything resembling an institutional framework for rural trade; unlike England, the county could not boast a dense network of rural fairs and markets. However, the relation between the proliferation of markets and the degree of commercialisation of the countryside may not be as straightforward as the English literature often suggests. An analysis of the social and political context and its effects on market institutions clarifies this.

Holland's scarcity of rural markets and fairs was not caused by a weakness of central government or by urban suppression of rural trade. Except when comital authority was under severe pressure, the 14th-century towns of Holland were unable to acquire extra-territorial powers with which to dominate the countryside. In this respect Holland resembled England much more than it resembled Flanders. To explain the scarcity of rural markets before 1350, we have to look at two other factors. Firstly, urban markets in Holland offered relatively easy access to outsiders, more so than in England or Flanders, thus providing good marketing opportunities for rural products. Secondly, Holland did not have a class of lords comparable to the English aristocracy with its manorial power base. Consequently, not nearly as many rural fairs and markets were established—but, on the other hand, there were probably more opportunities for informal exchange.

Looking at the differences between Holland, England, and Flanders from a long-term perspective, an additional, albeit tentative, conclusion is possible. In England, feudalism—through the active involvement of manorial lords in establishing markets—had stimulated an early commercialisation of the countryside, whereas in Holland manorialism had almost entirely disappeared by the middle of the 13th century and could therefore not contribute to the development of rural fairs and markets in the same way. In Flanders, the early rise of towns and urban industry had contributed to the emergence of proto-industrial activities; in Holland, a class of influential industrial entrepreneurs able to extend its activities in the countryside was still largely
lacking in the middle of the 14th century. Consequently, while the institutional framework for rural trade emerging in England was firmly based on formal trade venues and seignorial control, and that in Flanders on urban domination, in Holland a tradition of informal rural trading, relatively free from seignorial or urban control, emerged. As we shall see in the next chapter, the farmers and fishermen of Holland could fall back on this tradition and build on it when, in the second half of the 14th century, economic conditions changed.