CHAPTER FOUR

Food and Politics

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In Antiquity and the Middle Ages, the majority of the population living in the countryside ate only the food that they themselves produced. In cities, however, food took on other economic and political dimensions because food came from the *outside,* which, particularly during periods of famine, could cause enormous food shortages and social unrest. If the so-called great hunger shook the very foundations of power in its legitimacy and fed popular emotions (e.g., mobility crisis or riots), everyday malnutrition, and the lasting consequences of nutritional deficiencies were of no concern to the elites. Yet, the divergence in diets was obvious both physically, in the varying statures of people, and politically, in the opposition between the *popolo grasso* (fat people) and *popolo minuto* (thin people), the higher and lower part of the citizenship, as they were called in Italy at the time.

FEEDING THE POOR; FACING FAMINE

In Antiquity there was little evidence of systematic governmental interventions in the day-to-day food procurement for the residents of cities, with the exception of the imperial capitals, Rome, and later Constantinople, where the grain supply became, from Augustus onward, an imperial monopoly.

Elsewhere, in most cities, food procurement in times of scarcity mostly depended upon the actions of the urban magistrates, the *aediles,* to prevent food crises from turning into riots. At other times, supplying food to city dwellers took place either through domestic circuits, inside the large aristocratic households (whose *pater familias,* because of his status, had to feed all family members, free and enslaved, and his family and business relations), or through the market, for free salarymen, or, more occasionally, through individuals' philanthropy during civil and religious celebrations. The only new factor in this social and political system resulted from Christian charity, which progressively became an alternative to other forms of food distribution for indigents.[1] The distribution of food and clothing was a path to salvation resulting from the believer's desire to fulfill the moral obligations of the Christian doctrine. This generosity remained episodic, however, with no real political or economic impact. During periods of violent crisis, such as in 792–793, Charlemagne asked each powerful person, both ecclesiastical and secular, to feed "four starving poor until the next harvest."

In the Middle Ages, food aid to the hungry took place in three separate social spaces:

1. The aid given to those who depended on a lord occurred within the structure of the aristocratic household or within the framework of the *seigneurie* (the lord's land). The ninth-century capitularies frequently reminded the powerful to look after their *familia* (dependents). They evoked the strength of the ties between a master (*dominus*) and his household. After the famine of 1095, the Abbey of Gembloux bought properties from small lords who were ruined, having accumulated debts from usurers to feed their peasants.

2. The wandering poor, associated with beggars, were stigmatized. In 806 the capitulary of Nijmegen asked the king's subjects to both feed their own poor and not feed the wanderers, unless it was in exchange for work. Those that hunger forced to the roads found temporary relief in monasteries (at the door of abbeys or in hospices), following the model of evangelical hospitality. They received a meal, bread, and a small amount of money to pursue their journey. The number of those seeking assistance at monasteries was often greater than one

hundred, or even several hundred a day. These first two types of assistance rely primarily on direct consumption, through the intermediary of producers or owners who controlled their production.

3. All collective and anonymous aid (whether temporary or long term) was institutionalized by either secular (princes, urban authorities) or religious (bishops) authorities. In the early Middle Ages, this aid was organized by the bishop, who was traditionally in charge of the care of the Christian poor (elderly, widows, and orphans). However, the charities of episcopal cities, whose number rose in the last quarter of the seventh century, acted mainly on behalf of small, closed clienteles of people receiving permanent assistance, who were regularly listed in the churches' registers (*matricula*). This aid became formalized with the Carolingians (in the eighth and ninth centuries), and then in the cities (starting in the eleventh century).

In Merovingian sources, famine is described as a natural disaster. Beginning in the middle of the eighth century, contemporaries link the penury of hunger (*inopia famis)* with mankind's misbehaviors and sins. The reigns of Pepin III and Charlemagne were shaken by three famines of a rare intensity and geographic reach, in 763–764, 793–794, and 805–806. Once abundance returned in 765, Pepin III attributed the tribulations of the kingdom "to *our* sins" (including his subjects and himself). To give thanks to the divine mercy, the king asked the bishops to organize fasts and litanies and made, for the first time, paying the tithe mandatory for all, "whether they want it or not." In 805, during the famine, Charlemagne made the decision not to wait for the order to ask for divine mercy in situations of famine, diseases and epidemics, natural disasters, or any other tribulation. In 793–794, the first allegations of cannibalism in the Middle Ages appeared (they will surface again in the context of the famines that took place from the beginning of the eleventh century onward). These rumors seemingly echoed a disastrous political and religious climate. The famine of 793 followed the rebellion, drowned in blood, of Charlemagne's own son, Pepin the Hunchback. During the same period, chroniclers mention the general uprising of the Saxons and the victories of the Saracens of Spain over the Franks. The *Moselle Annals* and a 794 capitulary, in which Charlemagne reiterates the obligation of paying the tithe, tell of

demonic manifestations: in the spring, fields, swamps, and woods had supposedly been overwhelmed by a most abundant grain crop, but the hulls were empty, devoured by demons. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* reported that the 793 famine was preceded by "dreadful fore-warnings over the land of the Northumbrians, terrifying the people most woefully: these were immense sheets of light rushing through the air, and whirlwinds, and fiery, dragons flying across the firmament." Then, pagans (Scandinavian pirates) destroyed monasteries and massacred their monks. While looking for their model of sacred royalty in the Ancient Testament, the Carolingians also imported a conception of the world that incorporated the king "into the Godgiven, and thus 'natural' order of the world . . . The 'good king' is thus the linchpin of a world view that regarded the ordering of human society as an integral part of the wider ordering of the entire cosmos."[2] Food shortages (and other scourges, such as epidemics, earthquakes, or bad weather) were interpreted as signs of divine punishment. But this cosmogony was able to draw on other non-Christian traditions in which the sovereign shares the fecundating powers of nature: if he discredits himself by misbehaving, sterility sets in. This narrative scheme appears in the story of King Lugaid Mac Con: after rendering an unfair judgment, the grass stopped growing on the earth, the leaves on trees stopped growing, as did the grains on the wheat, until the Irish chased him from the kingdom.[3]

It took widespread and repeated famines, along with the new ideological dimension that state and society adopted after 750, to see the general concept of a politic of hunger that was initiated by Charlemagne reappear, and, after a long eclipse, be progressively reinstated by princes and cities in the twelfth century. Hunger was a factor in social and political disorder that the authorities tried to cast aside by means of preventive measures and food-purveying regulatory policies. The ideological context of the 794 and 806 capitularies promulgated by Charlemagne is that of the construction of a state and of a Christian moral order, achieved through the general ordering of the kingdom and the reformation (*correctio*) of the different strata of Frankish society. This struggle against disorder was translated into general measures: the standardization and the control of weights and measures in order to fight counterfeit goods and usury; and the instauration of a strong and stable currency, the silver denier, to stabilize prices, and to standardize exchanges. With urgency, the king reminded the *domini* of their obligation

to protect their dependents against hunger, but he also put in place measures that forbade exports and that limited fluctuation in high-cost times by setting a maximum price for the harvest, regardless of its quality. During times of famine, the royal stocks had to be sold at half of that maximum price. The 794 capitulary also set the weight of bread received for a fixed price: twenty-four pounds of wheat bread for one denier. Three centuries later, in 1124, the regulation of bread was still in the hands of the Count of Flanders. Later, in the second half of the twelfth century, the Flemish cities set their own fines and thus regulated the sale of bread, ensuring the regular inspection of loaves, and determining the weight of bread based on the fluctuating price of cereals. The Carolingian legislation also announced the medieval policy of fighting intermediaries and fighting attempts to raise the stock price of cereals. Despite the maximum set in 794, Charlemagne had to double these values during the 805–806 famine. After recalling the definitions of usury, cupidity, greed, undue profit, and interest, he declared that those who bought cereals without necessity, to sell them at twice or three times the price, were guilty of usury (*turpe lucrum*).

If the later capitularies still contained dispositions that aimed at regulating the circulation of food, such as the obligation to sell on public markets, the interdiction to not sell after dark other than to travelers, or the control of the currency, and of weights and measures, none of these later edicts deployed as energetic a policy to prevent the effects of famine, and to control the supply of food as Charlemagne's had. According to the ninth-century biographer, Archbishop Hincmar of Reims, Saint Remigius († c. 533) stocked cereals for lean years. Starting in the eleventh century, the biographies of numerous, particularly Germanic bishops, attest to the same measures. According to Heribert, the Archbishop of Cologne, in his c. 1050 biography, his earnings were dedicated to the rebuilding of destroyed churches and to the poor: when a famine began in Gaul and in Germany in 1005, and a multitude of poor arrived in Cologne, he gave them food and clothes, and ordered the clerics of the other cities in his diocese to distribute money so that the faithful could purchase food. Once the famine was over, the archbishop helped those who had fled return to their holdings. During the large-scale famine of 1042–1048, Wazo, the Bishop of Liège, purchased wheat wherever possible, stored it in his granaries, and distributed food and money. To prevent the Church of Liège's tenants from having to sell

their oxen, he gave them each two deniers. Such behavior is also noted by Sigebert of Gembloux, who depicted Abbot Olbert (1012–1048) as both a good manager of his abbey's patrimony (*dispensator et prudens*) and a new Joseph, using divine providence to fill his granaries in times of abundance, and distributing the surplus to the poor in times of shortage. Around 1100, chronicler Hughues of Flavigny, who repeated Raoul Glaber's frightening tales of the 1032 famine, highlighted the actions of Richard of Saint-Vanne, one of the leading reformers of Benedictine monasticism in northwest Europe. He sold the treasures from his church to buy goods and distributed the stocks of his monastery to the poor, writing to "kings, princes, and pontiffs" to encourage them to follow his example. Around 1095, a canon from Speyer, Sextus Amarcius, expressed this new relation to poverty when writing in his *De sobrietate et elemosinis faciendis,* "how poorly he fasts, the one who does not provide anything to the indigent." In 1124 it was in one of the principalities where Richard of Saint-Vanne had been called a century earlier to reform monasteries, Flanders, that the prince deployed a hunger policy comparable to the measures Charlemagne and the Ottonian bishops of the eleventh century had put in place. While the poor came from the countryside to beg around wealthier residences and in cities, Count Charles the Good made his officers distribute food and clothes everywhere that he owned properties: in one day, they distributed 7,800 loaves of bread in Ypres. He forbade the production of beer (which takes grains away from the cereal market), invited merchants to buy grain outside the county, and ordered bakers to make smaller breads (for half a denier) so that the poor could afford them. Biographers also depict the prince (who would be beatified upon his assassination in 1127) as a good lord, offering his tenants the remission of their debts, and a far-sighted manager, recommending sowing one measure of beans and peas for two measures of cereals, "since this type of vegetable grows faster (. . .) and produces fruits that the poor can eat." Lastly, every day until he died, the Count fed one poor person.[4] In the middle of the eleventh century, Capetian propaganda had already introduced the model of Christ, servant of the poor, in dining formalities to raise royal stature. According to Helgaud of Fleury († 1045), the Pious Robert had cured cases of scrofula during meals ritually served to poor people. These interventions for the starving poor appeared, of course, in the biographies of Saint Louis at the end of the thirteenth century. But

in those examples, interventions by the monarch to regulate supplies were never mentioned. Rather, episodic, charitable acts, which have a mostly symbolic significance, took place: Saint Louis served thirteen poor people himself every Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday during Lent and Advent. During those same periods, he had meals, bread, and money distributed to thirteen other poor people. He also liked to serve at the table of the monks and nuns (who voluntarily chose poverty) from his favored monasteries.[5] From the middle of the twelfth century, the duty to plan for, and fight hunger had been solidly rooted in political philosophy, but it had mostly become the concern, and work of urban magistrates.

THE MARKET

Between the middle of the fourteenth century and the first years of the fifteenth century, several cities in northern France took the initiative of collecting, and putting in writing a set of regulations of economic law, and policing of the trades. Each volume opened with food-related products and trades, as if urban magistrates gave food top billing among the preoccupations related to governing their city. This notion already appeared in the middle of the thirteenth century in the *Book of Ordinances (Livre des Bans*) in the Flemish city of Saint-Omer.[6] These volumes, as do the charts and regulations promulgated from the twelfth century onward, testify to a truly homogeneous regulatory policy of the food market by the occidental urban elites. The principles were the same everywhere: to ensure a sufficient and regular supply to not rouse the masses, without negatively affecting the interests of the merchants and producers; to protect the consumer against fraud pertaining to the quantity and quality of the goods; and to fight against hoarders and monopolists, in order to avoid excessive price hikes. To achieve this, cities required transactions to be publicized, they strictly regulated the place and time of exchanges, and imposed the control of weights and measures, and of the quality of the products.[7] The bulk of the food trade, oriented to the cities, had to go through markets and, since the early twelfth century, through specialized buildings such as halls. To prevent hoarding, it was forbidden to purchase products within a certain radius around the city or to accost vendors on the street. In London at the start of the twelfth century, a code of citizens' liberties provided

merchants with a pass, and specified the interdiction to forestall: "Within the space of three miles beyond the city on all sides nobody should detain or impede another, nor yet trade with him, if he wishes to come to the city under the city's protection. But when he has reached city, then, both poor and rich alike may trade with him."[8]

Similar rules framed, temporally and spatially, the trade of foodstuffs in cities. Essentials, such as cereals, could only be sold at the markets where their quality could be verified. The foods could not be sold in bags, but rather had to be on display. Once the sale began, the price could not be increased until the market finished. The baker had to *sign* his bread, as did the weaver his cloth. For some products, such as wine, a crier had to announce prices and qualities, which further improved the transparency of transactions. As a matter of fact, these had to take place in public, aloud, and in full view of the other buyers. Markets' opening and closing times were set by the city and often announced with a bell. Regulations gave absolute priority to local consumers, who were the only ones who could purchase foodstuffs between the opening of the market and the early afternoon. Only then could resellers, wholesalers, and food professionals — bakers, millers, brewers, butchers, innkeepers, and so on — proceed with their own shopping. To not leave the markets devoid of goods, the quantities that each person could buy were limited, often related to the needs of each household. Public opinion and legislators were outwardly hostile to food peddlers (*regrattiers*), wholesalers, or even to the main food-related occupations, such as butchers and bakers, all of whom were suspected of artificially raising prices and short-circuiting the market by buying directly from producers. Even the guilds were closely watched until the fourteenth century, when they obtained power and attempted to remove the constraints on their activities. A large number of officers, princely or urban, were in charge of both qualitative and quantitative control of products, and were tasked with taxing and checking merchandise, and sanctioning offenders.[9] In Chester in 1086, whoever brewed poor-quality ale was "either put in an unpleasant apparatus described as the '*dung seat*' or made to pay a fine of 4 *denarii*."[10] Urban authorities were in charge of controlling the correct weight of bread; according to Jean d'Outremeuse, the chronicler from Liège, cheating bakers had their fists cut off in 1203.[11] Other clauses were inspired by the fear of monopolies and hoarding. The regulations around

food trades forbade the formation of a collective operation, or the practice of two related, or complementary professions.

Civil and religious principles fundamental to the Middle Ages, such as the concept of loyalty, the doctrine of fair price, and the tendency clerics had to consider mercantile activities as fraudulence and any price speculation as a form of usury and greed, motivated this "moralization" of the markets. It has perplexed many historians, who had trouble understanding that patrician social strata (comprising important merchants and property owners, who dominated urban magistracies until the end of the thirteenth century) sought, against their material interests, to ensure that food markets functioned in a way that prioritized supply over profit and that aimed at keeping prices as low as possible. These policies were the price to pay to maintain peace within a city and legitimize a body of authority whose foundations were still influenced by the ideology of the House (*oikos*). Beginning in the fourteenth century, these urban laws saw their legitimacy reinforced by the new political concepts of the public good or common benefit, spread by secular jurists. They were executed at the next level by princes, whose actions were measured in relation to the commonwealth. The strict supervision of food markets had, of course, favored taxation by the prince and by urban authorities in charge of transit, weighing, sale, and consumption of foodstuffs. These taxes were among the first to appear in cities; almost everywhere, they represented the largest source of the city's income. The population referred to them pejoratively as *malatosta* in Latin (*ongeld* in Dutch, and *maltôte* in French): literally, poorly removed.

Small and medium cities could obtain food by exploiting agricultural lands from within their enceinte (particularly for the production of fruits and vegetables), and by politically dominating their rural hinterland, a zone within which their citizens actually controlled part of the fields and livestock operations. For its supply of bread-appropriate grains, a mediumsized city needed to be within a 6to 12-mile radius of about 150 villages.[12] In most instances, the city (*chef-lieu*) was the mandatory marketplace for grains harvested within the territory it controlled; it could limit exports and even forbid them during shortages. During serious crises, the most powerful cities held nothing back to guarantee their food procurement, to the detriment of smaller cities, peasants, and property owners, including their own citizens.[13] With more than 20,000 inhabitants, the medieval city had

to either use coercion to monopolize the import of cereals in one region (the staple solution), or gain control of a larger region by dominating a hierarchic network of other small and medium cities (in the urban republics of north-central Italy). The staple system allowed cities within the large transportation axes to channel trade to their advantage by forcing foreign merchants to stop to be taxed, and to unload and sell their goods. In Italy, the most powerful cities imposed commercial treaties on their neighbors that guaranteed them priority or a purchasing quota for grains. Venice was one of the first cities to establish these monopoly policies in the early thirteenth century. In 1251 it required every ship carrying foodstuffs and livestock on the Adriatic Sea to unload it in Venice before being able to, possibly, re-export it.[14] Contemporary chroniclers were sensitive to the unbalanced supply levels that made constant exports, especially of grains, indispensable. At the beginning of the fourteenth century, Dino Compagni (1255–1324) asserted that Florence could only sustain its food needs using its neighboring resources for five months out of the year.[15] Around 1300, the economic structure of all of northern Italy relied on manufactured goods and services being traded for foodstuffs from other regions around the Mediterranean Sea, particularly Apulia, Sicily, and Tunisia. In 1311

Genovese ships carried 45,000 tons of grains from Apulia to Florence.[16]

Dutch cities, which also had high levels of urbanization before 1300, obtained their grains (particularly the wheat that was sought after by the wealthy) from the fertile agricultural lands of Picardy, Hainaut, Artois, and Normandy, and of England. In England, the interdiction to export was used as a form of retaliation at the beginning of the thirteenth century; the export of cereals later became (starting in 1207) gradually framed by a system of royal licensing.[17] The Hansa also became an important supply source: Flanders was under a blockade of grains from the Wendish cities beginning in 1284.[18] Positive measures, such as the de-taxation of foreigners and passes, completed these types of competitive warfare between cities. Magistrates improved urban potential by having canals dug out, as in Ghent (in the twelfth century) and in Ypres (1251). Beginning in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Italian cities purchased grains in the name of the city and transported them on communal boats.

If riots that were directly tied to hunger seem to have been extremely rare in the Middle Ages (Samuel Cohn estimates them to be fewer than 1%

of recorded cases in the most urbanized areas of medieval Europe, Italy, Flanders, and northern France),[19] securing the food supply was a central political element in the struggle for power between patricians and leaders of the people. In the thirteenth century, one no longer died as a result of local food shortages; thanks to the intensification of trade networks, "people no longer flee to look for bread—bread comes to them." But price increases kept bread out of the reach of the poorest population strata. The word *carestia* (costliness) is used as a synonym of scarcity (*inopia*), even of famine (*fames*).[20] Any rumor related to supply levels or to a threat of costliness caused prices to increase and could be embarrassing to the powers that were in place, who reacted promptly: In a completely patrician-based regime, in 1243, the urban authorities of Perugia forbade the export of the *contado*'s grains, wine, and livestock. In periods of famine, in 1269, 1279–1280, and so on, the rural and urban markets of Perugia were closed, and the sale of grains was limited to the city's central square.[21] Beginning in the twelfth century, everywhere in Europe, the fear of going without and, above all, of no longer being able to buy bread, or of allowing spoiled, or low-quality goods to circulate, led to the redeployment of constraining measures and market oversight. One of the ways to check the work of bakers was to set the weight and quality of bread loaves produced from a given volume of grains, as was already the case during Charlemagne's reign. During the first half of the eleventh century, Liège already had a connecting system in place linking the weight and volume of bread, and wine. To fight against speculators during the 1042 famine, Bishop Wazo stocked and introduced onto the market the quantities of grains that he had purchased. His successors tried, but apparently in vain, to set a maximum price for grains: in 1118, the price of a bushel of wheat, set at five *sous,* had nearly doubled. Charlemagne had also been unable to prevent the prices of cereals doubling between 794 and 805. These policies were often destined to fail. Maximum prices were only set in times of extreme urgency and for a short period, such as in 1301 and 1315 in the kingdom of England. It was not a normal way to confront supply issues. Authorities were more likely to allow the price of grains to fluctuate, possibly intervening when it was low with massive sales in lean periods, and by limiting hoarding opportunities. In Liège, a series of food-related ordinances tightly regulated the production and commercialization of foodstuffs during the thirteenth century, by

establishing (in 1252) a scale of legal bread weight for rye and spelt, based upon cereal prices within a very large range: between one and seven and a half. In 1232 the city's authorities committed to having the goods sold "at fair weight, fair price, and fair measure." The prices recorded between 1194 and 1225 by the Benedictine Abbot, Renier of Saint-Jacques, show that their author closely observed the climatic conditions that, in his mind, primarily controlled the market. For Renier, a fair price existed at between two and four *sous.* Lower prices caused the market to collapse, while the upper limit was the threshold of costliness beyond which the price of bread could be more devastating to the population than the plague.[22] These scales were generally used in assizes that were also in charge of the taxation of bread consumption (and often beer or wine too). The oldest text of a bread assize in England appears in a compendium assembled between 1206 and 1216 for the Guildhall of London.[23] In the Low Countries, the first testimonials appeared in charters granted by Philippe of Alsace between 1168 and 1177, authorizing Flemish cities "to place bans on bread and on wine and on all other goods," with the agreement of the count, and negotiating an equal split of assize fees between the count, on one side, and the chatelain and the city, on the other. In Germany, the oldest assizes were certified in Lübeck in 1255.[24] As Abbot Galiani wrote in 1770 in his *Dialogue sur le commerce des blés,* bread and grain must be "objects of administration" rather than "commerce."[25]

CONSUMPTION AND TABLE MANNERS

The dining table was an essential place of power building in the Middle Ages. Commensality (the ordering of diners at the table) acted as an element that created social distance, and established reciprocal relationships at the hierarchical (vertical) and solidary (horizontal) levels: "Esteem demands marks of esteem, and there can be no social rank without orders of greetings and seating."[26] Widely distributed, food was a symbol of social rank. Its abundance, the quality and quantity of guests, the service, the charm and setting of the meal (with tableware, entertainment, etc.) made tangible an essential aristocratic quality: generosity. In 1200 Gilles of Paris wrote the *Carolinum,* a mirror of princes, for the young Louis V. In it, he offered as a model the moderate eater (*temperans*) as Eginhard depicted Charlemagne:

"leading a measured lifestyle, except when it was appropriate for the royal palace to shine in abundant luxury." The king, even if he were a saint, had to be a good host; that is, he needed to eat with pleasure (*hilariter*) and not skimp on either the quality, or quantity of dishes. If Saint Louis modeled his daily diet on the codes of the Christian meal — eating what was less good (small rather than large fish), depreciating what was good (adding cold water to sauces), and eating and drinking in moderation — he would know how to entertain like a king. During the banquet in the honor of Henri III of England's visit to Paris, meat was served on a fish day. According to the Benedictine chronicler Matthieu Paris, "The never-ending variety of dishes was resplendent, the abundance of beverages delicious, the quality of service enjoyable, the arrangement of guests well organized, the bounty of gifts superabundant."[27] One of Liutprand of Crémone's anecdotes concerning Guy of Spoleto's (?–894) candidacy to the throne in 888 of West Francia appears as a counterpoint of similar codes. The bishop of Metz was getting ready to welcome the contender and had had "much food [prepared], according to the Franks' customs"; Guy's snide squire answered that a third of it would suffice. They all chose Eudes as king, since "he was not worthy of ruling over us, the one who had prepared a vile meal of ten silver coins!"[28]

Practices evolve according to parameters such as the status and lifestyle of the sovereign (Otton III [980–1002], for example, chose to be served and to eat alone at the table), or the spread and complexity of the kingdom. In the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of the seventh through to the ninth centuries, and in the first princely courts of the ninth and tenth centuries, the aristocratic suites were small enough to create intimate ties based on commensality. It was, of course, impossible beyond a critical size: in 1135, under Henri I of England (1068–1135), the king's household comprised approximately 150 people, clerics and laymen, to which must be added the households of the other members of the royal family.[29]

The table brought together both passing guests and regulars. In doing so, it referred to two essential values: hospitality and feeding the household. According to Eginhard, if he was moderate at the table, Charlemagne was prodigal with strangers, "to the point that their charge was costly not just for the palace, but for the kingdom." The king was not affected because "in exchange for these immense nuisances, this attention provided him with a reputation for generosity and good standing." The hospitality

relation was also strengthened by its reciprocal nature. The king and the court were regularly invited to feast with the Greats. This reciprocal model appeared at all levels of society as obligations of hospitality, gift-giving, and reciprocity. Peasants owed rights (lodging, *feorm*) and presents (*xenia*) of hospitality (hens, eggs, wine and honey, cakes, etc.) as fees. In return, the great religious holidays were cause for banquets (during which the *xenia* were sometimes consumed) that the lords offered their peasants. According to Paul Diacre's account of the life of Gregory the Great († 604), the *xenia* of the tenants of St. Peter's in Rome were distributed to the poor. The more delicate products that arrived in the pontifical warehouses were given to the Greats.[30]

Food, thus, occupied a central place in the construction of the social bond—what Marc Bloch evoked when speaking of the "taste of homemade bread" of the vassalage (after the old English *hlaford*/lord, literally, the donor of bread).[31] We must pay attention to the degree of violence that can be expressed through these culinary transactions. The relation between the *pater familias* and the members of the household represented the archetype of the bond between the one who shares and distributes food and those who were fed (*nutriti*). This function (which is obvious in the familial circle), transposed to the political realm, indicates patriarchal authority. That authority was ambiguous, since the family of the Antiquity included blood relatives, guests and friends, legally free customers, and slaves. Between the indigent and the one who protected him, the relation settled at the domination realm. The act of feeding (and clothing) creates a relation of submission and degrades the one receiving assistance. When the sovereign shared his meal with his soldiers, commensality, to the contrary, established a relation that used food to connote the sharing of danger when fighting. Context was thus essential: following a sovereign meant that one no longer needed to obtain one's own food, but that one received daily rations, and more than enough food and drink (and in many cases, the necessary equipment, clothing, weapons, and horses). In 1066 in Hastings, men who had feasted at Harold's side died, paying, in their minds at least, for their mead.[32] These episodes of brutal fraternity were also combined in hunting, one of the strongest practices of social cohesion and formation of the elites that the king had to master by being the *best* hunter, and that he had already learned as a child.

The institution of the meal was thus a social reality that crossed through all societies, but with variations in intensity and complexity in the *grammar of food* that structured it within time and space.[33] If, in the tenth century, a treasure chest was enough to showcase the power of a Byzantine bishop (who ate simply and was often his own cook), it was not the case for the Franks, according to Liutprand of Cremone, for whom power had to be expressed through abundance, the profusion of servants, and all forms of material magnificence.[34] Literary sources such as the *Beowulf* suffice to demonstrate the central place that the *culture of the hall* occupied in the social practices of the Anglo-Saxon elites. The banquet hall was the "center of the heroic world and a place of harmony and abundance, where communities of warriors were defined and invigorated."[35] It was impossible to find a profane Romano-Germanic text that expresses as fully the centrality of the *convivium*. These practices were not exclusively centered on Germanic and Scandinavian models. After Christianization, they acculturated and mutually benefitted from the Christian models, such as Christ's promise to his disciples that they would eat and drink at his table in the Kingdom of Heaven. Anglo-Saxon and Frank kings rapidly adopted the main Christian holidays as occasions for the banquets during which they would wear their crowns.

Eating together and hosting banquets for one another signified entry into *one* society, and the creation of ties between equals. According to Icelandic sources, the heritage banquet celebrated the sovereign taking his functions among his subjects. The presence, or lack thereof, of a leader is what gave the meal its hierarchical (the subordination of the guests to the one who sits at the head of the table) or egalitarian meaning. To signify equality among King Arthur's entourage, Arthurian novels have created the image of the round table, with no head seat and no long sides. Other groups naturally had an egalitarian nature. Appearing as rural associations in the Frank countryside in the ninth century or as merchant organizations from the tenth century onward in the Low Countries, gilds constituted a fraternal grouping—a brotherhood of equals or quasi equals. At the beginning of the eleventh century, the statutes of Saint-Omer guaranteed commercial privileges to the merchants who were members of the guild and who organized mutual assistance. They structured the life of the organization around the collective consumption of an alcoholic beverage

(20 articles out of 28 pertain to these collective *potationes*). The guild examined internal conflicts and offered moments and rites of reconciliation (such as breaking bread and drinking together). The shared banquet represented a central element of celebration and of cohesion for the guild, because conviviality created relations that were close to family ones, as did the funeral banquets that had brought relatives together for the anniversaries of a deceased since the Antiquity. According to Galbert of Bruges (?–1134), the assassins of Charles the Good, Count of Flanders, used this ritual in reverse when they gathered to eat around his tomb, so that no one could avenge his death. The same symbolic system turned the refusal of drinking or eating with someone else into an insult and a sign of a rupture of the peace, while it was impossible, according to jurist Albert of Ghent in the thirteenth century, to accuse or try somebody if one had drank or eaten with him after the implied facts had come to one's attention. In the eleventh century, Adele, grand dame in Gelderland, brought the ire of God upon her country, which was flooded, after refusing to prepare the peace-signifying meal that was requested of her to reconcile her adversaries.[36] During banquets, medieval rituals sublimed sharing by having guests eating on the same trencher, drinking in the same cup, and using the same bowl.

THE EATERS

Man is what he eats, and at the same time, he eats who he is, or *what he would like to be.* In the Arthurian novels, two culinary triads — bread/meat/wine, gruel/vegetables/water — metaphorically oppose the knight and the hermit.[37] The villain of the fables differs from the rest of society by his physical appearance, his manners, and his feelings. But what mostly isolates him from others is his way of eating: he enjoys cheeses, eggs, and milk gruels, prefers boiled meat to a roast, eats everything without sauce, drinks water and milk, even at the inn (when even servants drink wine). He does not wash his hands, sits on the ground, and eats everything as one.[38] In the *Song of William,* Dame Guibourc, after having served the young Girart, her husband's nephew, recognized through his appetite the qualities of his lineage: "By God! Beautiful sire! This one is undoubtedly from your lineage [seeing the way he eats and drinks]. What a tough war he must fight against his neighbor."[39] While he slipped incognito among the guests of a banquet

thrown by Charlemagne, the son of the defeated king of the Lombards, Adelchi, was recognized because of his carnal behavior. He asked for all the bones that were removed from the royal table, broke them, and sucked the marrow, "like a famished lion devouring its prey," then he threw the fragments under the table and made an enormous pyramid out of them, before leaving. When Charlemagne, getting up, discovered this sight, he asked around; one of the guests answered that he saw, seated there, "a very strong warrior, who broke all these deer, bear, and ox bones like someone else would have broken stalks of hemp."[40] The Christianization of manners had only slowly eroded these aristocratic codes. Saint Louis provides an example. As a young man, Brunon (youngest son of the King of Germans, Henry the Fowler, future Archbishop of Cologne, and Duke of Lotharingia at the end of the tenth century), was as cheerful as the others at his banquets. After a joyful carousal that lasted until its participants fell asleep, the pious duke spent the rest of the night praying. He did not take part in the *ebrietas* of his guests, but he partook in the collective fun.[41] It was only in the middle of the twelfth century that the aristocratic culture of culinary excesses became stigmatized as a sin of mouth (*gula*) and that temperance was progressively transposed from individual virtue to the social norm. In

1159 John of Salisbury borrowed from Boethius, in his *Policraticus,* the idea that Epicureanism leads to the individual and political degeneration of princes. For the *Lament on the Battle of Poitiers,* the defeat of the French cavalry in 1356 was due to warriors being weakened by their gluttony. These new standards of behavior were mostly introduced by thirteenth century legislators in the first sumptuary laws of Italian cities. Before the fifteenth century, culinary excess consisted primarily of organizing banquets for many, and mostly too many, people, more rarely of limiting the quantities of food consumed. But for the nobles, excess still did not exist.[42]

Notes (pp. 186-187):
1. Garnsey 1988.
2. Smith 2005, 240.
3. Bray 1999, 111.
4. Van Werveke 1967.
5. Le Goff 1992.
6. Desportes 1981.Van Uytven 1985.
7. Britnell 1996, 27
8. Pirenne 1951; Hibbert 1965.
9. Britnell 1996, 26.
10. Zylbergeld 1973, 778.
11. Van Uytven 1985, 79.
12. Van Uytven, 1985.
13. Britnell 1989; Faugeron 2006.
14. Pinto 1978, 78.
15. Abulafia 1981, 382.
16. Britnell 1996.
17. Schubert 2006, 13.
18. Cohn 2006.
19. Curschmann 1900, 10; Schubert 2006, 40.
20. Blanshei 1976.
21. Zylbergeld 1973.
22. Britnell 1996.
23. Schmitz 1968, 122.
24. Tits-Dieuaide 1984.
25. Fichtenau 1991, 7.
26. Le Goff 1992, 142-143.
27. Montanari 2004.
28. Gautier 2006b, 42.
29. Devroey, 2006, 505.
30. Bloch 1939, 247 (vol. 1).
31. Gautier 2006a, 246.
32. Montanari 3004.
33. Fichtenau 1991, 59.
34. Magennis 1999, 35 ff; Gautier 2006a, 183-84.

35. Gauvard 1992.
36. Guerreau-Jalabert 1992.
37. Gauvard 1992.
38. Bloch 1940, 17 (vol. 2).
39. Montanari 1979, 460.
40. Fichtenau 1991, 61-62.
41. Campanini 2006.

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