Syracuse University

From the SelectedWorks of Samuel D. Gruber, Ph.D.

1990

Urbanism, Western Medieval

Samuel D. Gruber, Dr., *Syracuse University*

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/samuel_gruber/57/

Dictionary of the Middle Ages

JOSEPH R. STRAYER, *EDITOR IN CHIEF*

Volume 12

THADDEUS LEGEND—ZWART^c^NOC^c^

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS • NEW YORK

The Medieval English Borough (1936); Sylvia L. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London* (1948); Daniel Waley, *Mediaeval Orvieto* (1952) and *The Italian City Republics* (1969); Philippe Wolff, *Commerces et marchands de Toulouse (vers 1350–1450)* (1954).

KATHRYN L. REYERSON

[See also **Aldermen; Baptistery; Barbarians, Invasions of; Bastide; Beguines and Beghards; Black Death; Borough (England-Wales); Carolingians and the Carolingian Empire; Castles and Fortifications; Charter; Class Structure, Western; Commune; Constitutio de Feudis; Consuls, Consulate; Demography; Échevin; Fairs; Family, Western European; Famine in Western Europe; Food Trades; German Towns; Guilds and Métiers; Hanseatic League; Italy, Rise of Towns in; Lombard League; Markets, European; Mayor; Podesta; Schools, Cathedral; Schools, Grammar; Taxation; Trade, European; Universities**; and articles on individual cities.]

URBANISM, WESTERN EUROPEAN: ARCHITECTURAL ASPECTS

TOWNS IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

Little is known of the physical layout of cities and towns before the year 1000. Recent archaeological excavations, however, have begun to provide evidence for some continuity of an urban tradition between the collapse of Roman administrative authority and the rise of merchant towns after the eleventh century.

Some Roman cities were occupied as administrative centers for local rulers—whether Byzantine, Merovingian, Lombard, or Carolingian. The Lombards preserved some degree of urbanism through their designation of thirty-five cities as duchies, among them Milan, Pavia, Cividale, Verona, Brescia, Spoleto, Benevento, Pistoia, and Lucca. Pavia, as residence of the Lombard king, especially flourished. Roman structures were maintained, and some new palaces and churches were erected by Lombard patrons. There is no evidence, however, that the Lombard rulers had an urban vision. They inherited fully developed, but badly maintained, ancient urban infrastructures, which they kept up as best they could when it served their purpose.

The collapse of towns was a gradual process of demographic decline, loss of function, and material impoverishment. In the marble-exporting town of Luni, poor wooden huts occupied the former civic center as late as the sixth century. In Verona and Brescia, which continued as occupied centers throughout the early Middle Ages, there was much less dense settlement, but certain building characteristics tied the site to the past—for instance, building houses along the old Roman street lines.

In many parts of Italy, and even more in other parts of the empire, urban sites were totally abandoned for up to several centuries. In Britain, dozens of towns and forts were left empty, only to be resettled during the Anglo-Saxon period, when walled enclosures provided ideal defenses. Sparse occupation sometimes continued for religious or political reasons on an older site, but the earlier urban activities and functions were lost. A church or a royal residence might serve, at best, to mark the spot for future resettlement and diversification of social and economic activity.

Mainz, for example, continued to be known as a civitas throughout the early Middle Ages and housed a bishop. It had, however, few other traditional urban characteristics. In the ninth century the town consisted of farms, vineyards, orchards, and small plots separated by country lanes. Large areas must have been without any buildings. So, too, appeared Rome. Large numbers of documents from the late Middle Ages mention fields, orchards, and vineyards; and maps and drawings from the sixteenth century show most of the area of the ancient city still under cultivation.

The most densely populated and most economically active settlements in Europe in the early Middle Ages were not in the old Roman world, but on the shores of the North Sea, where after the late seventh century there emerged specialized trading and industrial centers. These were mostly new settlements, though in Britain, London and York were established on Roman sites. The Anglo-Saxon trading centers situated on the coast or on rivers have names that include the element *wic* or *wih*, which likely referred specifically to the trading aspect of the place. Southampton, known as Hamwih, may have had its origins in the increased prosperity under Ine (*r.* 688–726). Specifically, it was probably due to the increasing importance of nearby Winchester as a royal and episcopal center. The two centers complemented each other, Hamwih concentrating on commercial and industrial activities, and having signs of a large population, while Winchester had the king, bishop, and private estates. Winchester, with its royal and ecclesiastical authorities, was called *urbs* and *civitas*. Hamwih

was designated *mercimonium*, *villa*, *pagus*, *wih*, *wic*, and *tun*.

At Southampton, traces of settlement cover thirty-seven hectares (about ninety-two acres), with evidence of substantial long-distance trading activity in the form of imported pottery and glass, lava millstones, and coins. There is evidence for the working of bronze, iron, lead, and silver (including the minting of coins); the manufacture of pottery and textiles; and the production of wood, bone, and antler objects. A system of gravel roads ran parallel and at right angles to the riverbank and was repeatedly repaired until the abandonment of the site in the tenth century. The settlement does not seem to have been fortified. In a commercial sense Hamwih was an active urban place, and undoubtedly had one of the largest population concentrations in Britain at that time. It seems, though, to have lacked the civic, political, and religious institutions that would have given it a fuller urban life.

Other trading centers were even larger than Hamwih. Dorestad, near Utrecht in Holland, was situated at the junction of the Rhine and Lek rivers. In the course of two centuries it grew to cover an area of over 200 hectares (about 500 acres). As a trading center and port it was an important intermediary in the exchange of wine, pottery, glass, and grinding stones with less sophisticated northern kingdoms abundant in raw materials. Dorestad appears to have peaked between 780 and 830, when wooden merchant buildings stretched along the river banks, obscuring the native village that was the nucleus of the site. Plank walkways were built out into the river from the buildings to connect them directly with boats. Dorestad may have been the base of the Frisian traders who are frequently mentioned in early medieval sources.

Hamwih and *wics* like it, and the international entrepôts such as Dorestad, do not fit formally or politically into the mainstream of European town development. Their activities as trading centers where goods and customs from northern and southern Europe, as well as Asia, were exchanged did, however, lay a foundation for the more widespread mercantile activities of the eleventh century, which spurred the development of the independent town of the later Middle Ages.

TYPES OF TOWNS

The medieval town had many forms. Each was the result of unique circumstances that shaped it: history, geography, economy, and more. Yet, the many common elements of medieval towns that allow us to speak of a "medieval urbanism" at all reflect the realities of medieval society. These often outweighed distinctions in creating the urban environment of the Middle Ages.

Medieval towns essentially developed from four different beginnings: (1) those that continued on from antiquity, retaining their basic rectangular forms, or continued on ancient sites that never had grid plans; (2) those that grew up in the post-antique period naturally, without systematic planning, around castles, monasteries, or independent church structures; (3) those that grew up on a favorable location—a trading post or rest stop, a crossroads or a river ford; (4) those that were newly founded in their entirety.

Towns of Roman origin. From the third century on, the threat of invasion caused towns to build defensive walls, often greatly reducing their actual size to maximize defensive capability and minimize defensive costs. These new wall circuits, including the one built around Rome by Emperor Aurelian (*r.* 272–279), would define the limits of many European towns for centuries to come. Cities where episcopal sees had been established sometimes survived—though frequently they did not. In the Lombard duchies of Spoleto and Benevento, of some 100 bishoprics, only about one-tenth survived by 700.

When occupation continued, it was in the shadow of ancient remains. The old city forms survived because they were too difficult to remove. The ground level rose with the accumulation of rubble and organic debris. New buildings, even of the most temporary sort, used the ancient walls as foundations. Pathways often continued to follow the ancient streets, since these were the least obstructed passages. But as debris accumulated, the old streets narrowed and the straight streets curved. Dozens of towns, when demographic, economic, and political circumstances allowed them to revive, continued what was essentially the old Roman street network within the old Roman walls, but with many small adjustments.

Ancient public buildings remained in place, too big to move or destroy totally. Sometimes they were fortified, as in Rome, where by the twelfth century theaters, amphitheaters, and arches became urban castles, and the mausoleum of Emperor Hadrian became Castel Sant'Angelo, stronghold of the city and bridgehead at the surviving central Tiber crossing. The amphitheater of Nîmes actually became

the city when it was fortified by the Visigoths. And at Arles, when the outer walls of the town were destroyed in the eighth century, the amphitheater was fortified and settled, and the arena became the town square.

During the early Middle Ages there were also new settlements founded by refugees from invasion and disease. Defensible sites were chosen on hilltops, where tightly packed villages closed to the outside were established; and on islands, where water acted as a protective barrier. The Orthodox Christians of Aquileia found refuge from the Lombards on the island of Grado, and Venice probably was founded at the same time.

Natural towns. Perhaps the most common type of medieval town development was the process of encirclement, in which some central element—such as a castle, church, or monastery—attracted settlers, who built close to the attracting building until it formed the core of an urban community. Encircled cores often later became the focal points of radial towns, especially when more than one road led to the center. Roads leading to the center were like the spokes of a wheel. When development reached a certain point along these spokes, a wall often was built that enclosed the inner core, the radiating roads, and the emptier spaces between the roads. These spaces could be slow to fill up because they were not directly connected with the center. In some towns inner ring roads opened these wedge-shaped areas for developing, but in many cases they remained lightly settled and under cultivation, while more intensive growth continued along the radial roads outside the protective wall.

The generative element of the linear, strip, or ribbon plan was a single street or road, along or around which the rest of the settlement grew. A major route—for trade or for pilgrimage—might spawn many such settlements. Starting as a rest stop, post stop, or ferry crossing, the site would then develop support communities. The focus of the settlement was always the central street, which might in time be widened to accommodate a market. Where the topography allowed, settlement often expanded on either side of the main route, or on one side if the road skirted a riverbank or seashore.

More complex variants of the linear town developed at crossroads, where growth along more than one axis was possible, thus forming a cross. The intersection often served as a market area that later could be developed into a more regular space. When development of an intersection of perpendicular roads was more systematic, a series of cross axes in both directions could develop, creating a grid plan with dominant central streets.

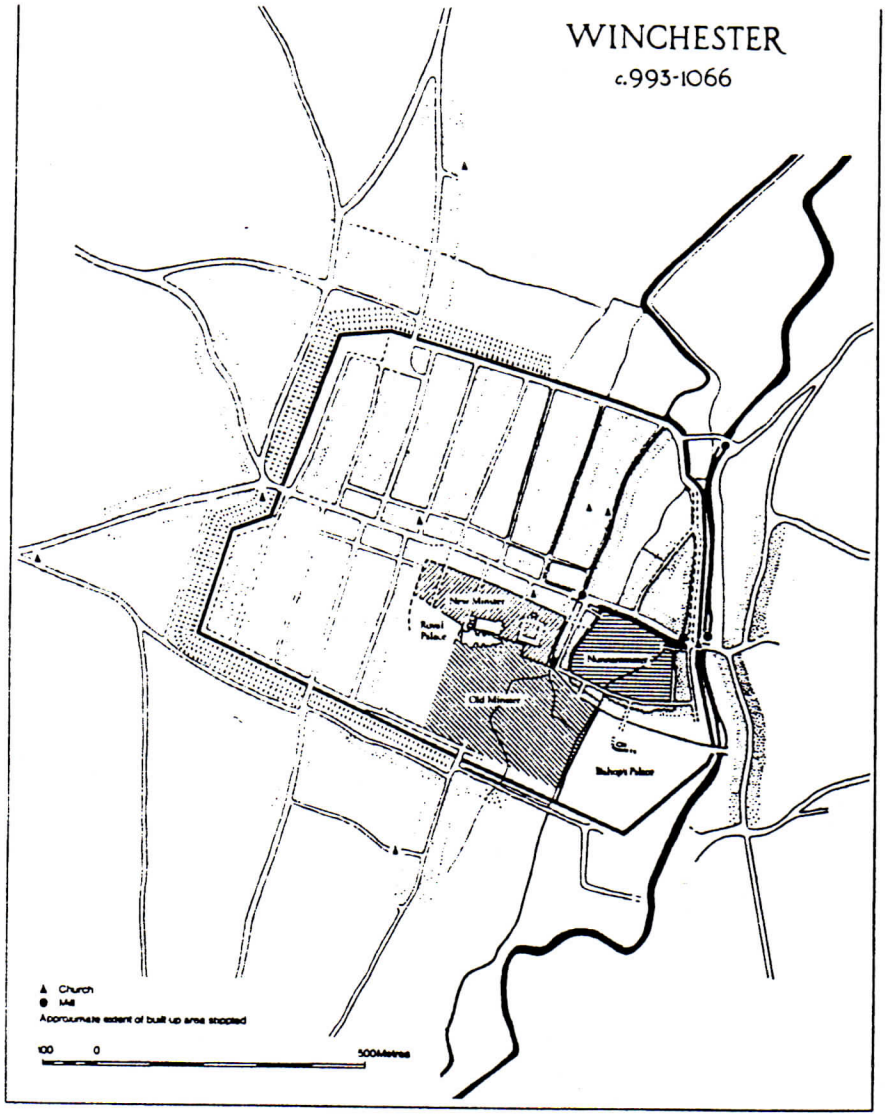
PLANNED TOWNS

There were few newly planned towns in Europe before the twelfth century. Only in Anglo-Saxon England, where Alfred the Great and his successors created a network of fortified settlements as a defensive strategy against the Danish armies then occupying part of the country, was systematic town foundation undertaken.

After his victory over the Danes at Edington (878) Alfred set out to defend his kingdom of Wessex, and to establish a base for the reconquest of England, by securing thirty defended places, so spaced that no part of the kingdom was more than thirty kilometers (about twenty miles) from a fortified center. The forts established by Alfred varied greatly in size and in the number of men required for their defense. Ten sites can be called forts, and the remaining can be regarded as towns of simple physical and social organization. These include four resettled Roman walled towns (Winchester, Chichester, Bath, and Exeter), four new towns with rectangular perimeters on previously open sites (Wallingford, Wareham, Cricklade, and Oxford), and twelve new fortified settlements on promontory sites (including Lydford, Lyng, Malmesbury, and Shaftesbury).

The towns show traces of rectilinear street layouts, and in the larger places the grid was linked to the fortifications by a ring of streets just within the walls. This internal ring allowed rapid movement within the walls by the town's defenders. The regular layout of rectangular blocks within the ring suggests a policy of equal land distribution for settlers.

The largest of these settlements was Winchester. As the result of extensive excavations, our knowledge of the development of that town is considerable. It occupied the full area of 58.2 hectares (about 145 acres) within older Roman walls, with the southeastern area of the city forming a royal and ecclesiastical quarter containing cathedral, royal palace, and (from the late tenth century) bishop's palace. Street names of the late tenth and eleventh centuries indicate the concentration of economic activities within the town—Tannerestret (tanners' street), Flesmangerestret (butchers' street), Scowrtenestret (shoemakers' street), and Sildwortenestret



Plan of Winchester, *ca.* 993–1066. REPRODUCED FROM *WINCHESTER IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES.* © 1976 OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

(shieldmakers' street). Similar town divisions existed in York, then a Viking center, around the same time.

The urban framework of tenth-century Winchester was the regular street layout that is still in use today. The main elements of this are a preexisting east-west thoroughfare (High Street); a single back street parallel to High Street on either side; a series of regularly spaced and parallel north-south streets at right angles to High Street; and an intramural or wall street running inside the entire circuit of the walls, linking the ends of High Street and the north-south streets. This layout diverges noticeably from the Roman street pattern. Only High Street approximates the path of an earlier Roman street, and this is due to its role of funneling traffic between the gates in the town wall.

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, as a result of population increase and territorial expansion by militarily dominant states, a wave of town foundation swept Europe. The rise of regionalism, in which one central city or state expanded its power over a wide territory and established satellite towns reliant on the founding city, caused large numbers of new towns to be built in southwest France, England, Wales, northern Italy, and eastern Germa-

ny. Royal, noble, and communal patrons used the enticement of personal liberties to draw settlers to their new foundations. In return they expected greater control over the territory and increased tax revenues due to new commercial activity.

The most common plan for these towns was the orthogonal grid, especially for towns built on level sites; but the grid plan varied in the number of intersecting streets, the total number of blocks created, the size of the area laid out, the amount and location of open space left within the grid, and the relative importance of central axes. Medieval planners used the grid flexibly, often subordinating it to the natural contour of the site. This provided more comfort, was aesthetically more pleasing, and cost much less, for it meant less excavation and leveling of new streets. In most new towns the streets were laid out at the time of foundation, but buildings often were not erected until the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, if at all. Few of these towns had the potential for becoming important independent centers. Lübeck and Leipzig, attached to older, well-sited centers, are exceptions.

Among the earliest of the new towns was Montauban in southwest France, founded by Alphonse-Jourain, count of Toulouse, in 1144 with settlers from the town of Montauriol who were eager to escape service to their lord. The new town, on the Tarn River, was walled and was laid out on an irregular grid that emanated from an open square in the center of town. Though a local effort, the creation of Montauban, ex novo, marks the beginning of an age of deliberate town planning in Europe on an extremely large scale. Close to 1,000 new towns were started across Europe during the following two centuries.

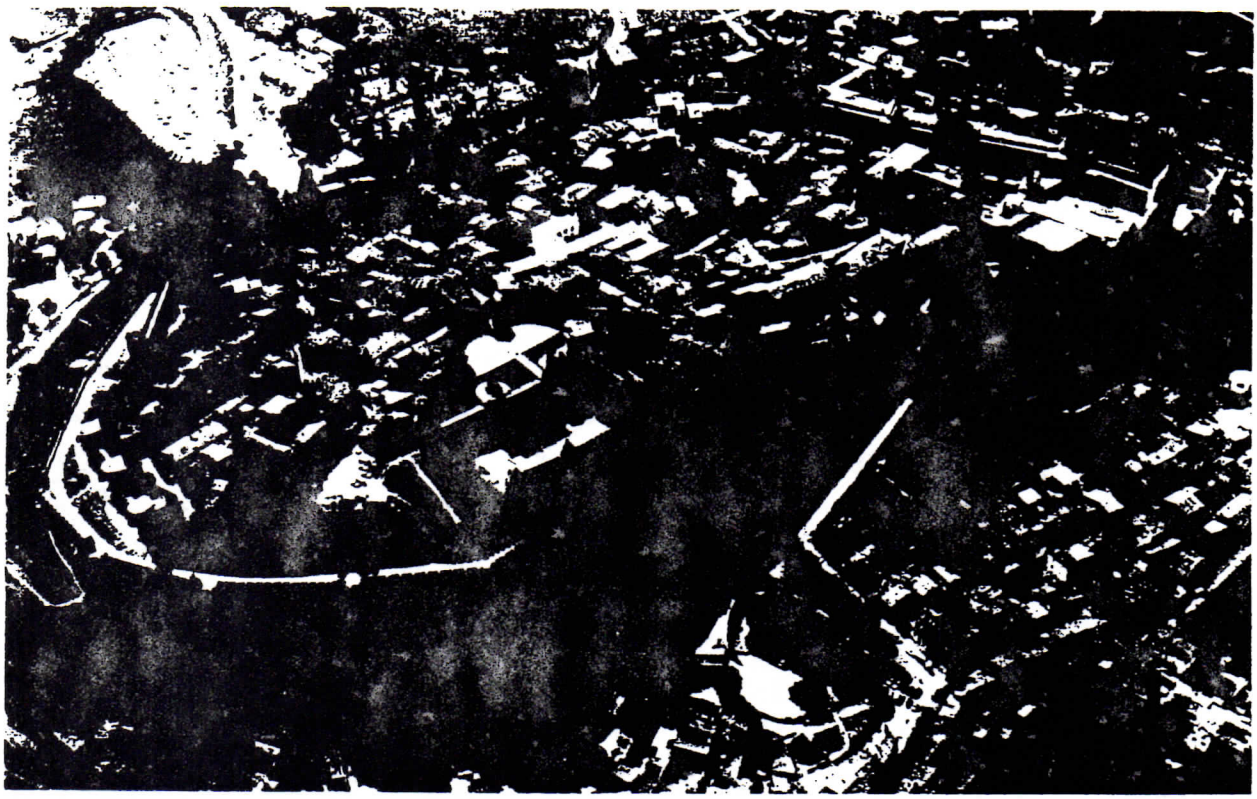
In France the new frontier towns were called bastides. The towns were small, often consisting only of the blocks that faced a central market square. Besides donating the land, the founder paid for the laying out and leveling of the streets and the square. He might also construct a mill, a bakehouse, and other facilities that would pay for themselves over time. If the town was successful, the founder could expect a good return from his investment, much more than if he had put the land under cultivation. The land was subdivided into plots, an arrangement that was facilitated if a grid plan was followed, and a plot was assigned to each settler, who was responsible for building his own house within a specified period of time. Towns founded for a specific military purpose were walled. Of the nonmilitary, only those founded by a particularly strong or rich patron could expect such expensive protection. About a third of the new towns in France and England were fortified.

Aigues-Mortes and the *ville nueve* at Carcassonne, founded by St. Louis in the 1240's, and Montpazier, founded by Edward I of England in 1284–1285, represent the most sophisticated examples of this type. Other founders of bastides include Alphonse of Poitiers, who established at least thirty-nine separate towns in the mid 1200's, and Eustache de Beaumarchais, royal seneschal at Toulouse, who founded a number of large grid-plan bastides in the 1280's.

Bastides had plans that accommodated site peculiarities. One type, used for a hill site with a castle on the summit, was to have a single main street snake up the hill, often narrowing as it approached the top. Side streets branched off the main artery in a fishbone pattern, with more streets off the lower side than off the upper. The main square was at the bottom of the hill. A variation was used for towns, or town extensions, laid out on shoulder spurs. The main artery followed the ridge; the side streets branched off and ran down either side.

There were 172 new town foundations in medieval England after the Norman conquest, 84 in Wales, and 125 in English Gascony. The grid plan is a common layout of these foundations, though linear and radial towns also were laid out. The towns with grids can be divided into two classes: one with a total of nine or twelve squares, and one much larger and easily expandable on its long axis. The size of the grid often depended on the restrictions of the site. For the market, a block of the grid was sometimes left open, but markets were often set on the town's high street or along river quays.

The fullest account we have of the foundation of a new town in England is the creation of new Winchelsea by King Edward I. Special meetings of experts were called to "devise, order, and array" the new town before its creation. The old town, a port city, was being washed away by storms and shifting river currents, and the king was losing his tax revenues. Edward I chose a new site, on a hill, to refound the town. A grid plan was imposed, with streets intersecting at right angles to create thirty-nine blocks (quarters). The east-west streets were numbered: Prima Strata, Secunda Strata, Tertia Strata, and so on. The surveyor of the site, Henry le Waleys, was told, "You shall plan and give direc-



Carcassone, showing Visigothic walls of the 6th century. PHOTO: DANIEL PHILIPPE

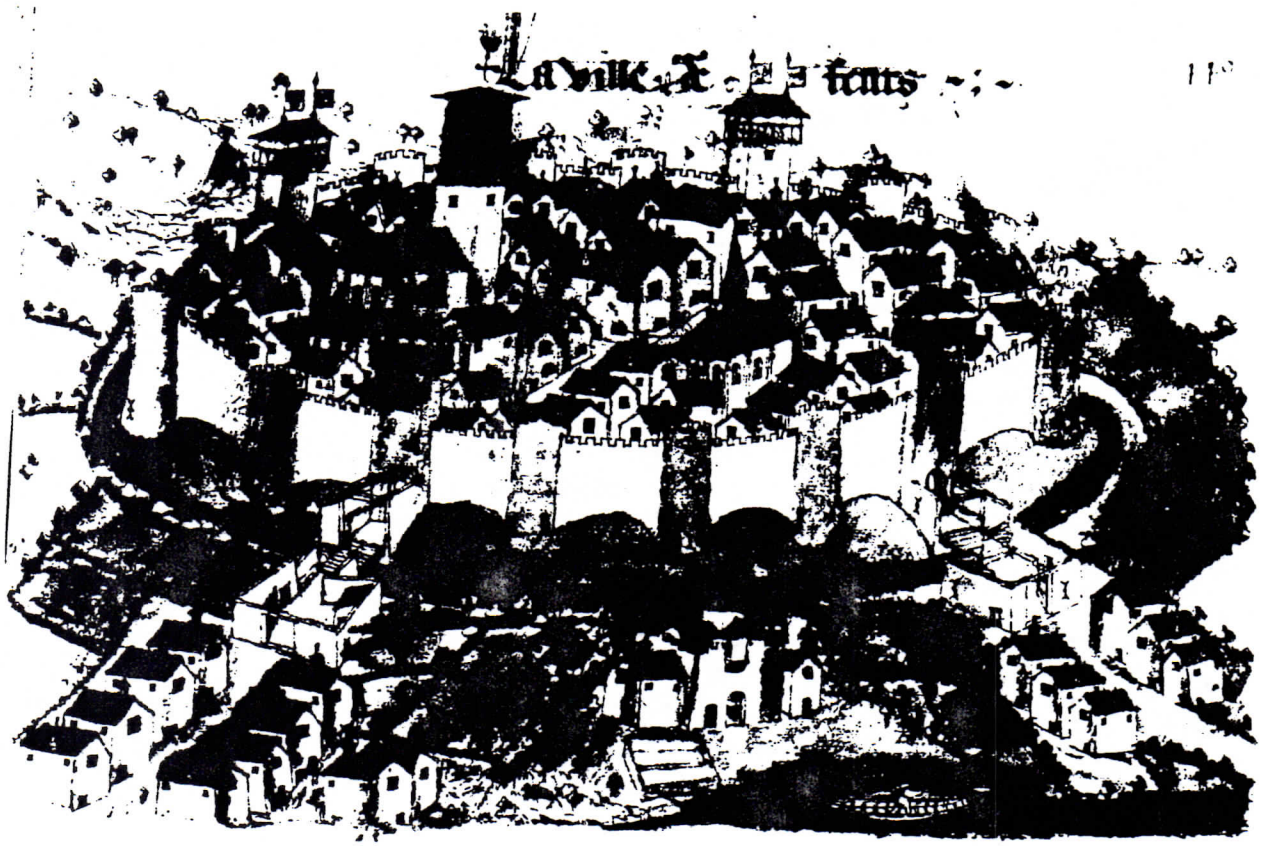
tions for streets and lanes, and assign places suitable for a market and for two churches." A monastery for the White Friars was built over two quarters. Land for a cemetery also was included, as was a twelve-acre King's Green at the southeast corner of town. Wells were dug, and, beneath the houses built for merchants, vaulted cellars were excavated and built. The market space was along one of the main north-south streets near the center of town. Unlike many other new towns, an empty block of the grid was not left for commerce. At new Winchelsea, most mercantile activity probably took place on the quay below the town.

In Italy, more new towns were founded for defense than for income, and they were often sited at preexisting crossroads for strategic reasons, then fortified. A typical example is Castelfranco Veneto, founded in 1189 by Treviso as a stronghold against the Paduans. It is enclosed within square walls and has a strong east-west axis, onto which open two piazzas catercorner to each other, with a minor north-south axis that ends at the crossing. The other streets form concentric squares within the wall enclosure.

In Cittadella, built in 1210–1211 by the Paduans, the two axes of the crossing are essentially equal. They completely dominate the rest of the plan, which creates a checkerboard arrangement of rectangular blocks formed by a series of east-west and north-south streets of equal width that repeatedly intersect at right angles. This grid occurs within an overall circular plan defined by enclosing walls and a surrounding moat.

A large number of new towns were founded in Piedmont. Villanova d'Asti, for example, on the road from Turin to Asti, was founded in 1248 on a grid plan comprised of three north-south streets and five east-west streets, covering one-and-a-half hectares. It was doubled in size thirty years later, following the original plan. Also in 1248 the commune of Alba founded Cherasco. The plan was a grid covering thirty hectares divided into forty-eight rectangular blocks (six rows of eight). The two main axes were lined with porticoes.

In central and southern Italy royalty founded towns on a large scale. Frederick II founded L'Aquila in 1204, and in 1256 his son Manfred built Manfredonia with materials from nearby Si-



Town of Feurs in the Forez district. Miniature in the 14th-century *Armorial d'Auvergne*. PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE, MS FR. 22297, fol. 449

ponto. The new town had a rigid checkerboard plan with the piazza the result of an empty block. In 1309, Charles II of Anjou founded Cittaducale, also using a grid plan.

ELEMENTS OF THE MEDIEVAL TOWN

Town walls and gates. One of the basic characteristics of all medieval towns is the defensive wall. In many early medieval towns, and in smaller settlements, wooden palisades or defenses of wood and earth were often used. This was particularly true in northern Europe, where wood was readily available. Whenever possible, however, towns built their walls of masonry. Stone or brick walls were structurally superior and offered greater protection. The walls loomed large, both physically and psychologically. In the early Middle Ages the walls and gates were the tallest urban structures. Church towers and private fortified towers did not generally surpass town walls in height before the eleventh century. In Verona the parapet of the wall was more than 11 meters (almost 36 feet) from the ground. In Senlis, the walls would have seemed especially large because the area they enclosed was quite small: 6.33 hectares (almost 17 acres), within a wall circuit of only 850 meters (almost 2,789 feet).

Some towns never outgrew their ancient wall circuit. Florence, in contrast, built a larger wall circuit in the 1170's, and was building a third wall by the mid fourteenth century. Todi expanded its Roman wall in the 1240's to enclose its outlying *borghi*. In Paris, Philip II Augustus ordered a new wall built around the right bank of the city, and, anticipating greater expansion on the left bank, he had the large underpopulated area walled, beginning in 1210.

New town walls followed the ancient pattern of construction. They were tall, continuous structures, marked by frequent rectangular or semicircular towers, and less frequent gates that were defended by larger protruding towers. Until the advent of modern artillery changed warfare in the

fifteenth century, town walls were remarkably similar in appearance from place to place throughout Europe. Walls usually followed the most economical route, enclosing the greatest amount of space with the least amount of construction and taking into account topographical features when they could be exploited for defense. Thus, the typical medieval town wall tended to be roughly circular. Curved walls also were preferred for defensive reasons, as they left fewer blind spots than walls that met at right angles.

Walls and gates served for defense, and made it easier to regulate goods and collect tariffs. In the sixth century Gregory of Tours described the still-standing thirty-foot-high wall of Dijon, with its thirty-three towers and four gates. Gregory could not understand why such a strong walled settlement was not then called a town. In the popular perception, it certainly was one.

Within the wall were the gates. Every city gate was in some way a triumphal arch. In his city gate at Capua, Emperor Frederick II (1194–1250) fully recognized this, and consciously imitated the triumphal arch form of ancient Rome (a example was visible at nearby Benevento). Heavily decorated gates were not, however, compatible with defense, so it was not until the fifteenth century that decorative classisizing gates became common in Italy. Ordinarily, medieval gates were sober, but for festive occasions they could be richly decorated with colorful tapestries and banners.

Open spaces. In the medieval town, open space was a valuable commodity. The need for freely accessible streets and squares was balanced by the increased need for space for the full variety of urban functions, both private and public. By the thirteenth century the struggle for space within the town was partially resolved through legislation.

Urban spaces were rarely planned for a specific purpose. Streets were processional routes, markets, front yards, and playgrounds, as well as carriers of foot, animal, and wheeled traffic. Squares served as markets, religious centers, courtrooms, meeting places, theaters, military muster grounds, and even as the sites of execution. By the late Middle Ages shortage of open space forced the definition and protection of spaces that still existed. Concurrently, efforts were made to embellish these spaces. Boundaries were more carefully arranged; buildings bordering the open spaces were made more uniform whenever possible; and decorative columns and fountains often were erected.

Important buildings usually bordered open spaces or were set off by open space. Cathedrals, especially, were frequently left free on several sides. This open space, known as a parvis, allowed large gatherings of people around the church for religious celebrations and for markets.

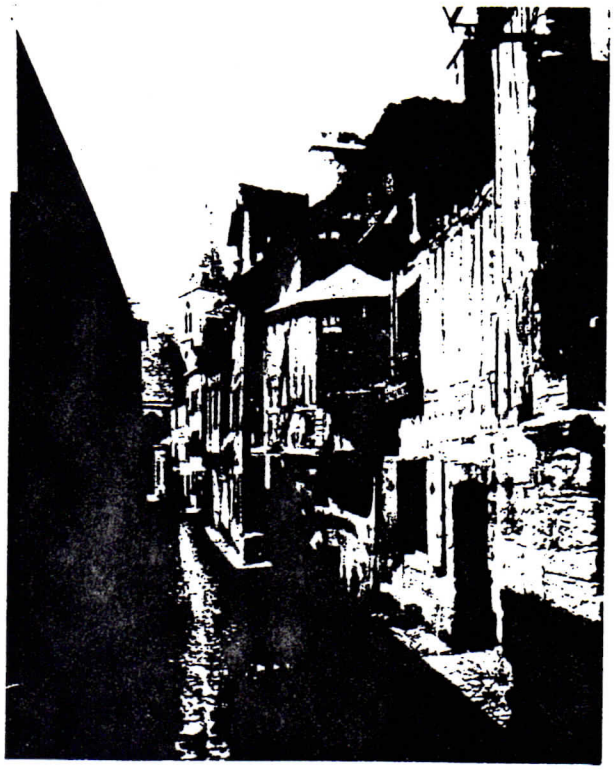
The disparate forms and buildings of central squares were unified by arcades, often with different kinds of vertical supports and arches of different widths. Public buildings, usually churches or town halls, had monumental stairways or protruding balconies that served as spatial accents.

Streets. Streets in medieval towns were primarily for pedestrian use. Wheeled traffic was usually restricted to the few wider streets—the arteries that traversed a town from end to end. In new towns there were many more wide streets. When the bishop of Worcester founded Stratford-on-Avon, he laid out new streets fifty feet (about fifteen meters) wide and made the main market street ninety feet (about twenty-seven meters) across.

Until the late Middle Ages, when officials were designated to keep streets and squares open for the public good, the tendency was for private individuals to encroach as much as possible on public space through building facades, balconies, and porticoes. Off the main commercial streets, a rule of thumb for building was often to leave only enough space for the passage of one heavily loaded donkey to pass.

By the thirteenth century, and even earlier in some parts of Italy, the ability to annex public space for private use was increasingly limited. Towns regulated the heights of towers and the heights and widths of balconies and other projections from buildings. Even the size and position of market stalls were regulated, as were the days and ways in which shop owners could display their wares on the street.

Until the thirteenth century, medieval streets were rarely, if ever, paved. One aspect of late medieval urbanism was the widespread paving of streets. In many towns, citizens were responsible for financing the pavements in front of their properties, up to a maximum width, and tolls on carts were sometimes applied to street improvement. Public funds were assigned, or private funds solicited, to pave areas around churches. Main streets in Paris were paved after 1184 by an order of Philip II Augustus when, as the chronicler Rigord reports, "the horse-drawn wagons crossing the Cité raised such a fetid smell from mud piled in the streets that



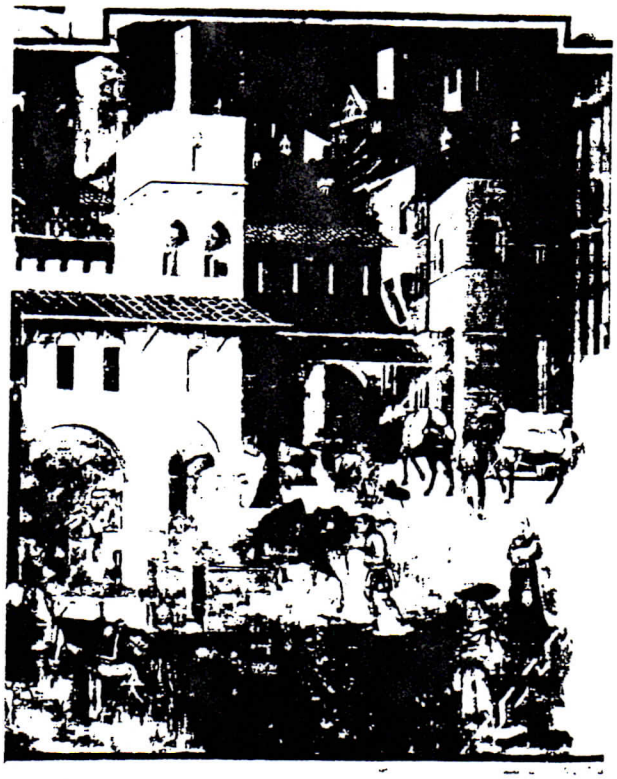
Late medieval street in Rouen (destroyed in World War II). PHOTO: ROGER VIOLLET

the king could endure it no longer." Streets were first paved in Florence in 1237, and in Lübeck in 1310.

Covered walkways, or porticoes, lined the main streets of many European towns. They offered protection from rain in the north and from sun in the south, and everywhere provided additional space for shopkeepers to display their wares. In most medieval towns they took the form of arcades supported by columns or masonry piers. In Rome, however, where the classical tradition was strong and ancient materials were available, the intercolumniations were spanned by flat entablatures.

Medieval street plans were not eternally fixed. Though many changes took place after the fifteenth century—usually the closing of streets and the filling in of open spaces—routes were changed in the Middle Ages, too. This was most common when major building projects took over large lots in town. The building of churches, civic structures, market structures, university compounds, and monasteries affected the preexisting street pattern. In Oxford and Cambridge, for example, the development of the college precincts altered the town plans.

Housing. The houses of the medieval town were extremely varied. The size, shape, plan, elevation, and building material differed greatly from region to region, and especially between the towns of northern Europe and those of the south. Because of the limited space within each town and the desirability, even necessity, for houses to front on a street, most house plots in the later Middle Ages were much narrower than they were deep. In Italian towns especially, the row or strip house, with divisions into vertical bays, developed. In both north and south the width of a house, typically five or six meters (sixteen to almost twenty feet), was due to the available size of wooden beams that rested on the structural walls (masonry in the south, wood in the north). A narrow door from the street, with stairs to upper floors, was on one side of the facade. The ground floor, used as a shop, workroom, or storage space, had its own wide entrance from the street that filled much of the lot



The Effects of Good Government. Detail from the fresco by Ambrogio Lorenzetti showing shops and covered walkways, 1338–1339. Palazzo Pubblico, Siena. ALINARI/ART RESOURCE

frontage. This layout changed during the fifteenth century, when strictly residential palaces displaced commercial activity in many neighborhoods. The owner usually lived on the first floor above ground level. Depending on the size of the house, upper floors housed children, servants, apprentices, and storage space. Kitchens and open loggias were frequently placed at the top of the house to allow cooking smoke to escape and to lessen the risk of fire.

In northern Europe wood and half-timbering construction were favored. In England a traditional Saxon "hall" type of house was adapted to the long urban lots. The pitch of roofs was steep, with houses usually joined at the eaves. Stone construction was only for the very rich.

Religious buildings. Prominent in every medieval town were the churches. For the most part, towns grew around their cathedrals, which were often the buildings with the longest continuous history. Cathedral sites were venerated for specific historical associations, for the tombs of religious leaders they contained, and for the long devotional traditions that grew up around them. Even when new cathedrals were built, as was frequently the case from the twelfth century on, the site usually remained unchanged. Smaller churches were established in towns as they grew. Most neighborhoods had parish churches, sometimes financed and built by a leading family or by a craft group strong in the area. For the most part, parish churches were small and unpretentious, blending in with the housing around them but spatially set off by an open square in front.

Monasteries often established rival organizations to the cathedral chapter, and these were often expressed architecturally by the construction of large churches with tall towers in the center of town. The introduction of the urban monasteries of the preaching friars, from the thirteenth century on, altered the religious life of towns, creating new centers of devotional activity. The Franciscans and Dominicans, the largest of the new orders, built most lavishly. For their large complexes they often were forced to choose open tracts on the edge of town.

Public buildings. The most important public buildings of any town, aside from religious structures, were those erected to house the many activities of the civic government. Beginning in the early thirteenth century, as power in towns passed from bishops and nobles to more popular regimes, impressive town halls were built. In Italy, these were generally situated near the cathedral and bishop's palace, which were usually close to the market square. In many towns civic and religious authorities were housed opposite each other across the public square.

Though the architecture of civic palaces varied from place to place, certain features were usually present. Some sort of outdoor meeting area, such as a large balcony or terrace, or an open loggia, was necessary, often in connection with the town square. Inside, the most important element was a large hall where public assemblies could gather. The most common arrangement would be to have a covered hall built over an open ground floor.

In northern towns public architecture developed differently, emulating the architecture of the great merchant organizations that were, in effect, rulers of many towns. The cloth house and other market buildings dominated public life in Lübeck and Bruges. In addition to these buildings for sales and meetings, warehouses and large workshops were numerous. As in Italian commercial port cities, they crowded along the waterfronts.

Commercial buildings. In Viking York, as early as the tenth century, street names such as Coppergate (woodworkers' street), and Skeldergate (shieldmakers' street) suggest the existence of special industrial sections. In larger towns the grouping of similar crafts continued throughout the Middle Ages.

Medieval streets were lined with shops. Though each town had its business sections in the center, overall there was a great deal of integration of residential and commercial use, with families, often with apprentices, living in the upper stories of houses while craftsmen and merchants used the ground floors. The most exclusive shops lined the most frequented streets. In Florence the money changers and goldsmiths had shops on the Ponte Vecchio; in Paris they were located on the Grand Pont, along with the drapers. In Rome the goldsmiths and money changers were situated on the Via del Banchi, named after their stalls.

Neighborhoods. All but the smallest towns were divided into neighborhoods that existed as administrative or religious units or as family enclaves. These districts, quarters, or parishes frequently depended on a central open space—perhaps in front of a church or by a wall. Streets connecting houses clustered around such open spaces were often more like corridors of a large house. Though in the large

cities of the late Middle Ages there were neighborhoods clearly differentiated by economic and social class, in most middle-sized towns there was a great mix of status within districts and along single streets. Often rich and poor lived side by side, sometimes in a patron-client relationship.

From the early Middle Ages, in commercial and pilgrimage towns separate districts existed for specific national groups. During the Carolingian period Rome had permanent neighborhoods of Saxons, Frisians, Lombards, and Greeks. The Milanese refugees from the Lombard invasion set up their own community in Genoa, and the Lombards initially separated themselves from native populations in the towns they occupied. Frisian traders had "colonies" in York, Mainz, and Worms from the eighth to the eleventh century; and Venetian, Genoese, and Pisan traders established themselves separately in towns around the Mediterranean in the following centuries. In England after the Conquest, the Normans built new "French streets" as well as fortified castles within older towns. Jews, who were often invited to cities to stimulate economic activity, were usually allowed to live where they pleased, though they tended to congregate together. The creation of ghettos began in Spain and Portugal in the late fourteenth century, from which time Jews were increasingly restricted throughout Europe. Walled ghettos in Germany and Italy are mostly the product of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The town outside the walls. Town life did not end at the walls. There was always a close relationship between town and countryside. In the early Middle Ages markets and other commercial activities concentrated outside city gates to avoid the tolls and taxes required by town officials. In France these semi-autonomous merchant communities were known as faubourgs until their incorporation into the cities by extension of the city walls and the extension of city rights to their residents. In the later centuries only specialized markets, such as animal markets, and the big seasonal fairs were left outside the walls.

The activity of commerce attracted more permanent service buildings, and, in part because the gates of the towns were shut at sunset, inns and hostels usually were built at the gate, as well. Inside the gate were commercial districts that depended on the transport of raw materials or finished products for their business. Materials could enter the town by the gate and reach their destination without being transported through the center.

Sanctuaries and monasteries were commonly situated outside the town. Cities of Roman origin—such as Rome, Toulouse, Rheims, and Verona—all had major churches outside the walls. During the Carolingian period royal palaces were associated with extramural monasteries. In most places it was not until the eleventh century that the decision was taken to move the see church within the town walls. In Rome, with its many extramural Christian catacombs, efforts were made from the ninth century on to remove martyrs' remains to safety within the walls. In the same century Leo IV had the *borgo* around St. Peter's walled, but only after the Saracens had sacked the district in 846. This new Leonine quarter became the true center of medieval Rome.

Hospitals and especially leprosariums were set outside the walls to isolate the sick. Many of these hospitals were near town gates to serve pilgrims and travelers. At Toulouse there were seven leprosariums and twelve hospitals by the mid thirteenth century. At least twelve of these charitable foundations were located outside the town, mostly near gates.

Slaughterhouses and tanneries, often kept out of the city by law because of their waste and stench, and mills and textile workshops, which required abundant water, also clustered outside the walls.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Michael Ashton and James Bond, *The Landscape of Towns* (1976); Maurice W. Barley, ed., *The Plans and Topography of Medieval Towns in England and Wales* (1976); Maurice Beresford, *New Towns of the Middle Ages* (1967); Martin Biddle, "The Development of the Anglo-Saxon Town," in *Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi medioevo,* 21 (1974), and, as ed., *Winchester in the Early Middle Ages* (1976); Wolfgang Braunfels, *Mittelalterliche Stadtbaukunst in der Toskana* (1953); Donald Bullough, "Urban Change in Early Medieval Italy," in *Papers of the British School at Rome,* 34 (1966), and "Social and Economic Structure and Topography in the Early Medieval City," in *Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi medioevo,* 21 (1974); Norman F. Carver, Jr., *Italian Hilltowns* (1979); Virginia Wylie Egbert, *On the Bridges of Mediaeval Paris: A Record of Early Fourteenth-century Life* (1974); Joseph Gies and Frances Gies, *Life in a Medieval City* (1981); Enrico Guidoni, *Arte e urbanistica in Toscana, 1000–1315* (1970); Jeremy Haslam, ed., *Anglo-Saxon Towns in Southern England* (1984); Richard Hodges and David Whitehouse, *Mohammed, Charlemagne, and the Origins of Europe: Archaeology and the Pirenne Thesis* (1983); Spiro Kostof, *A History of Architecture: Settings and*

Rituals (1985); Richard Krautheimer, *Rome: Profile of a City, 312–1308* (1980).

Pierre Lavedan and Jeanne Hugueney, *L'urbanisme au moyen âge* (1974); Ernest Lauer, "The First Wall of the Rhenish Episcopal Cities," in *Speculum*, 6 (1931); Guido Mengozzi, *La città italiana nell'alto medio evo* (1931); Lewis Mumford, *The City in History* (1961); John H. Mundy, "Hospitals and Leprosaries in Twelfth- and Early-Thirteenth-century Toulouse," in John Mundy *et al.*, eds., *Essays in Medieval Life and Thought, Presented in Honor of Austin P. Evans* (1955); John Mundy and Peter Riesenberg, *The Medieval Town* (1958); Luigi Piccinato, *Urbanistica medievale* (1978); Henri Pirenne, *Medieval Cities: Their Origins and the Revival of Trade*, Frank D. Halsey, trans. (1925, repr. 1956); Colin Platt, *The English Medieval Town* (1976); Susan Reynolds, *An Introduction to the History of English Medieval Towns* (1977); Howard Saalman, *Medieval Cities* (1968); G. Schmiedt, "Città scomparse e città di nuova formazione in Italia," in *Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi medioevo*, 21 (1974); Paul Zucker, *Town and Square* (1959).

SAMUEL GRUBER

[See also **Aldermen; Alfred the Great; Bastide; Borough (England-Wales); Bruges; Catacombs; Communes; Consuls, Consulate; Echevin; Fairs; Florence; Guilds and Métiers; Hospitals and Poor Relief; Leprosy; Lombards, Kingdom of; London; Markets, European; Mayor; Milan; Paris; Podesta; Roads and Bridges; Rome; Trade; Villages: Community.**]

URBNISI, one of the most ancient cities in Georgia, is located in central K'art'li. It is frequently mentioned in chronicles as having been well established and prosperous. Surrounded by fortified walls with projecting semicircular towers, it was an important center for trade in early medieval times and, as excavations conducted by Parmen Zakaraya revealed, contained numerous dwellings and commercial structures. Among the churches the most notable is a three-nave basilica (105 × 49 feet/ 32 × 15 meters) from the second half of the sixth century that was restored in the seventeenth century. The nave is three times as wide as the aisles. The arched barrel vault supported by cruciform piers is typical of early Christian basilicas in Georgia.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Parmen Zakaraya, *Zodchestvo gorodishch Urbnisi* (1965).

WACHTANG DJOBADZE

[See also **Georgia: Geography; Georgian Art and Architecture.**]

URIEN RHEGED (*fl.* sixth century), son of Cynfarch, was the British ruler of the kingdom of Rheged. His dominions extended west from beyond the Solway Firth (considered the center of the kingdom) over much of modern Cumbria to include parts of northern Lancashire and Yorkshire. Historically, little is known of Urien outside of the brief notice in chapter 63 of the *Historia Brittonum*, attributed to Nennius, which lists the Bernician kings at the end of the century, including Hussa (585–592) and Theoderic (572–579):

> Against these, four kings fought: Urbgen (Urien), Riderchen (Rhydderch Hen), Guallauc (Gwallawg), and Morcant. Theoderic fought fiercely against Urbgen and his sons. During that time, sometimes the enemy, sometimes the Welsh held the upper hand, and he trapped them for three days and three nights on the island of Metcaud (Lindisfarne), but, during the expedition he was assassinated on the orders of Morcant out of jealousy because his military skill and leadership were greater than all other kings'.

A portrait of Urien's magnanimity, generosity, and military leadership is contained in the nine poems addressed to him and to his son Owain (later spellings: Ewen, Iwein, Yvain) by Taliesin, who is mentioned by Nennius (chap. 62) as having written at the same time. Urien's name appears frequently in early Welsh genealogies, and his life attracted a considerable admixture of semi-history and legend. The later saga poetry of Llywarch Hen, supposedly a cousin to Urien, deals largely with his death, and both Urien and Owain (especially under the spelling Yvain) figure prominently in Arthurian romances. Some ecclesiastical traditions also attach to Urien's name: St. Kentigern (*d.* 612) was traditionally his grandson; and a further clerical son wrote a life of St. Germanus of Auxerre. This may be the Rum (Rhun) son of Urien whom Nennius (chap. 63) equates with Paulinus, archbishop of York, who was responsible for the conversion of Edwin of Northumbria in 627.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Nora K. Chadwick, *The British Heroic Age: The Welsh and the Men of the North* (1976), 80ff., 93f., 103–108, 112–124; Patrick J. Ford, intr. and trans., *The Poetry of Llywarch Hen* (1974); Kenneth H. Jackson, *The Gododdin: The Oldest Scottish Poem* (1969); John E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales*, I (1910, 3rd ed. 1939, repr. 1948), 162–166; Nennius, *British History and the Welsh*