

Review of periodical articles

Frederik Buylaert, Jim van der Meulen , Gerrit Verhoeven, Reinoud Vermoesen and Tracey Logan

Ghent University, Department of History, Henri Pirenne Institute for Medieval Studies, Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 35, B-9000 Ghent, Belgium

Jesus College, Oxford, OX1 3DW, UK

Department of Heritage, University of Antwerp, Blinestraat 9, 2000 Antwerp, Belgium

Department of History, Sint-Jacobsmarkt 13, University of Antwerp, 2000 Antwerp, Belgium

Centre for Urban History, School of History, Politics and International Relations, University of Leicester, Leicester, LE1 7RH, UK

Pre-1500

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The event that dominated academic discussions in 2022 was undoubtedly the invasion of Ukraine by Vladimir Putin's Russia. While Russia's breach of Ukraine's sovereignty dates back at least to the Crimean annexation of 2014, the military invasion of Ukraine began a year ago, on 24 February 2022. Apart from stories and images of atrocities, occasionally offset by tales of the astonishing bravery and unwavering morale of the people of Ukraine, a central issue in the discussions has been whether (and how) EU or NATO countries ought to intervene and lend military support to Ukraine, which is not a full member of NATO, merely a 'partner country'. A review of recent publications on medieval towns should therefore open with a contribution that provides a 'deep history' of such military alliances. William Caferro has developed a revisionist interpretation of the famous military alliances among Italian city-states between the twelfth and the fifteenth centuries. Traditionally understood through the lens of nationalist history, according to which these alliances were understood as embryonic and unsuccessful NATO-like arrangements to protect the Italian peninsula from foreign domination, these alliances in fact mirrored intra-urban politics. Just as independent city-states were ruled by rapidly shifting alliances of various corporate groups, so did city-states engage in urban alliances that were constantly adapted to changing circumstances. Historians traditionally imagine the independent capacity for self-defence as a hallmark of emerging states, but this exciting paper clearly shows how urban communities addressed this issue through collaborative arrangements (William Caferro, 'Corporative economy and martial corporatism: toward an understanding of Florentine city leagues, 1332–92', *Speculum*, 97 (2022), 1073–100).

Another engaging discussion on inter-urban networks as a constitutive element of early state formation comes from the Africanist historian and archaeologist Gérard Chouin. Within the context of a recent excavation project of the Yoruba city of Ifè (now in Nigeria) between 2015 and 2021, Chouin has written an exploratory article about urbanization in the Gulf of Guinea prior to c. 1500. Ifè's early history is hard to disentangle from mythical origin stories, but the city probably

fell into decline after a crisis in the decades between 1360 and 1380. This article pushes back against earlier scholarship that posited that Sub-Saharan Africa knew ‘very little’ urbanization before the mid-twentieth century.¹ While scholars have since shown that this claim is wrong, Chouin argues that historians and archaeologists still place too much emphasis on the supposed exceptional occurrence of large Yoruba cities compared to other West African areas such as the Kingdom of Dahomey (now in Benin). Chouin’s hypothesis is that the city of Ifè was in fact part of an extensive network of ‘hypercentres’ in pre-1500 West Africa. These large city-states operated on an equal footing with each other while they stood in a hierarchical relationship with a range of secondary urban centres along connecting trade routes. This can be inferred from archaeological findings across the area, which show a wide diaspora of specialized products that are traceable, such as the glass beads of Ifè, to particular cities through their chemical signatures. Like Caferro, Chouin deems these West African urban networks to have been a crucial building block of state formation that has been relatively neglected because it does not fit the model of territorial or national states. This notion of hypercentres that emanate urbanity across a wider zone or network of secondary centres fits well with the model of Central Place Theory. Yet, anthropological and linguistic evidence dating to the nineteenth century also shows that a range of West African ethnic groups such as the Yoruba, Igbo and Akan people defined towns in a similar way, that is as centres *including* a wider encircling zone of influence (Gérard Chouin, ‘Sous les tropiques, la ville: repenser l’urbanisation dans le Golfe de Guinée avant le XVIe siècle’, *Histoire Urbaine*, 63 (2022), 21–41).

Similar to the geopolitical affairs that dominated 2022, an overarching theme that pervaded many studies in urban history this year was the field of tension between inter-urban solidarity and collaboration on the one hand, and competition or downright xenophobia on the other. A fascinating example of the former, which is something of an outlier, is Kristiaan Dillen’s study of the custom of the Flemish town of Blankenberge of donating a porpoise (cut into portions) to the city aldermen of Bruges each year around Lent. This curious ritual dated back to at least 1288 and persisted until 1564. Previous scholarship had been divided over its correct interpretation – even going so far as to view it as a form of punishment that the city of Bruges at one time imposed upon Blankenberge after an unidentified slight, because this appears to have been a one-sided transaction. Dillen argues instead that the gift of the porpoise closed a ‘circle of reciprocity’ between the two settlements. While the coastal town of Blankenberge was of little commercial significance within the economic zone of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Bruges, its people nonetheless fulfilled a crucial service to the metropolis. They chiefly played a role in what contemporaries referred to as ‘the safekeeping of the land and the sea’, that is guarding the Flemish shores of the North Sea against impending threats (both military and environmental) and passing along information on such threats to other cities, including Bruges. In return, the citizens of Blankenberge could profit from the legal expertise of Bruges’ bench of aldermen: the ‘head’ bench of the region, which could be consulted for advice – an institution that solidified

¹The quote is from C. Coquery-Vidrovitch, ‘De la ville en Afrique noire’, *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 61 (2006), 1087–119, at 1087.

Bruges' hold over its hinterland, incidentally. Dillen posits quite persuasively that the annual gift of the porpoise was the capstone to this relationship of inter-urban mutualism (Kristiaan Dillen, 'Porpoise, punishment and partnership: the meaning of presenting and consuming a marine mammal in late medieval coastal Flanders', *Urban History*, 49 (2022), 568–88).

There were a number of studies that highlighted the opposite end of the spectrum, of inter-urban competition and policies of isolation. Such policies often strengthened the internal cohesion of an urban community while consolidating the authority of its ruling elites. Indeed, the field of tension between solidarity and xenophobia extended to the level of individual cities. As most of the contributions in this mould reveal, however, such processes of exclusion and inclusion had subtle, multi-lateral outcomes. Consider urban food crises. Focusing on a series of agrometeorological harvest failures and associated subsistence crises in the 'Blue Banana' (*la dorsale européenne*), the urbanized zone of Europe that stretched in a curve from the Italian peninsula in the south to the British Isles in the north, Laurent Litzenburger signals the rise of new urban policies of market control (*politique annonaire*) across that sphere between 1437 and c. 1540. Litzenburger discusses how the famine of 1437–38 marked the kick-off of a gradual expansion of strategies among urban authorities to waylay hunger among the populace, most notably through the construction of large granaries. Town councils used these grain reserves both in attempts to adjust market prices downwards at a fixed level, and to supplement the caloric intake of poor town dwellers. This was not an altogether new policy; the innovation after 1437 lay principally in scale-enlargement. New granaries, such as the Grenier de Chèvremont of Metz (built in 1457), which measured 16.5 by 31 metres and had five storeys, were far more sizeable edifices than their predecessors, thus offering stronger tools of cushioning the disruptive effect of harvest failures. While these policies spread relatively quickly throughout the Blue Banana in this period, they were also accompanied by protectionist measures against other cities. During grain shortages, urban authorities progressively sought to close off their markets to outsiders. Litzenburger notes how these measures were mirrored at the internal level: on the one hand, this period saw urban magistrates taking over responsibilities for the urban poor from charitable institutions, distributing bread during famines. This was accompanied, on the other hand, by a stricter management of who were deserving of such charity, resulting in the exclusion of outsiders. During a crisis in 1516–17, for example, the 'deserving poor' (*bon pauvre*) that belonged to the jurisdiction of the city of Metz were given specially designed insignia as a form of identification. Those asking for charity who were unable to produce this token were not only denied service, but chased out of the town – a pattern that extended across the Blue Banana in this period (Laurent Litzenburger, 'L'adaptation des villes de la dorsale européenne aux changements climatiques: l'exemple des crises de subsistances (1430–1540)', *Histoire Urbaine*, 64 (2022), 73–93).

This article chimes nicely with a critical discussion of food provisioning in fourteenth-century Barcelona. Adam Franklin-Lyons and Marie A. Kelleher point out that this metropolis in Catalonia was in a delicate position, in that the cereal production of the town's hinterland was not sufficient to feed the burgeoning population. In turn, Barcelona's dependence on the imports of bread grains from

other parts of the Mediterranean made that food supply vulnerable to political conflict (for example, Barcelona's conflict with Genoa) and to climatological disturbances. All this provided a strong stimulus for the town council to invest heavily in public services for the urban poor from the 1370s onwards, not least because its political legitimacy was inextricably entwined with its capacity to provide food security. These arrangements to protect the inhabitants of Barcelona against food shortages, speculative hoarding and so on were relatively successful, so that in later centuries, the urban poor were no longer targeting the urban political elite with protests, shifting more and more to scapegoating immigrants (Adam Franklin-Lyons and Marie A. Kelleher, 'Framing Mediterranean famine: food crisis in fourteenth-century Barcelona', *Speculum*, 97 (2022), 40–76).

These themes also take centre stage in the excellent contribution of Neil Murphy on urban poor relief in late medieval France. Here too, urban governments took on new burdens in the face of great challenges to the urban fabric. Starting with plague hospitals to isolate the vectors of this disease, more and more French towns gradually developed public services for the 'deserving poor' of the town, and these welfare benefits remained in place when plague epidemics gradually petered out in the first half of the seventeenth century. In turn, these local arrangements constituted the backbone of the first attempts of the French royal government to provide health care and poor relief to its subjects in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, thus throwing in sharp relief how lofty aspirations to royal absolutism were in fact predicated on pre-existing services on the local level that were controlled by independent-minded urban elites (Neil Murphy, 'Plague hospitals and poor relief in late medieval and early modern France', *Social History*, 47 (2022), 349–71).

Another article that exposes similar patterns is the brilliant contribution of Taylor Zaneri and Guy Geltner on communal hygiene in fourteenth-century Bologna as an exploration of the urban 'prehistory' of state-driven health policies. Zaneri and Geltner focus on the exceptionally well-documented case of the Bolognese *Ufficio del fango*, which was staffed with 'dirt masters' (*fango*) who walked the city streets to inspect market stalls, taverns and other enterprises to monitor whether tradespeople upheld proper (Galenic) health standards. The *fango* have left an extensive corpus of written documentation listing trespasses upon these standards. What is more, most of those recorded infractions include a reference to the specific place where they occurred. Zaneri and Geltner have mined this rich corpus for three sample periods (1287–1323, 1330–47 and 1355–83) to trace patterns and changes in the orientation of the Bolognese dirt masters in both time and space. One pattern they expose is that the *fango* transitioned from predominantly monitoring proper waste disposal in the later thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries to primarily targeting commercial infractions after c. 1330, especially among taverners and innkeepers. Another key finding is a gender-bias in the fines: over 50 per cent of female offenders of health standards were charged within a commercial context, that is for improper trade conduct. Accordingly, the shift to monitoring inns and taverns in the course of the fourteenth century was accompanied by falling numbers of female offenders. The authors' spatial analysis, then, suggests that whereas the Bolognese dirt masters largely restricted their activities to the city's main marketplaces (Piazza Maggiore, Porta Ravennate and Campo del Mercato) between 1287 and 1323, after 1330, their orientation began to shift

towards other spaces in the southern and eastern parts of the city, coinciding with a wider spatial distribution of their activities in general. In line with previous studies by Geltner, an underlying thesis corroborated by the Bolognese evidence is that the urban infrastructure of public health services (or 'healthscape') was already well developed in the Italian peninsula before the onset of the Black Death in 1347 (Taylor Zaneri and Guy Geltner, 'The dynamics of healthscaping: mapping communal hygiene in Bologna, 1287–1383', *Urban History*, 49 (2022), 2–27). Naama Cohen-Hanegbi's study of public health in late fourteenth-century Seville further suggests that, despite the general European pattern of improving public health provision after the Black Death, the plague did not always immediately galvanize urban healthscapes. Primarily based on the evidence of the city council's investment in medical libraries and financial allowances to staff in urban hospitals, Cohen-Hanegbi argues that significant expansion of Seville's healthscape did not occur until the final decades of the fourteenth century. When it did, increased theorizations on health care went hand in hand with an emphasis on spiritual care, a connection which may have been more profound in Seville than anywhere else in Latin Christendom. This was further accompanied by an all-too familiar tendency towards scapegoating the city's Jews. The most extreme example was Ferrán Martínez, archdean of the neighbouring city of Écija. In 1388, the Jews of Seville complained to the city council that his sermons and writings fuelled anti-Semitic sentiments and led to attacks upon their community. In his reply, Martínez doubled down on his conviction that the mere presence of Jews prevented proper administration of health care, just as the presence of synagogues in the city meant a disruption of the Christian order. Thus, Martínez drew a parallel between the physical body, the body of Christ and the urban body politic (Naama Cohen-Hanegbi, 'A healthy Christian city: Christianising health care in late fourteenth-century Seville', *Journal of Medieval History*, 48 (2022), 664–85).

The past year has also seen the publication of an important paper on the macro-economic effects of urban public services as a pull factor in urbanization processes. A joint venture of a political scientist and an economist sheds new light on the root causes of urbanization in the city-state of Genoa between 1300 and 1800. Genoa owed much of its wealth and splendour to the maritime empire that it maintained successfully up to the mid-seventeenth century, but even after the demise of this empire, the city itself continued to grow. Historians traditionally ascribe this continued growth to economic reconversion, but this claim does not withstand critical scrutiny. In fact, progressive urbanization was a consequence of structural poverty. The strip of land that constituted the Genoa hinterland did not lend itself to cereal agriculture, and other industries such as fisheries, silk production and so on were not particularly successful, so that year in year out, desperate country dwellers were drawn to Genoa, as another town that, over the centuries, had developed extensive public services, including the distribution of free food among the poor. Then again, as the urban economy was never so vibrant that the demand for labour could meet the demand for paid work by these newcomers, Genoa's public services were overwhelmed, so that progressive urbanization went hand in hand with pauperization. Rather than a pre-industrial success story, Genoa shows that urbanization in early modern Europe often resembled that of present-day Africa where rural immiseration also creates an enormous push-factor for urbanization (Luigi Oddo and

Andrea Zanini, 'The paradox of "Malthusian urbanization": urbanization without growth in the republic of Genoa, 1300–1800', *European Review of Economic History*, 26 (2022), 508–34.

A further reminder that the concept of 'community' (and hence solidarity) was and is fluid comes from a paper on how exactly the 'popolo' of Venice was defined, a word that oscillated between inclusive and exclusive definitions in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in dialogue with different political settings and circumstances. In a similar vein, this idea also underpins a contribution on urban revolts in the Low Countries. Based on a comparison of several cities within 'the larger Flemish economic area' (Flanders, Brabant, Artois, Liège, Tournaisis and parts of Hainaut and Picardy), Leen Bervoets and Jan Dumolyn aim to reconcile two scholarly traditions on urban uprisings in *ancien régime* Europe. On the one hand, there is the ('great') tradition of communal revolts against external authorities such as feudal lords and princes, which is mainly associated with the period between c. 1100 and the later thirteenth century. On the other hand, there is the ('little') tradition of internal uprisings of one or more groups within a single city, which was the predominant form of urban revolt from the fourteenth century onwards. Bervoets and Dumolyn examine the thirteenth century, which often gets short shrift in this body of scholarship even while it is recognized as a highly dynamic period of transition, as a kind of missing link that connects the two traditions. An interesting aspect of this transitional phase that the authors outline is the rise of bottom-up forms of political exclusion. The precocious development of Flemish urban textile corporations in the early 1200s, which soon clashed with the ruling patrician elites, led to a redefinition of the urban community within the ideological register: from a *communio* consisting of all burghers to a *communitatis* or *universitas* wherein 'the common(er)s' came to refer to all burghers 'minus the ruling elite of aldermen, councillors or leading men' (Leen Bervoets and Jan Dumolyn, 'Urban protest in thirteenth-century north-western Europe: a comparative approach', *Journal of Medieval History*, 48 (2022), 75–102).

At the level of individual cities, such power struggles involved mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, which often involved guilds or similar associations that further solidified internal bonds between groups of town dwellers. Gustavs Strenga offers a nuanced view on these mechanisms for fifteenth-century Riga. The beer carters' and porters' guilds of this Baltic city consisted of people from mixed social and ethnic backgrounds. The members of these transport workers' guilds had engaged in joint activities that fostered a sense of internal unison and identity such as communal meals since the fourteenth century. From the middle of the fifteenth century, however, both associations witnessed a renaissance that transformed members' capacity to derive their identity from guild membership. Around this time, both corporations introduced a new custom of granting donations to the guild, among other things of jugs and glassware that were used during communal meals. These highly visible tokens of membership to and relative stature within the guild injected a potential basis for new internal hierarchies. Yet these workers' associations – especially the beer carters' guild, whose members tended to be poorer than those of the porters' – stimulated the donation of small sums of money and objects of low value as well. In fact, almost half the donors of tableware (tablecloths, towels) in the 1450s and 1460s were working women. While gift-

giving within this corporative framework thus fostered a tendency towards new internal hierarchies, it simultaneously facilitated a sense of identity and belonging for poorer members as well (Gustavs Strenga, 'Donations, discipline and commemoration. Creating group identity in the transport workers guilds of mid fifteenth-century Riga', *Journal of Medieval History*, 48 (2022), 103–28).

Further attesting to the fluidity of such internal hierarchies, specifically as regards public gatherings, is a fascinating contribution by Hannah Serneels about the use of urban space. Serneels complements Bervoets and Dumolyn's birds-eye view of large urban uprisings with a study about smaller, individual acts of resistance within a select number of cities in the Southern Low Countries during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The underlying argument is that large-scale uprisings did not arise in a vacuum, but that there was a precondition of town dwellers first having to create, transform or merely claim certain spaces of resistance through individual acts of protest. In a theoretical model derived from James C. Scott's well-known work on everyday forms of resistance among Malaysian and Vietnamese peasants in the twentieth century, Serneels emphasizes the importance of the locations where acts of protest took place. A good example is shouting or singing politically charged songs. Public places such as city squares offered the best stage for resistance in this way, as the noise would reach a larger audience. But the risk of prosecution created a need to practise in a safer location. A possible practice site were the gatherings of urban craft guilds. In keeping with Strenga's point about the carters' and porters' guilds of fifteenth-century Riga, however, even when they took places in seclusion, guild meetings were not socially segregated events. They were still marked by internal hierarchies, which made them not entirely safe for ordinary people to brood on or engage in acts of resistance. Nevertheless, it was semi-private spaces such as these, and especially taverns, that were the crucial sites for small acts of resistance in South Netherlandish cities. As taverns usually had a socially diverse clientele, they were ideal spots to accost one's social betters, or even low-level officials, in relative isolation. Serneels mentions the example of a man called Hennan Luytens who took the opportunity of settling a score with a local appraiser (*waardeerder*) of poultry employed by the city of Mechelen when he bumped into him in a tavern in 1442. Luytens openly accused and threatened the appraiser, who had wrongfully confiscated a bird from his mother. Episodes like these raise the question whether the increased tendency among the *fango* of fourteenth-century Bologna to target innkeepers and taverners came with an elevated professional risk of being accosted or even harmed by drunken patrons whom they had fined in the past (Hannah Serneels, 'Making space for resistance: the spatiality of popular protest in the late medieval Southern Low Countries', *Urban History*, 49 (2022), 709–24).

Unfortunately, large-scale acts of violence against urban minorities were rife in *ancien régime* Europe. We have already mentioned violent attacks on the Jewish community of Seville in the later fourteenth century. Next to this, an article brings together the scattered evidence on the Tower of London as a key institution in the daily lives of English Jews between their arrival in England around 1190 and their expulsion in 1290. The constable of the Tower of London was not only responsible for managing the Jewish community in London but also elsewhere in the country, as English Jews were under the direct protection of the crown. As a result, Jews were

often transferred to the Tower for trials, with the available records revealing some 600 Jews who were accused of coin-clipping. Interestingly, the records not only reveal the well-known charges of ritual murder, child kidnapping and other anti-Semitic tropes, but also many hint at crimes in which Jews and Christians had colluded. More incidentally, the Tower of London also was a refuge to Jewish communities during anti-Semitic riots (Rory MacLellan, 'Prisoners, sanctuary-seekers, and workers: Jews at the Tower of London, 1189–1290', *History*, 107 (2022), 815–35).

Urban administrations were of course often directly involved in scapegoating. The official vilification of perceived acts of sexual deviancy, for example, was a tool for urban administrations to boost their own authority. Jesús Ángel Solórzano-Telechea examines the persecution of this wide array of acts that fell under the common denominator of 'sodomy' in the cities of fifteenth-century Castile. In these Christian cities, sodomy was seen as a direct crime against God, which therefore risked incurring divine vengeance upon the entire urban community. Just as we have seen with MacLellan's study of the Jewish minority of London, urban authorities appropriated the condemnation of such sexual deviancy to boost their own legitimacy. Sodomy was already penalized in Castile's eleventh-century law codes (*fueros*), when being convicted of this 'crime' brought great shame upon the individuals and their families. In the fifteenth century, however, Castilian town councils began to use persecutions of men and women who engaged in, or showed a willingness to engage in, non-procreative fornication with members of the same sex to consolidate their status as guardians of the 'common good'. It was from then on that sodomy was perceived as a crime that brought down shame and divine wrath not only upon the individual, but upon the urban community at large. And so, men and women who were convicted as sodomites were subjected to public humiliation and hideous forms of execution, the theatricality of which made these rituals an effective tool to bolster the authority of the magistrates. That said, members of the ruling elite frequently used accusations of sexual deviancy to discredit rival factions within their town (Jesús Ángel Solórzano-Telechea, 'Sodom's subjects: sodomy and urban politics in the late medieval kingdom of Castile', *Medieval History Journal*, 25 (2022), 60–92).

At the other end of the spectrum, last year saw the publication of several studies on the agency of the marginalized group par excellence: urban women. Maria Elisa Soldani has written on the wives of Tuscan merchants who set up shop in Barcelona. Apart from their critical role in the biological and social reproduction of the merchant household, these women also found their footing in a foreign town by navigating the somewhat different legal landscapes to engage in commerce and property transactions (Maria Elisa Soldani, 'D'une rive l'autre. Les épouses de marchands toscans à Barcelone au Xve siècle', *Revue Historique*, 703 (2022), 519–42). The agency of women is also highlighted in the contribution of Mary Harvey Donyo on the women of the convent of San Sisto, one of the oldest cloisters in Rome. Under Popes Innocent III and Honorius III, the convent became a hot-spot of institutional reform that was officially pitched as a process of spiritual housecleaning made necessary by the excessive involvement of these women in urban society. Building on a growing body of revisionist literature on religious reform, Donyo argues convincingly that the women of the convent colluded in

the construction of this narrative. While the reformation of the convent allowed both the pope and the Benedictine Order to wrestle control over convents and their resources from the Roman urban elite, this process also allowed the nuns to claim a privileged relationship with the papacy (Mary Harvey Donyo, 'Roman women: female religious, the papacy, and a growing Dominican order', *Speculum*, 97 (2022), 1040–72).

Rachel Delman, finally, shows that the English town of Stamford also knew a 'prominent female culture' of religiosity in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Taking the powerful noblewoman Margaret Beaufort (mother of King Henry VII) as a starting point, Delman exposes a vibrant network of rich urban women that oscillated between the town of Stamford and Beaufort's household at Collyweston in Northamptonshire. Lady Beaufort functioned as a conduit within this network, as did the guild of St Katherine and other urban anchoresses in Stamford (Rachel Delman, 'The vowesses, the anchoresses and the aldermen's wives: Lady Margaret Beaufort and the devout society of late medieval Stamford', *Urban History*, 49 (2022), 248–64).

1500–1800

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Religious co-existence is at the core of a debate that keeps on firing the imagination of early modern historians. All too often, the history of religious tolerance and co-existence is written from the top-down, through the eyes of the dominant religious majority. Genji Yasuhira takes a different approach route by scrutinizing from the bottom-up – using the extremely rich, but barely scrutinized judicial sources – how the Catholic minority in Utrecht deployed a series of survival strategies to profess their religion in a hostile Protestant environment ('Transforming the urban space: Catholic survival through spatial practices in post-Reformation Utrecht', *Past & Present*, 255 (2022), 39–86).

During the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Catholics were rather successful in protecting their sacred space. Even though the Reformation had officially secularized churches, monasteries and chapels (in hospices), some of these spaces were still used for clandestine Catholic services, funerals and other rituals well into the seventeenth century. Moreover, Catholics even succeeded in safeguarding a lot of crucifixes, saints' pictures, stained-glass windows, altars and other 'remnants of the Idolatry of the Papacy', as the Reformed consistory remarked bitterly in 1620. Yasuhira claims that the survival was not so much the result of the tolerance of the Utrecht city council and the magistrate – who, unlike the mellow stereotype of Dutch tolerance, took a hard line against Catholicism – but was only possible due to the support of canons, *klopjes* (women who lived together in a beguinage way) and local elites, who acted as patrons of the Catholic minority. They also protected their fellow believers in the second half of the seventeenth century, when Catholic life was forced to retreat from the (semi-)public space into private houses, where bolted doors, hatches and other secret let-outs for priests, *klopjes* and worshippers prevented Catholic life from being eradicated by an overzealous sheriff. Yasuhira's research not only makes a serious dent in the stereotypical