DEVELOPMENT OF MARKETS

his love for his fatherland has led to some exaggeration; accurate statistics were not available at his time. But it is now generally believed that Bonvesino did his best to obtain trustworthy data from well informed sources, and that he used some discretion in weighing the evidence.35

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Bonvesino della Riva, On the Marvels of the City of Milan
From the Latin* Milan, [1288]

IN PRAISE OF MILAN’S HOUSING

In regard to housing... the truth is there before the eyes of those who see. The streets in this city are quite wide, the palaces quite beautiful, the houses packed in, not scattered but continuous, stately, adorned in a stately manner.

1. Dwellings, with doors giving access to the public streets have been found to number about 12,500, and in their number are very many in which many families live together with crowds of dependents. And this indicates the astonishing density of population of citizens.

2. The roofed commons [open to all] neighbors in those squares which are popularly called coperti36 almost reach the record number of sixty.

3. The court of the Commune, befitting such a great city, spreads over an area of ten porticci or thereabouts. And in order to make this more easily understandable perchance to some people, I shall apply that it measures 130 cubits from east to west and 136 from north to south. In the midst of it stands a wonderful palace, and in the court itself there is a tower, in which are the four bells of the Commune. On the eastern side is a palace in which are the rooms of the podestà and of the judges, and at its end on the northern side is the chapel of the podestà, built in honor of our patron, the Blessed Ambrose. And another palace prolongs the court on the north; so, similarly, on the

The Final Product of the Commercial Revolution: Milan in 1283

It would be highly interesting to follow step by step the growth of the city as a permanent market. But this would require more space than we have at our disposal. It will suffice to compare the development of Milan and Pavia in the tenth century with a long description of Milan (Documents 21, 22, 23) by Frater Bonvesino della Riva, a thirteenth-century author who wrote in Latin, in Italian, and in Milanese dialect and won himself by his literary work a modest but respectable renown. The author of his data and figures formerly was strongly challenged, especially because his praise of his native city had been known only through excerpts inserted in a very unreliable compilation by another friar, Galvano Fiannos. Discovery of a manuscript of his work and careful checking of his data against other sources have gone a long way towards improving his reputation.44 To be sure, some of his figures may have been wrongly transcribed by the copyist of the only extant manuscript.

44 We omit here the description of a number of ministria carrying out various crafts—gold washers, fishmongers, leatherworkers, soapmakers.

45 Nunius et nautarii. The two words are practically synonymous, but there must have been a difference.

46 Gobtravessi. Nunc nullus homo debet illius ministria fons, nisi illi qui ministri sunt.

47 Nunius was the forename form one inciting the ban.

48 Nuncius sutilis et nautarii non estae, but exae ministri sunt.

49 Nunius was the forename form one inciting the ban.

50 Diciutare fuerit nautarii. Here nautarii does not seem to mean 'merchandise' but 'transaction'. The Paviaan merchants are given priority rights.

51 On Bonvesino della Riva as a literary figure, see G. Bertoni, Il Ducazzo, pp. 128ff. On his value as a historical source, see C. Baciduolo, Storia universale di Milano, pp. 295-31.

52 There is no general history of the Milanese economy in the high Middle Ages, but information on various aspects and periods can be found in T. Zotti, Apporti economico-storici del medioevo di Milano nel Trecento G. Bardini, Economia e politica nel duemila di Milano, G. Baccino, 'Giornali del Ducazzo', Archivio Storico Lombardo, LV (1888), 134-40.46

53 Bonvesino de Ripa [Bonvesino della Riva], 'De magnificis urbibus Mediolani,' ed. by F. Noval, In Bibliotheca historiae Italicum, XX (1848), 17-17. There also is a fine Italian translation, with useful comments, by E. Verga. Fra Bonvesino della Riva, Le maraviglie di Milano.

54 The only extant manuscript of the entire work has a gap here, this cannot be filled by using other incomplete manuscripts and excerpts.

55 The coperti, the Milanese version of what elsewhere was the portico or arcade, finally disappeared during the nineteenth century. Glass-paned galleries have to some extent taken their place in affording shelter to promenaders and meeting places sheltered from sun and rain and adorned with shop windows but the portico still plays an important part in the life of Italian towns.
DEVELOPMENT OF MARKETS

1. In fact, its natives of both sexes have the peculiarity of being rather tall, jovial in appearance, and quite friendly, not deceitful, still less malicious in dealing with people from outside their town, and because of this they also are more highly considered abroad than are others. ... They live decently, orderly, and magnificently; they use clothing that does them honor; wherever they may be, at home or elsewhere, they are quite free in spending, esteemed, honorable, good-natured in customs and way of life.

2. The population, as numerous in the city as in the country or in its district, increases every day, and the city spreads out with the [erection of new] buildings. How could the people not thrive where it is so glorious to live? For this reason, if citizens are counted together with strangers of all kinds they are found in all to be many more than 200,000 men [in the entire country]—each of them to be regarded as an able man at war. And we have not counted in their number men of different kinds exempted [from military service]—monks, canons, and other clerics and religious, both those professed and those living in their own homes with their servants.

3. In the city, indeed, there are ten canonsies, excluding from this number the house of canons [located] where the cathedral church is. But in the country there are seventy, not including seven canopies of the Order of the Humiliati, and the canons regular complete the number with twenty-one.

4. Then there are in the city ninety-four chapels...

5. In the city there are six convents of monks, and the nunneries are eight.

6. Again, in the city, including the suburbs, which are always to be regarded as included whenever the city is mentioned, there are ten hospitals for the sick, all properly endowed with sufficient temporal resources. The principal one of these is the Hospital of the Brolo, very rich in precious possessions; it was founded in 1145 by Godfrey de Busso. In it, as its friars and deacons testify, at times and particularly in the days of death[1], when count is made, there are found more than five hundred poor bed patients and just as many more not lying down. All of these receive food at the expense of the hospital itself. Besides them, also, no less than 350 babies and more, placed with individual nurses after their birth, are under the...

Bonvesin della Riva, On the Marvels of the City of Milan
From the Latin

Milan, [1288]

IN PRAISE OF MILAN'S POPULATION

When considered in regard to population, it seems to me that it outshines all the other cities in the world.

[Note: The text contains various footnotes and references.]

[1288]

[Note: Footnotes are used for additional information and context.]
hospital's care. 49 Every sort of the poor people mentioned below, 48 except the lepers, for whom another hospital is reserved, are received there; and they are kindly and bountifully restored to health, bed as well as food being provided. Also, all the poor needing surgical care are diligently cared for by three surgeons especially assigned to this task; the latter receive a salary from the Commune. In conclusion, the misery of no man who is in want meets refusal or rejection here. In the county, indeed, there are fifteen hospitals or thereabouts.

7. There are also houses of the Second Order of the Humiliati of each sex which in the city and the county reach the number of 220 inside them there is a copious number of persons leading the religious life while working with their own hands...

8. The houses of the Order of St. Augustine of each sex undoubtedly are sixty...

11. This, however, I affirm with certainty, that inside as well as outside the city, counting priests and other clerics of all orders... more than ten thousand religious are eating Ambrosian bread...

12. What else can be said of the huge number of the multitude living in Milan and in the county? Silence, whoever can grasp it, let him grasp it. This, however, will be forgiven me: that I am by no means silent. For, as I roughly estimate—and many definitely assert the same—more than 700,000 mouths of the two sexes, including all infants as well as adults, obtain their sustenance from the surface of the Ambrosian earth. Every day—and it is wonderful in what manner—they receive, from the hand of God, Ambrosian food.

13. Why not, even if their number is so great, since in the city alone, with its dense population, there undoubtedly are 115 parishes, among which there certainly are some in each of which indeed more than five hundred families live, while in a few others about one thousand live?

14. Let therefore anyone who can count how many persons live in such a city. And if he is able to do it accurately, he will count up to the number of about 200,000, as I firmly believe. For it is certainly proved and supported

by serious, careful investigation, that every day, taking into account the different seasons, 1,200 modii of grain and more are consumed in the city alone. That this is the truth of the matter, those who are wont to collect the tribute of the grain ground in the mills can certify.

15. Whoever wishes to know how many warriors there are in time of war should know that more than forty thousand—that is, counting each and all—live in this city who are able to fight the enemy with sword or lance or other weapon...

16. In it and in its county more than ten thousand could easily maintain war horses [if] ordered by the Commune...

17. There are in this city alone 720 doctors of both laws, and their college is believed to have no equal in the entire world, either in number or in learning. All these, ready to give [judicial] sentences, gladly take the money of the litigants.

18. The notaries are more than 1,500, among whom there are a great many who are excellent in drawing contracts.

19. The messengers of the Commune, popularly named servitori, undoubtedly are six hundred.

20. Six, indeed, are the principal trumpeters of the Commune, honorable and distinguished men...

21. The experts in medicine, who are popularly named physicians, are twenty-eight.

22. The surgeons of different specialties, indeed, are more than 150, among whom are a great many who, obviously being excellent physicians, have derived from the ancestors of their family the ancient traditions of surgery. They are believed to have no equals in the other cities of Lombardy.

23. The professors of grammatical art are eight. They supervise crowds of pupils, each professor with his rod, and teach grammar with great industry and diligence, surpassing the doctors of other cities, as I have clearly determined after careful examination.

24. There are fourteen doctors in the Ambrosian chant, of so excellent renown that because of them this city is noted for its crowds of clerics.

25. The teachers of the elements of reading and writing indeed number more than seventy.

26. The copyists, although there is no university (Stadium generale) in the city, surpass the number of forty, and by writing books with their hands every day they earn their bread and other expenses.

27. Indeed, there are three hundred bakers in the city (as one learns from
the books of the Commune) which bake bread for the use of the citizens. There are also very many other bakeries exempt [from taxation] which serve monks or religious of each sex; of these I think there are more than a hundred.

28. The shopkeepers,²¹ who sell at retail an amazing amount of goods or all kinds, doubtless are more than a thousand.

29. The butchers number more than 440, and excellent meat of quadrupeds of all kinds, as suits our customs, is sold in great quantity in their shops.

30. There are more than eighteen fishermen [who catch] all kinds of fish—trout, carp, large eels, tench, grayling, eels, lampreys, crabs—and who every day bring a supply of large and small fish of every species from the lakes of our county. Those who bring fish from the rivers number more than sixty, and those who bring fish from the numberless mountain streams state that they are far more than four hundred.

31. The hostellers giving hospitality to strangers for profit number about 150.²²

32. The smiths who outfit quadrupeds with iron shoes number about eighty, and this indicates the multitude of horsemen and horses. How many are the saddlers, how many the smiths of bridles and spurs and stirrups, I pass over in silence.

33. The makers of the sweet-sounding brass bells which are attached to the breasts of horses—and which we do not know are made anywhere else—are more than thirty, and each of them has under him many assistants in his craft.

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Bonvesinello della Riva, On the Marvels of the City of Milan

From the Latin²³

Milan, [1288]

IN PRAISE OF MILAN'S FERTILITY AND ABUNDANCE OF ALL GOODS

When considered in regard to the fertility of territory and the abundance of all goods useful for human consumption, [its excellence] already is evident, but I shall explain it more plainly.

²¹ Taberna evidently stems from classic Latin, taberna, 'shop,' and not from medieval Latin, taberna, 'inn.'

²² Unlike many other cities, Milan allowed inns to keepers to buy and to sell wares in their inns, as appears from the statutes of 1216.

²³ See note 16.

1. In fact,²⁴ in our territories, fertile, fortunate, fruitful,²⁵ all kinds of cereals are produced: wheat, rye, millet, panic from which bread is made, and all kinds of vegetables which can be cooked and are excellent to eat—beans, chickpeas, navy beans, small chick peas, lentils—in such an amazing quantity that after being distributed in different places they not only make good the deficiency of foodstuffs in the city of Como but also are transported and distributed to feed peoples beyond the Alps. Why not, since . . . more than thirty thousand yoke of oxen cultivate our territory? . . . Also, in our fields an infinite and unbelievable quantity of flax is produced . . .

3. Sour and sweet cherries of all kinds, both cultivated and wild, grow in such great quantity that sometimes it happens that more than sixty carts of them are in one day brought through the gates of the city, and they are available for sale in the city at any hour from mid-May until almost mid-July. Plums, too, white, yellow, dark, damascene, likewise in almost infinite quantity, are distributed ripe from shortly before the Kalends of July until the month of October.

At the same time plums begin to appear, pears, summer apples, blackberries, and the figs named 'flowers' appear in abundance; then follow cultivated filberts; afterwards the cornel-berrys, particularly appropriate for ladies;²⁶ also jujubes and peaches amazingly abundant; likewise, figs and grapes of various kinds; also almonds, although few of them; wild filberts, nuts in unbelievable quantity, which all citizens who like them enjoy all the year round after all meals. Nuts can also be mixed, ground, with eggs and cheese and pepper to stuff meat in winter. Also an oil is obtained from them which is liberally consumed among us. Then again, winter pears and apples and crabapples grow, all of which abundantly supply our citizens throughout winter and beyond. Also pomegranates appear, most useful to the sick. Grapes of many kinds are abundant, and they appear ripe about the middle of July and are available for sale until the Kalends of December or thereof.

4. Also the common and the noble chestnuts—the latter named matroni—grow in infinite quantity and they are distributed all the year round in abundance to both citizens and foreigners. These, served in different ways, abundantly refresh our families. In fact, they may be cooked green in the open fire, and may be consumed after the other foods instead of dates and,
in my opinion, they taste better than dates. Often they are boiled, and many eat them, cooked like this, with a spoon; then, very often, the water in which they were cooked is poured out and they are chewed without bread, indeed instead of bread. Also, when dried out by the slow heat of the sun, they are then recommended for the sick. Very many medlars, so displeasing to bankrupt gamblers, appear in the month of November. Olives grow in some parts of our county, although they are not very abundant, and laurel berries, which should be eaten with warm wine to cure pains in the stomach. Other kinds of fruit also grow, but what was said above about them will be enough for the present. No dates, pepper, or any of the very many spices from overseas are grown here—and I am not sorry for this, since they do not grow anywhere except in arid and extremely hot climates. . . .

6. The monastery of Chia Ravalle alone gathers in its own fields every year more than three thousand cartloads of hay, as the monks of that house tell me. . . .

8. More than 150,000 cartloads [of firewood] are certainly burned every year in the city alone. . . .

11. It is worth noting that in the city alone about seventy oxen are slaughtered every day—counting only the days in which the consumption of meat is permitted to Christians—as I investigated carefully from a few butchers.

12. As the sellers of fish themselves, having investigated carefully the truth of the matter, plainly declare, counting all days from Quinquagesima Sunday to the feast of Saint Martin [November 11], more than seven modii of crab are eaten every day in the city alone. And in order that no one may remain in doubt as to what quantity is understood by modius, let him know that the size of the modius with us is eight sextarii, and it weighs as much as a heavy man.

16. It was learned after careful examination of those who collect the tribute of the salt for the Commune that 65,830 sextarii of salt or theraboutes are brought every year through the gates of the city. . . . But how much pepper is likely to be consumed within the city . . . I could not learn in any way.

In my opinion, it is indeed more pleasing to the poor to use pepper, yet the just man using it in his food is not to be despised. Was it not said that he who is poor should not scorn the poor? But surely it is no sin to use pepper, since it is allowed on the divine law. . . .

17. Four general fairs are held in the city every year, that is, on the day of the ordination of the Blessed Ambrose, on the feast of the Blessed Lawrence, on the Ascension of the Blessed Mother of God, and on the feast of the Blessed Bartholomew. It is amazing to see almost innumerable merchants with their variety of wares and buyers flocking to all these fairs. Furthermore, ordinary markets are held in different parts of the city two days a week, that is, on Fridays and Saturdays. Indeed—and this is more amazing—practically anything that man may need is brought daily not only into special places but even into the [open] squares, and all that can be sold is loudly advertised for sale. Also, there are many fairs in the towns and villages of our county, being held every year on certain days. In many of them, in fact, there is a market every week, and merchants and buyers hasten to all of them in large numbers. It is evident, after all that has been said, that in our city it is a wonderful life for those who have money enough. Every convenience for human pleasure is known to be at hand here.

18. Also it is obvious that here any man, if he is healthy and not a good-for-nothing, may earn his living expenses and esteem according to his station. And it is worth noting that here the fecundity of offspring is just as prolific as the abundance of temporal goods. In fact, when on festive days one looks at the merry crowds of dignified men, both of the nobility and of the people, also at the bustling thongs of children incessantly scurrying here and there, and at the comedy gatherings, comedy groups of ladies and virgins going back and forth or standing on the doorsteps [of their homes], as dignified as if they were daughters of kings, who would say that he has ever met such a wonderful show of people this side or the other side of the sea. . . .

Florence, a Masterpiece of the Commercial Revolution

The four Italian cities of Milan, Venice, Genoa, and Florence far outstripped all other European business centers during the Commercial Revolution. Milan's