

# Guild Ordinance for the Slipper-makers of Lüneburg (February 8, 1525)

## Abstract

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This ordinance for the slipper-makers of Lüneburg, which lay in the duchy of Brunswick-Lüneburg, represents the midpoint on the spectrum between local autonomy and princely rule. It regulates relations among masters and between masters and apprentices, and it sheds light on the guild's shared religious life. This guild was not only a unit of production—it was also a Marian confraternity, whose members (and their wives) shared a corporate religious life. The Marian fund was the guild's treasury, a fact emphasized by the custom of levying fines in wax, which was presumably used for votive candles. The guild was also a burial society.

## Source

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### I. Ordinance of the Masters

[1] Every master may hold two apprentices and one youth or helper. [1] And when a master has a youth who has been learning with him for half a year, he may take another youth into his shop.

[2] When a master has staffed his workshop in this manner and more apprentices come into the city, any apprentice who comes to a master should work for him for fourteen days, and afterwards [he should do] more work either for the same or another master. And if it should happen that there is then no master who requires the apprentice's services, he shall stay where he is, but without a contract, because he came outside of the contract time. And he shall also not enter into a contract until the contract time comes; rather he should receive his wage on a regular basis. [2]

[3] Furthermore, the masters shall normally keep contracting times on Easter and Michaelmas [September 29] and take the apprentices under contract at their place in the guild hall. Thus, the same manner and customs that are found in other towns will be observed. Every master should direct the apprentice to that spot. And if a master or a journeyman opposes this, he shall receive a fitting penalty.

[4] Item, should an apprentice behave improperly in his master's house, the master should ask and take fitting recompense from him.

[5] So also, if a master wants to fill a large order and be paid in gold, he should not deliver the slippers himself until the eldest master present has inspected the work and confirmed its quality. And if the master does not do this, he shall be fined a cask of beer, one half to the Marian fund and the other half to the masters.

[6] Furthermore, if a master should take an apprentice from another master outside of the contract time, the former shall also be fined a cask of beer as often as this happens, one half of which will go in penance to the Marian fund, the other half to the masters.

[7] And if any master should—by God's will—lose a wife or children, all members of the guild shall process to the grave, as is fitting, and the apprentices shall carry the corpse to the grave. Whoever does not do this and stays home, whether master, wife, or apprentice, shall be fined a half pound of wax for the Marian fund.

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[8] Furthermore, each Saturday every master shall give 2 pence to the Marian fund.

## **[II.] Order and Regulation of the Apprentices**

[1] Item, when an apprentice first begins his traveling years, these regulations shall be read aloud to him, so that he knows how to behave and of which rules he should be aware.

[2] Afterward, he shall be congratulated with a drink and received as a good journeyman, whereupon he shall immediately donate 6 pence to the Marian fund.

[3] If it should happen that an apprentice becomes so drunk that he vomits in the guild hall, he shall give a pound of wax to the Marian fund.

[4] And if an apprentice tries to bring a drunk apprentice into his master's house, which he is obliged to protect from harm, and if the apprentice does not stop this behavior, he shall be fined one keg of red beer, one half to the Marian fund and the other half to the guild hall.

[5] And if it should happen that the apprentice does not remain in his master's house, but goes around in an improper fashion, he shall incur the same penalty.

[6] And if an apprentice misbehaves in the guild hall, he shall pay a fine of a pound of wax to the Marian fund.

[7] And if an apprentice plays with dice or cards either outside or inside the city, he shall pay a fine of a pound of wax as often as it happens.

[8] Item, every apprentice and anyone who has completed the instruction should give 2 pence to the Marian fund every fourteen days.

[9] Those youths who have been in training for one year shall give 1 penny to the Marian fund every fourteen days.

[10] Item, when a youth wants to learn our craft, he shall be named to the masters, and it should be shown that he is truly and legitimately born and has been instructed for 3 years.

[11] And whenever a youth wants to be accepted for instruction, he shall give the apprentices 3 shillings for the guild hall and 4 shillings to the Marian fund.

[12] And an apprentice who has not properly completed the training year shall not be promoted.

[13] If a journeyman should fall ill, he shall be lent 4 or 8 shillings from the Marian penitential fund. If this apprentice should die, then this money shall be recovered from his remaining goods, but if he survives, he shall repay the borrowed money to the fund.

[14] Item, if an apprentice is regularly delinquent in his reparations, the master should withhold wages from the apprentice until it is made right. And if an apprentice leaves the city or is banished, he shall pay 6 pence into the Marian fund.

[15] And when a youth transgresses the aforementioned rule, the honorable city council's custom shall be observed and not hindered.

[16] What is collected in the fund will be put toward two candelabra and candles to the glory of God and the Blessed Virgin Mary, to increase her high praise.

Written on Wednesday after Candelmas [February 8], in the year 1525.

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## NOTES

[1] The meaning of this term [*ansteker*] is not entirely clear, but it may refer to someone who pins patterns to the material for slippers and thereby expedites the master's work. Its position in the sentence seems to suggest that this was a relatively unskilled worker who would be comparable to a youth in the first years of instruction in the craft. Comparable, sub-apprentice workers are referred to in the previous document, the Ordinance for the Bakers of Regensburg. There, they are called "helpers" [*helffer*]*—trans.*

[2] As the following article reveals, the contracting of apprentices occurred twice a year*—trans.*

Source of original German text: Eduard Bodemann, ed., *Die Älteren Zunfturkunden der Stadt Lüneburg*. Hannover, 1883, pp. 170–72.

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