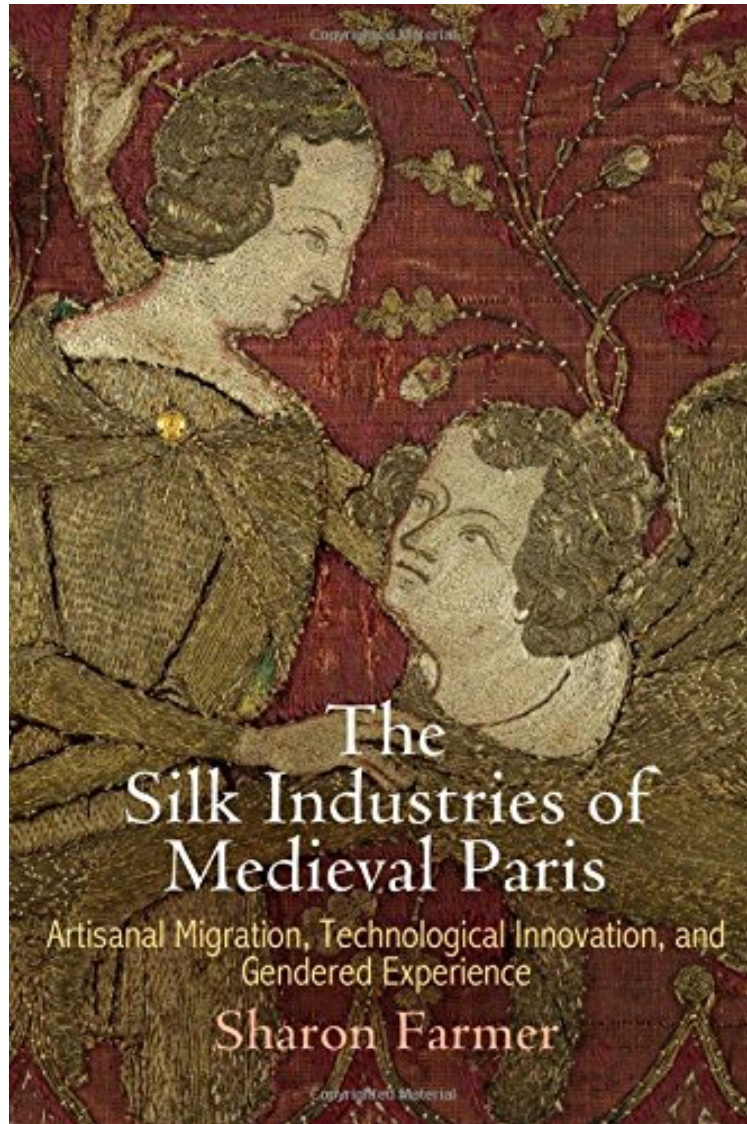


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Sharon Farmer

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and Gendered Experience (The Middle Ages Series):

For more than one hundred years, from the last decade of the thirteenth century to the late fourteenth, Paris was the only western European town north of the Mediterranean basin to produce luxury silk cloth. What was the nature of the Parisian silk industry? How did it get there? And what do the answers to these questions tell us? According to Sharon Farmer, the key to the manufacture of silk lies not just with the availability and importation of raw materials but with the importation of labor as well. Farmer demonstrates the essential role that skilled Mediterranean immigrants played in the formation of Paris's population and in its emergence as a major center of luxury production. She highlights the unique opportunities that silk production offered to women and the rise of women entrepreneurs in Paris to the very pinnacles of their profession. *The Silk Industries of Medieval Paris* illuminates aspects of intercultural and interreligious interactions that took place in silk workshops and in the homes and businesses of Jewish and Italian pawnbrokers. Drawing on the evidence of tax assessments, aristocratic account books, and guild statutes, Farmer explores the economic and technological contributions that Mediterranean immigrants made to Parisian society, adding new perspectives to our understanding of medieval French history, luxury trade, and gendered work.

"In *The Silk Industries of Medieval Paris* we have, for the first time, a coherent discussion of silk and accessories production that accounts for the unusual presence of female guilds in Paris. Sharon Farmer also reveals the basis of the appearance of luxury fabrics made in Paris in aristocratic and royal account books. This is an invaluable contribution to the history of women, gender, and medieval industry." Kathryn Reyerson, University of Minnesota

About the Author Sharon Farmer is Professor of History at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

Introduction At some point before the last decade of the thirteenth century a luxury silk cloth industry emerged in Paris. In chronological terms, this development is not particularly surprising. By the end of the thirteenth century at least four towns in northern Italy had developed commercial silk cloth industries, and in Paris itself the commercial production of silk yarn and smaller silk mercery goods had been around for at least fifty years. It is, rather, geography that might give us pause. In the period before the fifteenth century European production of luxury silk cloth was generally confined to the Mediterranean region; and, indeed, until that century, Paris remained the only western European town north of the Mediterranean basin to produce luxury silk cloth. At least one major historian of the silk industry of Renaissance Italy has drawn the conclusion, moreover, that the Parisian silk industry of the thirteenth century could not have amounted to anything other than the production of haberdashery. One goal of this book, then, is to establish that Paris really did have a silk cloth industry and to demonstrate that, together with the other silk textile industries there, it played a major role in the local economy, especially because it was one of the most important sources of employment for women. Another goal of the book is to explain how the technology of luxury silk cloth production reached Paris and, in so doing, to address the question of long-distance immigration from the Mediterranean basin to medieval northern France. In the premodern period, luxury silk technologies tended to spread in conjunction with the movement of skilled artisans and entrepreneurs who understood the peculiar characteristics of silk fiber and of the complex looms that could create patterned and piled textiles with that fiber. Understanding the origins of the luxury silk cloth industry in Paris thus entails an analysis of patterns of migration in medieval France, most especially patterns of migration from the Mediterranean basin where the closest luxury silk cloth workers resided to northern France. In examining those patterns of migration, I hope that this book will recast our understanding of the French medieval past. Since the publication of Grard Noiriel's *Le creuset franais* in 1988, a number of historians of modern France have attempted to assert the importance of immigrants and immigration in the history of France and thus to redefine powerful national myths about what it means to be French. Only by reorienting our understanding of the French past, Noiriel believed, could the enormous numbers of French citizens who are themselves immigrants, or the children and grandchildren of immigrants, come to feel, and to be perceived, as fully French. While Noiriel focused on waves of immigration in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, other scholars, such as Jean-Francois Dubost and Peter Sahlin, have pushed the inquiry back into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Medievalists, however, have been slower to come to grips with the magnitude and socioeconomic breadth of immigrant communities in France, especially communities of immigrants who came to northern France from various parts of the Mediterranean. It seems especially important that historians of medieval France do so, however, given the huge role that French medievalists of the *Annales* school played in the decades following World War II, when the French peasantry was rapidly disappearing in perpetuating the myth that the French landscape and the peasants who once worked it gave birth to the people who eventually constituted the modern French nation. Indeed, despite Noiriel's work, the myth continued to inform French historical scholarship into the early 1990s and beyond. In an essay titled "La terre" in Pierre Nora's collective work on French realms of memory, for instance, Armand Frmont claimed that "with only a few rare exceptions, every French family sinks the roots of its genealogical tree into peasant soil." Perpetuating such a view requires putting on blinders when it comes to modern, early modern, or medieval immigrants

who became permanent residents of France. The one category of Mediterranean immigrants to medieval northern France that has received considerable attention to which I will return in Chapter 5 is that of northern Italian merchant-bankers and pawnbrokers. But the problem with these merchant-bankers and pawnbrokers is that, for the most part, they did not integrate into French society; their immigration was usually temporary, they clustered in their own neighborhoods, and they were subject to distinct and often discriminatory treatment by the king. Focusing on the temporary status of the majority of these Italians, as well as on their volatile relations with the crown, a number of social historians of medieval Paris have come to the conclusion that Italian immigrants to Paris never integrated with the rest of the community and that Paris thus "remained a northern city," with a foreign migrant population consisting almost exclusively of people originating in England, Germany, and the Low Countries. Through a focused analysis of immigrants who contributed to the origins and early development of the Parisian silk industry in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, this book challenges that conventional wisdom. The Mediterranean immigrant entrepreneurs and artisans who contributed to the early development of the Parisian silk industry took up permanent residence in Paris, paying taxes not as foreign "Lombards" but as "bourgeois of Paris." The evidence concerning these immigrants suggests that from at least the thirteenth century, if not before, the melting pot of France consisted of much more than the three iconic groups: Gauls, Romans, and Franks whose role in the making of France was first highlighted and idealized by Jules Michelet. The influx of these immigrants into Parisian society and the contributions that they made to that society suggest, moreover, that during and just after the age of the crusades, and of Latin Christian Europe's expansion into Iberia and the Byzantine empire, human movement across the Mediterranean transformed not only the frontiers of Latin, Greek, and Muslim cultures but also the northern regions from which many of the crusaders and settlers emerged. The second major focus of the book is that of gender and work status. A majority of the Mediterranean immigrants who participated in the early development of the silk cloth industry in Paris came from towns in northern Italy where inheritance customs, legal systems, and guild regulations worked to restrict women's access to property and to high-status labor. Large numbers of women in these Italian towns worked in the silk industry, but they were almost always in positions at the very bottom of the labor hierarchy. In Paris, by contrast, the industry that these immigrants helped start ended up providing unusual opportunities for women. By examining, and attempting to explain, the prominence that women came to play in the Parisian silk industry not only as workers with relatively modest incomes but also as prominent mistresses of ateliers and as prosperous entrepreneurs, I hope to add new perspectives on gender and work in the Middle Ages. The discussion of women's high-status labor in the Parisian silk industry will draw useful comparisons with women's roles in Italian centers of silk production, as well as with their roles in the wool industries of northern France and the Low Countries. Those comparisons emphasize that Parisian silk women were able to rise to levels of prominence that we do not find in other textile industries. The presence in Paris of the French royal court, I argue, may help explain the unusual gendered patterns in Paris's silk industry. The final chapter of the book brings together issues of migration, cultural difference, and gender by looking at Jewish and foreign Lombard interactions with Parisian silk women both through relationships of production and through relationships of credit. ***Chapter 1 sets the stage for the rest of the book by providing a broad overview of late thirteenth-century Paris as a city with a significant range of luxury industries and with a significant population of Mediterranean immigrants. Part of the context for Mediterranean immigration into Paris is already well-known, although it bears repeating here: in the thirteenth century, the French royal dynasty and the aristocrats who associated with that dynasty were tied to Mediterranean regions through dynastic marriages and through familial histories involving a variety of military conquests. Additionally, the University of Paris, which first took shape in the twelfth century, drew large numbers of international students and scholars, including a very large number from Italy and a significant number from Iberia. Beginning in the mid-thirteenth century, moreover, Italian merchant-bankers became semipermanent residents of Paris in order to finance royal projects, lend money to elite and modest borrowers, and supply wealthy consumers—royal, aristocratic, and ecclesiastical—with exotic luxury goods, many of which originated in the Far East. As I further elaborate in Chapter 1, Paris reigned supreme among northwest European centers of luxury consumption, so much so that in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries even the English king sent his agents there to buy luxury goods. Some of those goods, like silk cloth from Lucca and the Levant, were imported. Others, however, such as gold and silver plate, jewelry, illuminated manuscripts, and fine linens, were produced locally; and it was within this context of skilled luxury production that Paris became both a magnet for talented immigrant labor and a place in which luxury silk textiles were produced. Chapter 2 turns to the production processes within the interconnected silk textile industries that took root in Paris over the course of the thirteenth century. The production process began outside of Paris, in centers of silkworm cultivation in Central Asia, China, and around the Mediterranean. By first describing the original transformation of silk cocoons into raw silk and then following the journey taken by silk fiber, from the centers of silkworm cultivation to Paris, the chapter calls to our attention the trade networks that linked Paris and its silk industry not only to the Mediterranean world but also to Asia and Central Asia. It then goes on to elucidate the ways in which silk work differed from or resembled work with other textile fibers, thereby enhancing our understanding of why the spread of silk technologies usually involved the migration of skilled workers. Those migrants are the focus of Chapter 3. The technical discussions in Chapter 2 also provide useful

background information for understanding gendered hierarchies of production, which are a major focus of Chapter 4. Chapter 3, an investigation of the role of immigrants who contributed to the Parisian silk industry, begins with a discussion of the Parisian mercers/entrepreneurs who both sold silk and, in some cases, managed the production of silk yarn, textiles, and mercery goods. It then turns to a variety of source materials in an effort to locate, among mercers who resided in the most important mercery neighborhoods of Paris, those who had immigrated to Paris from the Mediterranean region. I then search, in the evidence provided by Parisian tax assessments, for immigrant silk artisans whose tax addresses place them in relative proximity to mercers from the same towns or regions. Immigrant mercers, we learn from Parisian tax assessments and other sources, had come to Paris from nearly every important zone of silk production in the Mediterranean: the Levant, Cyprus, the former Byzantine empire, Iberia, Venice, and Lucca. Silk artisans including some artisan women migrated to Paris from Venice, Lucca, and Cyprus. Chapter 4 looks at gendered hierarchies and the importance of women in the Parisian silk industries. The tax assessments from late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century Paris indicate that in Paris, as elsewhere, women predominated among silk workers; silk work, moreover, predominated among women's forms of employment. Nevertheless, men predominated among high-status silk workers and among silk entrepreneurs. The first section of Chapter 4 discusses the evidence supporting this point, emphasizing five different markers of labor status. The second and third sections of the chapter, however, shift our perspective, comparing and contrasting the status of Parisian silk women with the status of other working women: specifically, silk women in Italian towns, and women in Paris and other northern French and Flemish towns who participated in the wool industry. Looked at from this perspective, Parisian silk women appear to have had extremely high status. After attempting to explain why Parisian silk work was able to offer unusual opportunities for women and why the gendered hierarchies of silk work changed when silk production traveled from Italy to Paris the chapter returns to silk women of low income and status, thereby highlighting the enormous gap in wealth and opportunity between silk women who owned their own workshops and those who remained mere employees throughout their lives. Chapter 5 looks at relations that arose between silk women, on the one hand, and two groups that were considered outsiders to Parisian bourgeois society but whose members, nevertheless, had a relatively strong presence in Paris at the end of the thirteenth century: Jews and foreign Lombard moneylenders. In the first section I argue that although thirteenth-century Parisian silk women probably turned to both Jewish and Lombard moneylenders when they were in need of credit, they would have been more inclined if they had a reasonable choice to do business with Jewish moneylenders rather than Lombard moneylenders. A perception that foreign Lombards were sexually dangerous, I suggest, contributed to that preference. In the second part of the chapter, I turn to other relations that developed, in the second half of the thirteenth century, between Parisian silk women and Jews, some of whom became involved in the production of various silk products. The fact that Parisian Jews were involved in textile production points, I suggest, to contacts between northern French Jews and Jews of Mediterranean regions. In the third and final section of the chapter I explain and describe transformations that took place during the fourteenth century, when the French king began to pass and enforce increasingly repressive policies toward Jews and foreign Lombards. In the conclusion to the book I review the political and economic challenges that Paris faced in the fifteenth century, with a view toward providing a context for the eventual disappearance of Paris's silk cloth industry, which took place at some point before 1467.***

In developing the analysis in the chapters that follow I have drawn, for the most part, on three distinct types of sources: Parisian guild statutes that were generated between c. 1266 and 1365, seven Parisian tax assessments that were generated between 1292 and 1313, and household accounts and inventories from the courts of France, England, Artois, Savoy, Flanders, Hainaut, Sweden, Navarre, and Rome. Where appropriate, I have also drawn on narrative evidence from the fragmentary civil and criminal court records of late fourteenth-century Paris and from miracle stories of the late thirteenth century. These sources offer windows into the daily lives of immigrants, Parisian Jews, apprentices, and working women who fell into hard times. The few historians who have mentioned the silk industry of medieval Paris in their work have drawn almost exclusively on published editions of the collection of Parisian guild statutes known as the *Livre des métiers*. Most of those statutes (those for 73 of the 101 guilds whose statutes are now included in published editions of the *Livre des métiers*) were codified between 1266 and 1275 by the royal provost of Paris, tienne Boileau, or by his immediate successor. As I will discuss more fully in Chapters 2 and 3, however, the statutes for the two most important silk-weaving guilds were not codified until after 1280, thus suggesting that those two guilds, and most likely the activity of weaving silk cloth, did not take shape in Paris until after 1275, tienne Boileau held the office of royal provost of Paris from 1261-1270. He was appointed to that office by King Louis IX (r. 1226-1270), who instigated a number of reforms both for the governance of his realm and for the governance of Paris itself. Those reforms helped create the political context for the flourishing of artisanal production and commercial activity in Paris. Louis helped limit abuses of royal administrative power in Paris by transforming the office of royal provost into a salaried position rather than one that was remunerated through a "farming" system, in which administrators owed a fixed amount of their administrative revenue to the king but could keep for themselves the rest of the revenue that they generated; tienne Boileau was the first royal provost to be remunerated with such a salary. Louis IX also created the administrative structure through which the bourgeois elite of Paris came to exercise independent governance over civil and commercial aspects of life in the municipality. Beginning with Louis's reign, that governance was exercised by the

newly created provost of the merchants and four bourgeois chevins who assisted him. This group of bourgeois magistrates is important to us because it came to include a number of mercers/entrepreneurs who sold silk textile products and managed part of the production process. We will encounter a number of mercers from chevin families in the chapters that follow. Like the *Livre des métiers*, the Parisian tax assessments of 1292-1313 are emblematic of the particular concerns of a particular king/those of King Philip the Fair (r. 1285-1314) whose military skirmishes with Flanders and England created a need for more organized forms of taxation. But the assessments are also indicative of the successful formation of the city's bourgeois leadership: the bourgeois citizens of the town chose to fulfill their financial obligations to the king through an assessment of the value of their property, rather than having to pay a tax on all commercial transactions, which they apparently felt would have been harmful to commerce. Although no document ever spells out how the assessors (who were bourgeois residents of the neighborhoods that they assessed) arrived at their conclusions concerning the tax obligations of particular households, it seems that they based their assessments on the value of a household's movable and immovable property, including business inventory. The tax assessments of 1292-1313 constitute the most extensive demographic source for the population of Paris from the entire Middle Ages, and they are among the best fiscal records that we have for any medieval town. The first assessment, that of 1292, which seems to have been a preliminary list of people who would later be taxed, was the largest of all of the assessments because it included citizens who were assessed for only 1 sou (or 12 deniers); it includes approximately 15,000 heads of household. The assessments of 1296-1300, which included taxpayers owing 2 sous or more, represent the last 5 years of a collective tax obligation of 10,000 livres parisis per year that began in 1293. Each of the assessments of 1293-1300 originally included approximately 10,000 taxpaying heads of household; however, the lists for 1293-1295 have been lost, as has that part of the 1296 assessment that included the names of the most modest taxpayers those who paid between 2 and 5 sous. The assessment of 1296 thus includes only around 6,000 names rather than 10,000. Similarly, the more restricted assessment for the year 1313, which was drawn up for the knighting of the future Louis X, also includes approximately 6,000 names. All of the taxpayer information from the seven tax assessments of 1292-1313 has been entered into a computerized database by Caroline Bourlet of the Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes in Paris. Over the past dozen years, she has generously created at my request numerous electronic files containing the names and taxpayer information of various categories of workers and various categories of immigrants. Those lists provided the starting point for the appendices at the back of this book, as well as for other statistical arguments that I have developed in the text and in the notes. As I explain in Chapters 1, 3, and 4, the tax assessments do not provide consistent information for generating statistics. Nevertheless, they have enabled me to draw conclusions concerning patterns of migration, the relative size of various professional groups, and relative incomes across professions and between genders. Moreover, unlike many other tax lists of this period, the Parisian tax assessments locate taxpayers in their parishes and on their streets. Since some 75 percent of the population was never taxed, the information about taxpayers' precise locations on their streets is only approximate; nevertheless, it is clear that the tax assessors moved up and down the streets of Paris in an orderly fashion, so we do get important information about approximate locations and about individuals who either lived or worked in proximity to each other. Because the tax assessments provide geographical information, and because it is possible to collect cumulative information about individuals and neighborhoods across the seven assessments, I have been able to chart individual taxpayers' locations on maps of medieval Paris, to determine who their neighbors were, and to follow them (and sometimes their business partners and families) from one tax assessment to another. Unlike the *Livre des métiers* and the Parisian tax assessments, household account books did not result from a single set of administrative innovations coming out of a single court. Instead they emerged broadly across Europe, as a manifestation of the growth of pragmatic literacy and improved record keeping in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The earliest surviving aristocratic or royal household account books are those of the count-kings of Catalonia, from the 1150s. By the late thirteenth century, most kings and many aristocratic households were keeping such records in order to keep track of the amount of money that household administrators were spending on food, provisions for horses, clothing, jewelry, and plate. The accounts, or sections of accounts, that most interest us were known as the "wardrobe accounts," in the case of the English royal household, the "Comptes de l'argenterie," in the case of the French royal household, and "mises extraordinaires," "grosses parties," or "parties foraines," in the case of various aristocratic households. In these accounts, or sections of accounts, the administrators of elite households recorded purchases of textiles for the clothing for the head of household, for members of his or her family, and for liveries to all of the retainers within the households. Textile purchases for interior decorations of residences and for military banners and outfits (for both mounted warriors and their horses) sometimes appeared in these accounts, but they were also recorded in separate accounts for building and stable expenses, which I have drawn on, in places, as well. For the decades surrounding the end of the thirteenth century, I have consulted two of the most extensive sets of unpublished accounts from this period for the region north of the Alps: those of the English royal household and the comital house of Artois. I have also consulted the published and unpublished records of the French royal household, the comital houses of Flanders and Hainaut, and the published inventories of Pope Boniface VIII. For that period, and the later fourteenth century, I have also made an effort to examine all of the published sources mentioned in Frdrique Lachaud's survey article on textiles in medieval household

accounts, and I have benefited, as well, from references provided by colleagues working with the royal and comital accounts of Sweden and Savoy. Combining prosopographical evidence from the account books and the Parisian tax assessments has proven to be invaluable for constructing miniature biographies of a number of Parisian silk entrepreneurs. The aristocratic accounts also provide precious evidence concerning the consumption of Parisian silk textiles, and they occasionally offer hints concerning production processes. Contrary to the assumption that Paris produced only haberdashery, the account books indicate that luxury silk cloth that was produced in Paris showed up in such diverse places as France, England, Sweden, and the county of Savoy. To be sure, those same accounts also indicate that Paris's silk industry never reached productive capacities that competed with those of the four main Italian centers of thirteenth-century production, but it is clear, nevertheless, that there was indeed a luxury silk cloth industry in medieval Paris and that it lasted for at least a hundred years.