



THE GUILDS OF THE FLORENTINE REPUBLIC

Florentine craftsmen grouped themselves into Associations by the second half of the thirteenth century, and each working citizen had to belong to a guild to have the right to aspire to public office. Their craftsmanship brought the city to very high economic status and helped build an artistic wealth that endures today. Each guild had their individual patron saint and a flag (called gonphalon) with its emblem. They owned their own separate residence and wrote separate statutes for their internal organization and ruling.

At the beginning seven MAJOR ARTS were established, they were:

1. The guild of Judges and Notaries
2. The Merchants of Calimala (Calimala being the streets where they had their shops)
3. The Guild of Exchange
4. The Wool Guild
5. The Silk or Por Santa Maria Guild (Por S. Maria being one of the gates to the city)
6. The Guild of Physicians and Apothecaries
7. The Guild of Vair preparers and Furriers

Some time later 14 MINOR ARTS were added, they were:

- I. The Guild of Butchers
- II. The Guild of Shoemakers
- III. The Guild of Smiths
- IV. The Guild of Masters in Stone and Wood
- V. The Guild of Flax Dressers and Second Hand Dealers
- VI. The Guild of Vintners
- VII. The Guild of Hoteliers

- VIII. The Guild of Oil Makers and Cheese Mongers
- IX. The Guild of Leather Workers and Tanners
- X. The Guild of Armor and Sword-makers
- XI. The Guild of Harness makers
- XII. The Guild of Carpenters
- XIII. The Guild of Locksmiths
- XIV. The Guild of Bakers

Today the church of ORSANMICHELE in Florence remains to testify to the greatness of the Guilds. Dedicated to the Archangel Michael since a small church was built in his honor in the year 750 it was rebuilt in 1284 when, after it was used to hold grains and cereals for market, the Comune of Florence commissioned Arnolfo Di Cambio (the first architect of Florence's Cathedral) to build a Loggia in its place.

Today one can see along the outside walls some beautiful examples of the guild's emblems by Luca Della Robbia.