

QUESTION THREE (40 marks)

The passage below comes from a trial record of the interrogation of a beggar in the town of Augsburg in Germany in 1558. The underlined text refers to the questions and statements of the court official. You do not need to know anything about Germany in the sixteenth century to answer the question below, nor should you draw on any information from outside the source.

Thursday, the 25th of February 1558, Simon Schweyer, beggar boy from Lindau testified without torture as follows:

1. How long has the boy been begging here and how often has he been put out of the city? He has been around here with his mother for seven winters or so, and his mother sent him into the city to beg. He has been put out six or seven times.
2. Is it true that he has been locked in the Fool's House at least fifteen times, and that he has taken an oath to stay out no less than five times. He has never been in the Fool's House, but his brother Michael, who is two years older, was in it about three times. Michael does not come here to beg anymore, and is in Oberhausen with their mother and father.
3. Where is he staying here in Augsburg, or who is giving him shelter? He has very seldom spent the night in the city, and when he has, he stays in a bathhouse on Lech Lane behind the bakers. He does not know the bather's name.
4. It is known that his father and mother are staying in Oberhausen, and that what he and his mother have earned begging, they squander out there. With whom are they lodging? They are lodging with a young man named Schneidt in Oberhausen, whom they give 6 *kreuzer*¹ a week for rent. His father drinks about a measure² of wine per month.
5. What do they have to pay for their lodging, and what do they have for income besides begging? In summer, his father sometimes makes hackles³ and sells them, and he also repairs pots. Otherwise they have no trade other than begging.
6. Is it true that his mother claims to have epilepsy whenever someone does not want to give her anything or threatens her under questioning. She also sometimes pretends to have an attack and falls down on the street, but is only faking to move the people to have more sympathy for her so they will give her something. His mother is ill and does not trick people with it.
7. They eat and drink the best in Oberhausen, and support not only themselves by begging here but also their landlords. No, they do not do that.
8. His father also goes begging; what illness or infirmity does he claim to have? His father does not beg, but he has a bad back.
9. What other beggars are there in Oberhausen who support themselves only from begging, and make enough from it to feed themselves? There are a lot of beggars outside the city, but he does not know them, and does not know what they have to support themselves or how.
10. Where are these beggars staying? He does not know the names of the peasants they stay with.
11. He and his father and mother also beg on Wertach Bridge [a bridge known for the presence of many beggars]; how long have they been doing it? They have never sat on the bridge or begged on it, rather they have sought alms here and there. The boy requests mercy.

Punishment recorded: Simon Schweyer, a boy of sixteen years, was put out of the city seven times for begging, and each time he was strictly forbidden to return, but in spite of this he came back in. Therefore he was disciplined in the irons and earnestly warned not to be found here again or he would face public corporal punishment.

What does this source reveal about society in Augsburg in the sixteenth century?

¹ A unit of currency

² A serving measure, approximately 1.05 litre

³ A type of comb used for separating the fibres in linen and other textiles