The Roman world of work : social structures and the urban labour market of Roman Italy in the first three centuries AD

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Chapter 1

Introductory chapter: aims, methods and sources

Inter articifes longa differentia est et ingenii et naturae et doctrinae et institutionis.

Dig. 46.3.31 (Ulpianus)

INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on the ways in which the urban labour market of Roman Italy functioned. The framework of the urban labour market is exploited with the intention of presenting a novel, integrated analysis of the Roman labour force in Italian cities in roughly the first three centuries AD. Pre-industrial working populations in general were not coherent bodies.[1] An inherent diversity is therefore a priori likely to have been characteristic of the Roman labour force. There is a need for a conceptual framework capable of accommodating this diversity.

There is a significant collection of scholarship about Roman labour. A number of more general monographs relevant to the subject have appeared over the course of the twentieth century. The legal background of labour and labourers has been extensively documented in Italian by De Robertis.[2] The language barrier made this work inaccessible to large proportions of the anglo-saxon world, however, which is also the problem with the work of Calabi Limentani.[3] The scholarly world was better served by the monograph of Burford, *Craftsmen in Greek and Roman society*.[4] Her book was based on an extensive knowledge of various sources ranging from material culture (the book opens with a potter's signature) to literary sources and Roman law. Burford's book remains valuable because of its meticulous collection of data, but its interpretive framework echoes the sentiments of the ancient writers, and is outdated. In line with the times, the *Aufstieg und Niedergang* of the Roman world coloured the perceptions of the influential work of Louis.[5] There is much of merit here, but the ancient sources are secondary to the (invalid) narrative, which diminishes its use. Similarly, Mossé developed Finley's views about labour in the ancient world, in a strict universe of city states and consumer cities and is therefore of limited use to any of us who disagree (even in part) with Moses Finley.[6] The value of many of these earlier monographs, then, lies predominantly in their integrated approach of the sources, but not in their overarching interpretations of the Roman empire.

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1 Ehmer (2014) 105.

2 De Robertis (1963), also (1946). On *collegia*, idem (1971).

3 Calabi Limentani (1956), *Il lavoro artistico,* still helpful though limited in scope, focusing on the 'art' in artisan.

4 Burford (1972). Taylor (1979) reads like a useful, brief summary of Burford for a general audience of undergraduate and graduate students.

5 Louis (1927)=(1965^{2}).

6 Mossé (1979).

Since the early 1980s, the debate on the nature of the Roman economy has moved on considerably, and this has freed the way for a novel interpretation of labour.[7] Moreover, the continuous digital revolution starting in the 1990s has facilitated the analysis of large amounts of epigraphic and papyrological data to support a more wide-ranging view of work in the Roman world.[8] In the meantime, significant progress has been made in the debate on the nature of Roman slavery and slave labour.[9] Recent work has also shed new light on the exceptional position of freedmen in Roman society, and in the Roman economy.[10] Similarly, the sizeable freeborn population of Roman Italy has received increasing scholarly attention within accounts of the Roman economy, with a particular focus on free artisans and craftsmen.[11]

The broader subject of urban labour and labourers in the Roman world is revelling in scholarly attention, as the recent collections of papers edited by Laes and Verboven (2017), and by Wilson and Flohr (2016) may show. But the papers in them concern largely bits and pieces relevant to the broader picture: despite converging trends they do not present one coherent account. Even Hawkins' monograph, *Roman artisans and the urban economy*, 2016, is merely complementary to my own. It presents many new insights such as the major theme of unstable labour demand, but his focus is on the skilled artisan or craftsman, not on the unskilled mass of urban labourers.[12] A recent book with one coherent, integrated approach of the urban labour force, that also links up with the developments on the subject of the Roman urban economy in the early empire, is lacking.

Outline

The second chapter of this thesis defends the assumption that there was an 'urban labour market', arguing that this hypothesis is both plausible and useful to think with, provided that the specifics of the Roman case are kept in mind. The concept of a labour

7 See, e.g., Hawkins and Mayer eds (forthcoming); de Callataÿ, ed. (2014); Scheidel ed. (2012a); Temin (2013a); Bowman ed. (2009); Morris, Saller and Scheidel eds (2007); Scheidel and Von Reden eds (2002); the papers in Garnsey (1980) in my view formed an important turning point in Roman labour studies.

8 Joshel (1992) on individual labourers in CIL 6 is the first systematic study; see below.

9 Bradley and Cartledge eds (2011), particularly the overviews by Morley, and Bodel; Scheidel (2008); Bradley (1994) especially chapter 4 on slave labour; Harper (2011) on late antiquity has many valuable observations for the early empire.

10 Garnsey and De Ligt (2016), De Ligt and Garnsey (2012) on their numerical importance; Verboven (2012a) on the freedman economy; Mouritsen (2011a) provides a very full and useful account concerning freedmen, with chapter 6 (206–247) on freedmen in the economy.

11 Cf Their incorporation in the reference articles on labour and the labour market by Hawkins (2013) and Tacoma (forthcoming); also Brunt (1980).

12 Hawkins (2016) 14-15. This book is reworking of his 2006 dissertation. Due to constraints of time, I have retained many references to his 2006 manuscript.

market, as it is known in economic theory, is based on simple price theory: the law of supply and demand. This entails assumptions about labour in Roman Italy that need to be clarified at some length. It will become clear that the economic definition of a labour market should be expanded to an integrated approach of the social and cultural backgrounds of the society under scrutiny. Such an approach serves to highlight factors producing market imperfection and segmentation.

The way the urban labour market functioned is determined by structural factors in society of a social, cultural, economic and/or legal nature. In line with the basic tenets of New Institutional Economics, it is now commonly recognized among Roman economic historians that institutions are crucial determinants of how economies function. Roman labour and labourers did not exist in isolation. It is my contention that the position of an individual Roman in the labour market was decided largely by his or her position within (predominantly) social institutions. It will be argued that the most important of these institutions was the family. Family of birth largely determined future economic opportunity, expectations of marriage and childbirth were important in negotiating the position of women, and so on. Non-familial collectives, however, should also be factored in and were probably particularly influential for those (temporarily) not surrounded by their family, such as migrants, or widows.

The structure of this book is based on the importance of institutions for understanding the urban labour market. Having established first that Roman Italy did indeed have a functioning urban labour market, the focus of my attention shifts to structural determinants of its performance.[13] Centre stage is reserved for two chapters on the social institution of the Roman family, in its various shapes and sizes. The division of the Roman family into two chapters is prompted by a fundamental difference between small-scale families on the one hand, and elite households on the other, in terms of their demographic make-up as well as their motivation for participation in the labour market. It is hoped that this binary classification can do some justice to that specificity.

The next chapter considers non-familial labour relations. The obvious example is the much-debated professional *collegium*. However, recent scholarship has made an important leap forward by placing the professional *collegia* within the context of private voluntary associations more generally.[14] It is clear that here, too, the social and economic functions of associations were seamlessly connected. An analysis of what I have termed ‘the economics of association’, then, will highlight the role played by voluntary associations. Social ties and trust networks beyond the family must have been crucial in a society where much hinged on personal security and *fides*, something that was perhaps even more difficult to come by within an urban context than in the countryside.

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13 Cf the volume edited by Laes and Verboven (2017).

14 E.g. the papers in Wilson (1996).

In the concluding chapter the argument is brought together and some of the implications drawn out. Roman labour did not exist in a historical vacuum: the contribution of the Roman case in the context of global labour history should be explicitly addressed. The global perspective may serve to highlight the particularities of Roman labour relations. The discussion of Roman labour relations, conversely, may help us to perceive the merits and deficiencies of existing models aiming at universality.

Method

The use of theory, models and comparison has become increasingly common in ancient history since the pioneering works of, among others, Moses Finley and Keith Hopkins, and needs no justification. Much progress in ancient history has been achieved through ever increasing engagement with other fields of research to develop new theories and models, particularly during the last one or two decades. Very few students currently working in the field of Roman socio-economic history have refrained from the application of economic concepts of, for example, transaction costs or social network theories. It seems that the editors of the *Cambridge Economic History of the Greco-Roman World* were not wasting their breath, when in 2007 they urged the ancient historian to continue "engagements with the social sciences" and "to pursue comparative analyses".[15]

The current investigation thus conforms to a wider trend in ancient history. It takes its cue mainly from New Institutional Economics (NIE). The subject calls for a more multifaceted approach, however, and I will frequently resort to insights drawn from other socio-economic theories, from simple price theory of supply and demand, to human capital theory and family economics. Many of these theories were developed for the early modern or modern period, opening up various lines of comparison. There may be those who object to this methodological eclecticism. However, the merits of multiple models and comparanda far outweigh the deficits of in-depth knowledge of each. They are introduced mostly to develop models and hypotheses, or to illustrate the inherent (im-) plausibility of explanations offered. A full comparison is often unnecessary and beside the point. The same goes for applying only one theory in a rigid way.

The range of topics dealt with in this book in consequence is much wider than labour or the labour market, and includes the Roman family, associations, demography, price theory, slavery and more. It is my belief that Roman labour cannot be understood without taking into account such structural factors in Roman society. Conversely, an understanding of the urban labour market in Roman Italy is significant to an understanding of the complex web of correlations that was Roman society. What is more, ancient historians' exploration of other fields of study should ideally take place along a two-way street. The particularities of Rome have a contribution to make to the larger picture.

15 Morris, Saller and Scheidel (2007) 7.

Setting boundaries

The chronological scope of the analysis is the early empire, starting from the reign of Octavian Augustus (31 BC–14 AD), up to and including the reign of the emperor Diocletian (284–305), who issued the important *Prices Edict*. That is a period of a little over three centuries. Emphasis is on the structural continuity of the empire as the background for this analysis of the working population of Roman Italy. That is not to deny the fact that political change, social conflict, demographic shocks such as epidemics, and resulting potential market fluctuations, occurred in this period. Think only of the many changes which took place during the crisis of the third century. But the impact of conflict or epidemic disease, as well as long-term trends in demography, are virtually impossible to trace through the scattered and fragmentary data for prices and wages, and inscriptions that are not often securely dated. It seems appropriate to choose a structural approach that incorporates the evidence for the whole period.

The period coincides with the time frame for which ancient sources are most abundant, including the inscriptions that form the most important body of evidence for this thesis. The so-called epigraphic habit peaked in the late first, early second century AD.[16] And although the epigraphic habit continued under Constantine and his followers, the body of epitaphs became more and more Christianized and demonstrates a significant change in labour ethics, evident in Christian perceptions of the family and the labour participation of women.[17] For this reason, Christian inscriptions and other Christian sources are not taken into account. Other evidence for the Roman period is similarly concentrated in the Principate.

This study concentrates on Roman Italy, the core region of the early Roman empire. A high urbanization rate and an unprecedented degree of sophistication of the urban network had consequences for the development and the nature of the Roman Italian labour market. The population of the imperial heartland was more dense than in the provinces, and the wealthy elite was disproportionately based there.[18] Moreover, Roman Italy was where the exceptional city of Rome was located: the capital functioned as an engine generating economic opportunity throughout Roman Italy.[19] Socio-political circumstances in the Roman empire were also conducive to economic prosperity. Under the first emperors a relatively stable government was established. The *Pax Augusta* was firmly in place, and the population of Roman Italy in particular benefited from Italy's

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16 MacMullen (1982). Here, the epigraphic habit refers to the overall output of inscriptions, whereas in the following analysis local and regional variation will certainly be taken into account.

17 E.g. Pleket (1988) 275 on the Christian doctrine of the dignity of labor.

18 Scheidel (2007a) 47 with table 3.1 on page 48.

19 Cf Morley (1996).

exceptional position through exemptions from taxation. From the perspective of NIE, then, prospects were particularly good for the Italian part of the Roman economy.

Because the scope of this work is considerable and impinges on many other topics, it is important to signal the boundaries of its reach. My focus is specifically on the non-elite. The elite was a relatively closed segment of the population. The boundaries between the elite and the subelite were nevertheless permeable. The elite probably needed a continuous influx of newcomers to sustain itself, both in terms of numbers and in terms of wealth; freedmen may not have been allowed in, but their descendants were.[20] But the resulting elite was engaged in a very distinct 'labour market', for magistracies, priesthoods, and the like. The elite therefore features mainly on the sideline of this work, so to speak, as employers, investors, and specifically as heads of household. Much that will be said about elite *domus* holds true as well for that one very particular household, the *familia Caesaris*. But as the imperial household grew into the bureaucracy of an empire, the specific nature of the *familia Caesaris* deserves the more detailed separate treatment that it has received elsewhere.[21]

Most Romans were engaged in agriculture and, to a lesser extent, the exploitation of other natural resources: Roman society had an organic economy.[22] Scheidel's educated guess is that "there is no good reason to believe that more than one person in eight would have been permanently or predominantly engaged in non-agrarian labour".[23] Hence, it could easily be argued that a focus on the urban labour market largely ignores the majority of the population, but this is not strictly speaking true. Roman Italian cities survived on the products from the land that surrounded them. Some craftsmen lived in the countryside and some farmers lived in the city. Farmers sold their surplus in the urban market, and potentially hired extra labourers there for the harvest. Conversely, many city-dwellers must have been migrants from the countryside who moved to the city for seasonal labour, or who settled their more permanently. The distinction between the urban and rural population was not clear-cut.[24] But a focus on city dwellers in the context of labour is justified by the fact that labour differentiation as a rule takes place in an urban environment, and occupational inscriptions are largely from an urban context.

Work in the army, too, is a world apart that still awaits treatment in a full-length monograph: there were indeed those employed as artisans and craftsmen in the army,

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20 Cf Tacoma (2006) on the Roman Egyptian elite. Much of the discussion is also relevant for Roman Italy; Broekaert (2012) 58-60 on elite and intermarriage with wealthy merchants.

21 Chantraine (1967); Weaver (1972); Boulvert (1974); Schumacher (2001); see now also the dissertation of Penner (2013) on imperial households.

22 This includes mining, and could include glass works, potteries and brickmaking.

23 Scheidel (2007a) 80, talking about the whole of Greco-Roman Antiquity.

24 Cf De Ligt (1991).

travelling or stationed with the legions.[25] Most of them are not part of this discussion for obvious reasons. Occasionally, the army men do feature in this book – but only insofar as they returned home safely and lived out their days in the cities of Roman Italy. Thus, a certain Lucius Artorius was a veteran of the *legio XIX* commemorated in Cesena in the early 2nd century when, judging from the motifs on his funerary relief, he had presumably become a butcher.[26]

LABOR OMNIA VICIT IMPROBUS: CONCEPTUALIZING LABOUR AND WORK[27]

> There was much work and there were many workers in the ancient world but one clear, unequivocal concept, which abstractly and unequivocally denoted labor, was lacking.[28]

> Work, as we know it, is a modern invention.[29]

Pleket and Gorz point to a fundamental difficulty in studying Roman labour. What are we studying when we study Roman work, or labour? To the Romans, there was not necessarily a concept of work, as opposed to leisure: the *cum dignitate otium* glorified by Cicero probably was not something the non-elite could really relate to.[30] The linguistic antonym of *otium*, *negotium*, does not actually mean 'work', but 'business undertaking'.

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25 To my knowledge Rink (1983); Strobel (1991) are the exceptions that briefly discuss the manual labourers in the army. See now also Herz (2017).

26 *CIL* 11. 348: *L(ucius) Artorius C(ai) f(ilius) mil(es) / veteran(us) leg(ionis) XIX / Artoria L(uci) l(iberta) Cleopatra / L(ucius) Artorius L(uci) l(ibertus) Licinus*; with Zimmer (1982) no. 8 who argues that the freedman L. Artorius Licinus was the butcher because of the placing of the butcher-motifs on the monument; the survival of a veteran of the fated *legio XIX* that was almost completely lost at the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest in 9 AD incites questions about the dating of this inscription in the 120's, since the number XIX was never again used for any Roman legion.

27 Verg. *Georg*. I. 145–6, "Toil triumphed over every obstacle, unrelenting Toil", translation H. Rushton Fairclough, rev. G.P. Gould (Loeb Classical Library 1999).

28 Pleket (1988) 268–9.

29 Gorz (1989) 14. Cf also Von Reden, *Brill's New Pauly* (first appeared online 2006), s.v. 'Unemployment': "Unemployment was not an economic problem in Antiquity, because concepts such as full employment and working population did not exist". For a good attempt to tackle the issue of unemployment in Antiquity, Pleket (1988) 271–5.

30 Cic. *Sest*. 98. Cf in this context the useful conceptual difference made by Van der Linden (2011) 27–8: there must have been times of 'non-work', "recovery from work through, for instance, relaxation or sleeping", but probably less time reserved for leisure, or 'anti-work', "all playful activities that cost a lot of energy but are not meant to produce useful objects or services" – in other words: *otium*.

The citation from Gorz underlines the fact that the historian's understanding of what 'work' is, differs over time.

"Obviously, labour history is about labour", Van der Linden and Lucassen write in their programmatic paper, *Prolegomena for a global labour history*.[31] But that does not necessarily make it clear what labour is. Is labour the same thing as work? If not, what is work? In common parlance, both labour and work can refer to any variety of activities; in scholarly analysis, they are often used more specifically. Thus, labour history has long focused on labour in a relatively restricted sense, specifically referring to wage-labour in the context of early capitalism.[32] By contrast, the concept of work appears to be a relatively recent one, that addresses the limitations of the earlier use of 'labour'. Ancient history cannot yet rely on a clear labour/work terminology, and a clear definition of both concepts is urgently called for.[33]

This thesis studies Roman labour in a very specific sense, that is according to the definition of labour in the *Oxford English Dictionary*:

> Work (esp. physical work) considered as a resource or commodity, typically when necessary to supply the needs of the community or for the execution of a particular task; the contribution of the worker to production.[34]

Labour in the sense of "work (…) considered as a resource or commodity" has a Marxist ring to it, which in the formulation of the *OED* is probably a reflection of the current Western capitalist interpretation. Its history suggests a distinct difference between the commodification of work, and the commodification of workers, however, which would effectively exclude slave labour from the definition. Since slave labour is explicitly meant to be included in this analysis, commodified labour should be taken to encompass labourers as a commodity throughout.

"Work (…) considered as a resource or commodity", presumably means that it is a money-making engagement, where in case of a dependent labourer the money may also be made by someone else. Latin *labor* carries the same connotations as its derivatives labour, Italian *lavoro*, Spanish *labor*, etcetera, associating it with (physical) pain or hardship.[35]

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31 Van der Linden and Lucassen (1999) 8.

32 See concluding chapter.

33 For another attempt: Verboven (2017a).

34 *OED online* (accessed 26-10-2016), 'Labour', s.v. 10a.

35 *OED online* (accessed 26-10-2016), 'Labour', s.v 1 and esp. 2a: "Bodily or mental exertion particularly when difficult, painful, or compulsory; (hard) work; toil; *esp.* physical toil". Hofmeester and Moll-Murata (2011) 15 note the ambiguity in early modern vocabulary.

The efforts of labour, specifically hard work and manual labour may also be indicated by *opus*; it is no coincidence that condemnation to hard labour, is *damnatio ad opus*. *Operae,* conversely, indicates service and implies choice.[36] *Operae* is also the legal term for the requirement that manumitted slaves had to provide a certain amount of labour for their former masters in return for their freedom.

Work as a concept appears to be broader than labour, referring to a wide range of actions inclusive of labour.[37] Greek *ergon/ ergazesthai* appears to cover a similar width.[38] Labour historians broadly adhere to the definition of work drawn up by the sociologists Chris and Charles Tilly.[39]

> Work includes any human effort adding use value to goods and services. However much their performers may enjoy or loathe the effort, conversation, song, decoration, pornography, table-setting, gardening, house-cleaning, and repair of broken toys, all involve work to the extent that they increase satisfactions their consumers gain from them. Prior to the twentieth century, a vast majority of the world's workers performed the bulk of their work in other settings than the salaried jobs as we know them today. Even today, over the world as a whole, most work takes place outside of regular jobs.[40]

Their definition is important for two reasons: first, Tilly and Tilly correctly emphasize the importance of non-wage labour in many historical societies. The Roman Empire is no exception to that. Wage-labour may not have been as marginal as it is sometimes thought to have been, but Rome was a slave society, and the existence of a large number of slaves and ex-slaves alone significantly complicated the makeup of the labour market.[41] A highly inclusive definition of work like this is therefore necessary in order to do justice to the complexity and diversity of Roman labour relations, encompassing unfree and free labour, dependent and independent labour, as well as the regularly unremunerated economic contribution of women, and children.[42] Moreover, the definition of Tilly and Tilly is the one that labour historians embarking on the path of global labour history

36 Lewis and Short (ed. 1958), s.v. *opera*, write "opus is used mostly of the mechanical activity of work, as that of animals, slaves, and soldiers; operae supposes a free will and desire to serve".

37 *OED online* (accessed 26-10-2016), 'work', for work being inclusive of labour, s.v. 4 and 5.

38 Pleket (1988) 268.

39 E.g., Van der Linden and Lucassen (1999), Hofmeester and Moll-Murata (2011), and in ancient history also by Verboven (2017a) 4-6.

40 Tilly and Tilly (1998) 22.

41 On the marginality of free hired labour, famously: Finley (1998^2) 68, 127, 136.

42 The economic value of unremunerated labour had been stressed earlier by feminist scholars; see the influential work of Tilly and Scott (1974).

seem to adhere to.[43] Opting for the same definition thus opens up enormous potential for comparison.

In sum, whereas 'work' indicates the recent broadening of scope in the scholarly field, the term 'labour' acknowledges a debt to neo-classical and Marxist labour history. There is a fertile tradition of labour history to build on, and a wealth of comparative material. That said, it is important to acknowledge a fundamental difference in the meaning of labour and work that is conceptually useful, where labour is a 'money-making engagement' and work is "any human effort adding value". This thesis is about Roman labour, but in the context of Roman work.

THE DISCOURSE ON WORK: THE ROMAN ELITE

Most of the ancient evidence was written by and for men from the elite. This is hardly a new observation, nor is it unique to the Roman empire:

> Elite discourses are dominated by members of the elites and by intellectuals. In all the periods under consideration, members of the subordinate classes, and particularly wage dependents and manual workers, participate rather indirectly, as objects, in discourses on work. Very seldom do they appear in the sources as active speakers. The great exception, however, is made up of people of the 'middling sort' such as merchants and artisans, who based their identities, self-esteem, and political demands upon their work.[44]

The study of work through literary sources and legal texts, explicitly became a study of 'attitudes towards work', rather than 'work'.[45] Roman labour was conceptualized mainly through the eyes of those who derived status from the fact that they did not have to work: the Roman elite.

One famous passage that is repeatedly invoked in this context, is Cicero's *De Officiis* 1.150–1.[46] In this passage, Cicero distinguishes between trades and employments that are becoming to a gentleman (*liberalis*) on the one hand, and those that are not-so-becoming (*illiberales*) and lowly (*sordidae*) on the other. A list of the latter follows,

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43 E.g., Van der Linden and Lucassen (1999) 8; Lucassen (2008^{2}) 45; Hofmeester and Moll-Murata (2011) 6.

44 Ehmer (2014) 112, with reference to Lis and Soly (2012).

45 See for example the diachronic studies of Lis and Soly (2012); Lis and Ehmer (2009); Van den Hoven (1996); Applebaum (1992).

46 Apart from the aforementioned works (n. 45), also in e.g. Dixon (2001c) 113 ff, Joshel (1992) 66–7, Kampen (1981) 114–5, Treggiari (1980), Finley (1973^{2}) 41–57.

including such jobs "which incur ill-will" (like tax collectors), and all wage-workers, "for in their case their very wages are the warrant of their slavery". There is, says Cicero, some merit in the more skilled jobs, particularly those that benefit society "such as medicine or architecture or teaching – they are respectable for those whose status they befit".[47] Ultimately, however, Cicero advocates that agriculture (in the sense of landholding) is the only fitting source of income.

This is just one source, of course, but the reason for its frequent appearance in discussions of the subject is that "Cicero the moralist has proved not a bad guide to prevailing values".[48] The Roman elite looked down on those who had to work for a living. A very similar attitude regularly prevailed among the higher classes at least up until the Industrial Revolution and even after, when manual labour was still held in relative contempt compared to landholding.[49] For the majority of the population, however, it would be a luxury to engage in philosophical reflections about work or non-work: work to them was a necessity, a simple fact of life. Elite disdain towards the working population would make no-one give up their occupation. There is one thing that a strong elite ideology potentially could have done, however: it may have changed the way that individuals arranged to be remembered.

THE DIGNITY OF WORK: THE NON-ELITE

> [J]ob titles, in contrast to jobs, exist because (...) men and women actually called themselves foot servants, financial agents, silversmiths, and jewelers.[50]

The literary sources appear to show a rather coherent picture that does not take very kindly to work and labourers. It is now realized that this ideology, however, does not match well with the way the labourers themselves refer to their work. De Robertis already pointed to the significant difference of opinion between what he called *l'ambiente volgare*, that is views toward labour among popular ranks, and *l'ambiente aulico*, or attitudes from within the elite milieu.[51]

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47 Cic. *Off.* 1. 150: *Qui in odia hominum incurrunt* (…); *est enim in illis ipsa merces auctoramentum servitutis*; 1.151: *ut medicina, ut architectura, ut doctrina rerum honestarum, eae sunt iis, quorum ordini convenient, honestae*. Translation Finley (1973[2]) 41–2.

48 Finley (1973[2]) 57.

49 For preindustrial Europe, see most extensively Lis and Soly (2012). A substantial section of this impressive volume is devoted to the attitudes towards work and workers in Greek and Roman Antiquity.

50 Joshel (1992) 71.

51 De Robertis (1963) 21–97.

Occupational inscriptions

The voice of the non-elite is not lost entirely. The members of the working population themselves occasionally disclose both occupation and their opinion of it to the historian, in the documentary texts on papyrus that survive from Roman Egypt, for example, that include detailed letters, and contracts.[52] From Roman Italy, however, occupations are known mainly through inscriptions. An occupational title is recorded on the epitaph of between two and three thousand Romans from Italy; around a hundred of them had tools of the trade or scenes from work depicted on their funerary monuments. Professional associations professed their shared occupation publicly through their very name, adding roughly two hundred inscriptions. The occupational inscriptions and reliefs form the most important body of evidence for the current investigation.

My understanding of occupational inscriptions includes epigraphic texts with an indication of employment or job-title, including individual job indicators such as 'spinning woman', or 'two brother carpenters', as well as inscriptions set up by a collective like the 'association of bargemen'.[53] Not included are the *instrumentum domesticum*, that is any writing on artefacts (a great many signatures and/or stamps), and *inscriptiones parietariae*, that is wall-inscriptions or graffiti – the second type is de facto limited to Pompeii and Herculaneum.[54] These two types of sources are of a fundamentally different nature than the other inscriptions with job-title, and on top of that are often fragmentary and offer very little information on the labourers themselves.

It must be presumed that on a tombstone, occupation was recorded as a result of a conscious choice of the deceased (for a funerary monument constructed *se vivo*), or their heirs: a slab of marble can only contain so much text, so the decision what to record becomes highly significant. Epitaphs are set up at a very particular time: at death. Their importance transcends death, however. Remembering the life of the deceased, with the active participation of the living, these texts are highly informative about life in Roman society. An occupational title predictably is added most for the dedicatee, but not uncommonly for the dedicator as well, and occasionally only for the dedicator. To many artisans, to *collegiati*, and others, work ostensibly was a source of pride and an important part of their identity.[55] The well-known monument of the baker Eurysaces in Rome traces back his wealth to his occupation in every detail: in the inscription that is rephrased similarly on all four sides, on the elaborate relief like a frieze that runs along

52 E.g. Gibbs (2011), Van Minnen (1987).

53 *Quasillaria*, e.g. *CIL* 6. 6339; *duo fratres fabri tignuarii*, *CIL* 6. 9411; *collegium naviculariorum*, *CIL* 6. 1740.

54 *Instrumentum domesticum*, collected in *CIL* volume 15, and see most elaborately the papers collected in Harris ed. (1993); the *inscriptiones parietariae* are collected in *CIL* volume 4.

55 Joshel (1992) *passim.*

the top, and perhaps even in the shape of the actual monument.[56] And not just the ostentatiously successful, like Eurysaces, felt that work was significant enough to record. There are examples of slave, freed and freeborn workers, men, women and children, and each category is attested on humble as well as lavish monuments. It is difficult to tell from a job-title alone who would be able to afford an inscription, or what their work meant in terms of social status and identity; even an *alipilus*, a 'plucker of armpit hair', was able to set up quite a sizeable tomb and dedicate it to his wife and to an unknown number of freedmen.[57]

What one does for a living has become one of the main features of identification in the present day. Roman job-titles are evocative and often have a familiar ring to them. It seems to me that this has invoked a certain feeling of identification with these 'ordinary' Romans among many historians.[58] Partly for that reason, perhaps, there has been no lack of scholarly attention for the occupational inscriptions, especially considering the fact that occupational indicators are found in merely a small minority of all inscriptions. A percentage is difficult to provide because I will not hazard a guess as to how many inscriptions from Roman Italy have come down to us altogether. Despite that, it seems

56 Petersen (2003); cf George (2006) 23-4 for the exceptional nature of this "blatant celebration of work", but with p. 24 for the fact that through its scale the monument also conforms to elite views: "The frieze does not memorialize Eurysaces' own work as much as his authority over the work of others".

57 *CIL* 6. 9141. There is a 'job-description' of the *alipilus* by Seneca, that does not suggest that it was a very respectable occupation: Sen. *Ep.* 56.2, "*alipilum cogita tenuem et stridulam vocem, quo sit notabilior, subinde exprimentem nec umquam tacentem, nisi dum vellit alas et alium pro se clamare cogit"* – "Think of the hair plucker with his thin, creaking voice, constantly squealing to be more noticeable and never quiet, except when he plucks armpits and forces another to scream for him".

58 Compare the title of León (2007) written for a general audience: *Working IX to V* (who actually emphasises the more 'exotic' nature of Greco-Roman occupations for comic effect).

clear that the occupational inscriptions would probably come to well below five per cent.[59]

Job-title is thus seen as a significant distinctive feature in inscriptions by the ancients, but also by historians of the ancient world. This is apparent, for example, in large corpora of inscriptions, that generally include a sub-header for occupational inscriptions.[60] Occupation was also singled out as one of the criteria for the subject-based collection of Hermann Dessau.[61] This longstanding awareness of occupations mentioned in ancient sources greatly facilitates research. However, the inclusion or exclusion of a text in a corpus or under a sub-header depends entirely on the editors' choice, and on their understanding of work. As we will see, the same is true of the selection criteria used for epigraphic investigations into labour and labourers specifically. The fact that this relatively small sub-set of epigraphic evidence tends to be highlighted, may also have distorted historians' understanding of how much we actually know about labour in the Roman empire.

In the last decades of the previous century, the occupational inscriptions became a point of interest in and of themselves. A series of pioneering articles by Susan Treggiari carefully analyzes and contextualizes occupational inscriptions from Rome. Treggiari raises many important questions in her considerations of Roman labourers, and of particular groups among them, such as elite households and especially female workers.[62] Astrid Händel employs the epigraphic evidence for preliminary observations about trade and wholesalers in Rome.[63] The fullest exploration to date of the occupational

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59 If around half of the ca 2,500 occupational inscriptions come from Rome, a very rough calculation for that city would come to 1,250/60,000 = 2.1 per cent. 60, 000 is based on the estimate in Tacoma and Tybout (2016) 358 n. 46. Cf Eck (1998) 32: "Von den rund 35000 funerären Texten, die in CIL VI publiziert sind, geben nur rund 5000 einen genaueren Hinweis auf die soziale Stellung. Doch höchstens rund 1300 von ihnen beziehen sich auf 'normale' Berufe (…)" – that would be 3.7 per cent; Sigismund-Nielsen (2006) 206 for a reassuring finding of 4 per cent in *CIL* 6 (with table 7 on page 211). Her 'random sample' of *CIL* 6 is very problematic, however. Contrast e.g. her finding of 1 per cent with occupational title in the monument of the Statilii with the thorough study of Borbonus (2014) 128 table 9, who finds no less than 28.8 per cent for that columbarium; Huttunen (1974) 48 finally, talks about 9.5 per cent of dedicatees or 4.4 per cent of dedicators. His estimates should in my view be discarded entirely, however, because he works with a radically different understanding of what 'occupation' means, explicitly including senatorial or equestrian status among the occupational indicators for example (p. 47).

60 E.g. *CIL*: *Apparitores et officiales (magistratum, imperatoris, vectigalium); Artes et officia privata*.

61 *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* (ILS) (1892).

62 Treggiari (1973); (1975a); (1975b); (1976); (1979a); (1979b); (1980) ; cf also the insightful chapter on written sources on working women in Kampen (1981) 107-29.

63 Händel (1983). Unfortunately I have not been able to locate the "entstehenden Dissertation, die über die hier vorgelegte Inschriftenanalyse hinaus weitergehende Untersuchungen zum Gegenstand hat", mentioned on p. 90, but see also Händel (1985).

inscriptions is a monograph by Sandra Joshel called *Work, identity, and legal status at Rome*.[64] She analyzes occupational inscriptions set up by or for individuals from the city of Rome. Joshel's book characterizes the various groups who recorded or were commemorated with occupational title, and sheds light on the motivations to do so. Rather than an investigation into the Roman workforce, this work is all about the inscriptions, and it has become an essential guide to a full understanding of the material.

Since Joshel's book, there have been others who focused on occupational inscriptions in other geographical areas. A thick description of the occupational epigraphy from Picenum was published by Alessandro Cristofori.[65] Outside of the Italian Peninsula, F.P. Rizzo devoted a book to the occupational epigraphy of Sicily.[66] These works both offer an interpretive framework, but the scarcity of the material makes it difficult to go beyond general observations on labour and the economy, and even their more general observations must therefore remain mostly conjectural. The value of these undertakings lies in Rizzo's and particularly Cristofori's painstaking collection and thorough commentary of the individual inscriptions. Beyond the scope of my research, but very interesting and useful material for comparison, is the work of Frézouls on Gallia and Germania.[67] The importance of the observations of Onno van Nijf in his monograph on professional organisations in the Roman East, exceeds both professional organisations and the Roman East: especially his finding of a chronological development in the recording of occupation in epitaphs is valuable, though I have not been able to detect a similar trend for Roman Italy.[68] Epigraphic sources regarding *collegia* have been collected in the extensive work of Waltzing, supplemented by Menella and Apicella.[69] Waltzing remains the starting point for sources on the *collegia*, though his careful interpretative volumes have long been superseded by a rich scholarly tradition on associations.

Some Roman labourers have attracted more attention than others, which must in part be due to the fact that they are the most common in the epigraphic record. Thus, the ambitious *Wirtschaftliche Untersuchungen* of Gummerus have resulted in two meticulous epigraphic analyses of doctors, and the more general group of jewellers/metalworkers.[70] Well-documented and well-studied occupations for women are those in the medical

64 Joshel (1992).

65 Cristofori (2004).

66 Rizzo (1993), to be consulted with the critical review of Clauss (1994) in mind.

67 Frézouls (1991); on the city of Narbonne specifically see Bonsangue (2002); cf also Tate (1991) for Syria.

68 Van Nijf (1997) 40–2; on p. 42 he does suggest regional differences in trends.

69 Waltzing (1895–1900) 4 vols; Menella and Apicella (2000).

70 Gummerus, *Wirtschaftliche Untersuchungen* I, II (1915), and III (1918); Medical occupations: idem (1932) with additional material in Rowland (1977). For doctors, see also the archaeological approach of Jackson (2005).

sector, with special attention for midwives and – not strictly medical – wet-nurses.[71] The epigraphic record plays a large part in all of these studies. Other scholars have focused not so much on occupation, but on a particular find-spot of the inscriptions. The columbarium tombs from Rome and the individual households included among them are relatively easy to demarcate, which is probably why they have received ample scholarly attention.[72] Similarly, the epitaphs from the Isola Sacra necropolis are now readily accessible in a detailed and well-organized monograph.[73]

The main dataset used in this study is a catalogue of job titles in Latin, derived chiefly from lists provided by Joshel, Treggiari and Von Petrikovits.[74] Their catalogues proved to be complementary, presumably because they had a different workforce in mind. Joshel lists the occupations that are attested for individual Romans in the city of Rome.[75] Treggiari talks about a more specific, but not clearly delineated group of *opifices* (craftsmen) and *tabernarii* (shopkeepers).[76] Von Petrikovits, finally, seems to have aimed simply to be as inclusive as possible, listing everything that might be considered a job. Compiling a new catalogue of my own, I occasionally excluded a title from the list that to my mind is not securely attested in epigraphy or other sources from the period under scrutiny.[77] The resulting catalogue was then expanded by adding occupations discovered in epigraphic, literary and legal sources. This has resulted in a list of 564 job-titles. I hasten to add, however, that the exact number is elusive: some job-titles refer to the same or very similar jobs and usage may have changed over time.[78]

The spectrum of occupations ranges from the humble (such as a litter-bearer, *lecticarius*) to the more privileged (gem engraver, *gemmarius sculptor*). Even legal infamy was no reason not to be proud of an occupation: a number of male and female entertain-

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71 Laes (2011b) and (2010) with catalogue; Sparreboom (MPhil-thesis 2009); Flemming (2000); Joshel (1986).

72 Among others, Borbonus (2014), Hasegawa (2005), Caldelli and Ricci (1999). See chapter 4.

73 Helttula et al. (2007).

74 See appendix 1. Joshel (1992) 176–82; Von Petrikovits (1981) 83–119; Treggiari (1980) 61–4.

75 Joshel (1992) 176: "only the titles borne by named individuals".

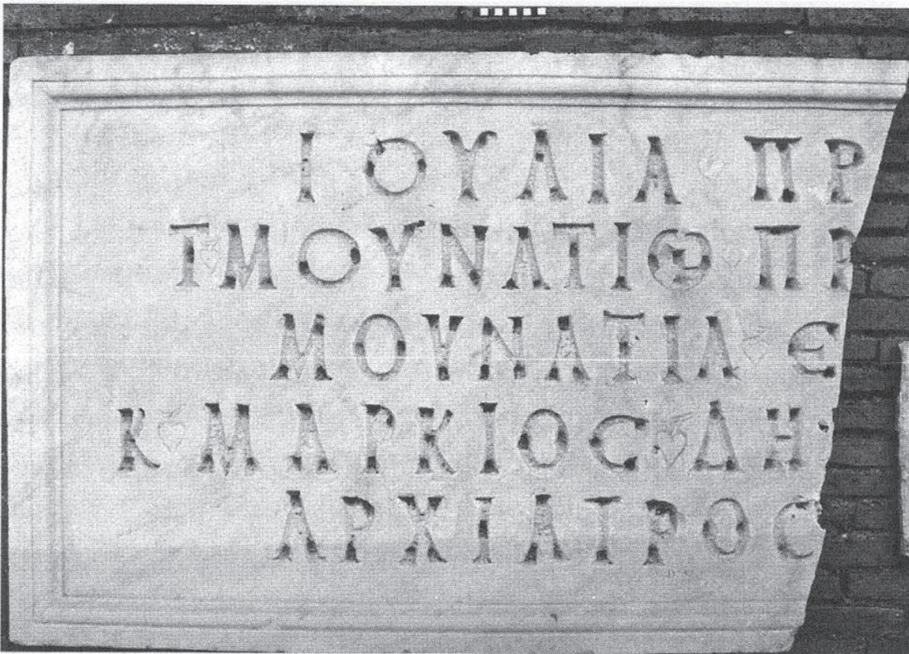
76 Treggiari (1980) 48: "The area of employment to be discussed is roughly that condemned by Greco-Roman philosophers".

77 Such as *carnarius* (butcher), only attested in Greek in papyri; *clusor* with no references and Von Petrikovits (1981) 192 "fraglich, ob ein Handwerker"; *paracharactes CTh*. 9. 21. 9 – 'forger', which is not in my view a job-title; or *tomacularius*, supposedly a Bratwurst-dealer, with Von Petrikovits (1981) 117, only reference to Not. Tir. 103, 80 "(hier irrig *tomatularius*)".

78 The catalogue also includes a number of decisions on my part: for example, the hapax *anellarius* was included as a variant of the more common *anularius* (ring-maker), for example, but *vestifex* is a separate entry from *vestificus* because of the evident variation in job-titles for 'tailors'; Gummerus (1932) identifies some chronological changes in usage for medical job-titles; more generally, Neumann (1981) and Händel (1985) 501.

ers comes up in the sources, and there is also a *lanista* (trainer/owner of gladiators).[79] Some wage-earning engagements apparently inspired more pride than others and are far more commonly attested, as indicated for doctors and wet-nurses above. Various merchants and tradesmen (*mercatores* and *negotiatores/negiotiantes*) are also common.

Some members of the working population of Roman Italy used Greek on their tombstone, not Latin. To my knowledge Greek epitaphs from Roman Italy have not systematically been taken into account by any of the previous studies into Roman labour. The necessary tools are available: there is a catalogue of occupational titles in Greek, albeit compiled for Roman Egypt, and *IGUR* and *IG* include in their indices headers for *artes et officia privata*.[80] There are various forms of cultural interaction attested. From the Isola Sacra necropolis, for example, comes a beautifully carved inscription set up by Q. Marcios Dem(etrios), *archiatros* – a high-ranking doctor (*figure 1.1*).[81]



Ἰουλίᾳ Πρ[όκλᾳ]/ Τ. · Μουνατίω · Πρ[όκλῳ] / Μουνατίᾳ · Ἐ[3] / Κ. · Μάρκιος · Δη[μήτριος] / ἀρχιατρος [

To Julia Procla, to Titus Munatius Proclus, [and] to Munatia E(…). Quintus Marcius Demetrios, physician, [set up this monument]

79 *Lanista*: *CIL* 6. 10200. Legal infamy and profession: Edwards (1997).

80 Catalogue for Roman Egypt: Drexhage (2004) ; cf Ruffing (2008) vol. 2.

81 *SEG* 13, 473 = *IPO* A 158 = *ISIS* 149; photo from Helttula et al. (2007).

The inscription is written in latinized Greek, by and for people with Latin or latinized names.[82]

Access to online databases for most of the ancient sources, including inscriptions, papyri and the entire corpus of known Latin and Greek literary and documentary texts, makes it relatively easy to locate and access the sources for a particular occupation once a job-title is known. The *index vocabulorum* to *CIL* 6 is also an incredibly valuable tool, since most of the sources come from the capital. Identification of the occupations is not straightforward, however, and it is here that my catalogue of job-titles should be helpful.

Inscriptions are not without biases. It is well known that the inscription-erecting population was not a direct reflection of the Roman population: men receive commemoration more often than women, and the young are overrepresented, to name but a few characteristics.[83] There is local and cultural variation in epigraphic habit.[84] Occupational inscriptions come with a number of additional biases. It should be stressed once more that only a very small minority of epitaphs records an occupation at all (see above). That could theoretically be the result of a general negative view of labour and labourers in Roman society, as encountered in the elite discourse. Monuments inscribed with a job-title or with an ornamental representation of work, however, would seem to emphasize pride in, and identification with, a job.[85] It is hard to believe that the elaborate funerary altar of the blacksmiths Lucius Cornelius Atimetus and his freedman Lucius Cornelius Epaphra, for example, represents anything but self-respect – it is a large monument with tools, a vending scene, and a work scene within the smithy on the sides.[86] Nor do I support the view that the small numbers of occupational inscriptions might be due to the fact that entrepreneurs or supervisors of a business in particular are commemorated with job-title, to the exclusion of their employees.[87] Whereas it is true that the occupation of the head of household is more likely to be mentioned, there are many inscriptions for dependent labourers including those within the family (wives or children), and

82 Compare *IPO* A 184 = *ISIS* 157 (*D(is) M(anibus) / T(ito) Munatio T(iti) f(ilio) Proclo / Quir(ina) Iuliano / fec(it) Iulia Ti(beri) f(ilia) Procla / m(ater) f(ilio) p(iissimo?) vix(it) ann(os) VI die(s) XIIII*) and the sarcophagus with inscription *IPO* A 185 = *ISIS* 158: *T(ito) Munat(io) / T(iti) f(ilio) Proclo* – both in Latin, clearly related because both mention Titus Munatius Proclus (Iulianus), son of Titus, and *IPO* A 184 also refers to Julia Procla.

83 Hopkins (1966), (1987); this difference is particularly marked in Rome, cf Garnsey and De Ligt (2016) 93 with references.

84 Hemelrijk (2015) 30–1 with references for a concise, nuanced update on MacMullen (1982) and the concept of epigraphic density.

85 Joshel (1992) 163 and throughout.

86 *CIL* 6. 16166 (Rome 1st c. AD), now in the Galleria Lapidaria of the Vatican Museums: *L(ucius) Cornelius / Atimetus / sibi et L(ucio) Cornelio / Epaphrae lib(erto) / bene merenti / ceterisq(ue) libertis / lib(ertabus) posterisque / eorum.*

87 Tran (2007b) 124-5.

the extended household (freedmen, *colliberti*, slaves): the monument of Atimetus and Epaphra belongs in that category, too.

In my view, the most logical explanation would be a general preference among the majority of the inscription-erecting population to record familial ties before anything else. Particularly women were generally commemorated in a familial context, in accordance with Roman ideals: If women were unlikely to put up or receive inscriptions, this phenomenon becomes even more pronounced for inscriptions with job-title.[88] Slaves and ex-slaves, conversely, may not have had family to commemorate or to be commemorated by, which helps to explain that they are the ones most likely to have an occupational title in the epigraphic record.

The amount of epigraphic sources is impressive, but that should not obscure the fact that their interpretation is not always straightforward. The epitaphs are often brief and offer little or no context, and it is not always clear whether an occupational indicator is meant to be a job-title, or a cognomen.[89] Fortunately, more often an occupational title is unquestionably an occupational title. But then it is not always clear what the job entailed. Was a *margaritarius* a dealer in pearls, or a pearl-setter? Or was he both, selling his own wares in his home-shop *taberna*? What exactly did an *aquarius* do with water?[90] Context matters.

With certain occupations missing from the record, with other jobs under- or over-represented, and with such a low percentage of 'workers' attested altogether, it is clearly not possible to equate the individuals in the occupational inscriptions with the working population. Most pieces of that puzzle are probably missing, though definite patterns can still be discerned. Other ancient sources, models and theories are necessary to decide whether these are patterns of commemoration, accidents of tradition, or reflections of reality.

Reliefs

There is no lack of interest from students of the Roman world, as well as from the general public, in figurative scenes of Romans at work on stone or frescos; the scenes of fulling from the walls of a fullery in Pompeii have been reproduced countless times, for exam-

88 Cf Groen-Vallinga (2013), and chapter 2. This pattern is most marked in the city of Rome.

89 Cf. Gummerus (1926).

90 Von Petrikovits (1981) 69: "Die auffallende Tatsache, dass schon seit Plautus im Lateinischen selten zwischen den Produzenten und Händlern einer Ware unterschieden wird, dürfte darauf zurückgehen, dass diese Unterscheidung oft auch in der Wirklichkeit nicht existierte". Cf Morel (1992) 232. Händel's brave attempt to identify jobs ending in –*tor* as executive employees and those in –*arius* as owners/wholesalers simply does not hold, think e.g. of the *aerarius* (coppersmith), or *albarius* (stucco worker), *brattiarius* (gold leaf beater), and so on.

ple.[91] Occupational reliefs, however, are considerably less numerous than occupational inscriptions. They signify a more expensive form of funerary commemoration, which goes a long way to explain their smaller numbers. Probably for the same reason, slaves are hardly ever commemorated on a monument with a relief, and that includes occupational reliefs. Freedmen predominate. It is interesting that the Gallic provinces are best represented in scholarly literature: occupational reliefs seem to have been part of the commemorative habit there more than anywhere else.[92] The Italian heartland nevertheless brought forth many pictorial sources for work.

Zimmer's collection of *Römische Berufsdarstellungen* (1982) contains about one hundred funerary reliefs, shop signs, stones and frescos from Roman Italy portraying scenes from work, and monuments depicting tools. It is the only illustrated catalogue of this type of evidence to date that I know of, and as such remains invaluable.[93] Kampen also includes a catalogue of work-reliefs in her book on working women in Ostia, but her criteria are significantly different.[94] Her catalogue includes women from Italy and the provinces, and men only from Ostia. Kampen chose to include only scenes of work, not tools, but she does include the category of mythological illustrations of work, such as an image of Amores and Psychae with garlands. In my view, this category of mythological work is mainly that: mythological. The Amores and Psychae may hint at the occupation of garland-making, but it does not necessarily refer to the occupation of the deceased. Still her catalogue adds a number of reliefs not covered in the work of Zimmer. Neither collection can – or does – claim completeness.[95]

It would be a laborious task to collect all occupational illustrations for Roman Italy, and it is my contention that doing so would not add much to my argument. Originally, however, inscription and relief were part of the same funerary monument, and they should be studied as such wherever possible. As often as not only one of the two remains. Whenever we are fortunate enough to find both preserved, profession as a rule

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91 The fullery is VI. 8.20.

92 Larsson Lovén (2007); Langner (2001); Béal (2000); Chevallier (1997); also Rose (2007), particularly on Metz. George (2006) 28 suggests that the prevalence of the imagery of work in the northwestern provinces was due to the fact that the elite ideology, which was after all developed in and extended out from Rome, carried less weight there.

93 Zimmer (1982) is more inclusive than Gummerus' pioneering study of 1913; Schulze (1998) offers a diachronic catalogue for all types of ancient images of child-minders (*nutrix* and *paedagogus*). The findings from the Roman period are small in number both in absolute and in relative terms.

94 Kampen (1981) 137–161; the catalogue does not contain many images, only for the few reliefs depicting working women. I hasten to add that this choice is quite sensible, considering the focus of her book.

95 The occasional relief is still being published, see e.g. Wilson and Schörle (2009) for a funerary relief with scenes from a bakery.

is not mentioned in the text, but is conveyed solely through the image – or vice versa. The earliest freedmen monument with explicit reference to work is the lavish tomb of the Gavii, depicting four life-size portrait busts of the family. Only in the inscription, added in uneven writing in the right-hand corner, as if it were an afterthought, is the text '*duo fratres fabrei tignuares*', two brothers, who were carpenters.[96] George tentatively suggested that the freedmen monuments show a swift development throughout the first century AD, from the modest monument of the Gavii, to increasing visibility of work in emblematic motives added to the stones, to vending scenes – that is, an honourable perspective on industry –, to the ostentatious pride shown on the monument of Atimetus and Epaphra.[97] In my view, the perceived 'evolution' must remain conjectural, because it relies on very precise dating based on stylistic rather than factual aspects, and they all fall within the broad first century AD. In epigraphy, however, dating is even more problematic. For these and other reasons it is a pity that inscription and monument are not consistently studied together; in spite of converging trends, iconography still is mostly the prerogative of art historians and archaeologists, whereas textual evidence tends to be reserved for historians and classicists. Bridging the gap is not easy, especially when dealing with large numbers of data.

Although digital humanities greatly facilitate the search for occupational inscriptions, the problem with an online database is that much information is lost in the process: a careful note from the editors of *CIL* that a sickle or a comb is depicted on the monument, for example, is as yet untraceable online. Pictures of the inscriptions and their monuments are thankfully becoming available in larger numbers, and this is a great help. But there is a long way to go before every single monument with an inscription can also be viewed. The images that are currently available, are not searchable; the photos accompanying inscriptions often lack quality, and regularly do not present a full view of all sides of a monument.

Literature, law, and material remains

There is other, more indirect evidence available as well. Glimpses of working life may be found in fragments from the satirists, like Martial 2.17 remarking on the practice of a *tonstrix* (barber) in the Subura:

96 *CIL* 6. 9411, Rome 40 BC, now in the S. Giovanni in Laterano, Chiostro; George (2006) 20-1 for dating and discussion of how this monument highlights socially conservative values (the family) rather than occupation, under the influence of elite views on labour; For occupation only on the relief, not in the text, e.g. the altar of Lucius Cornelius Atimetus and Epaphra above with *CIL* 6.16166; also *IPO* A 273–5, all three part of the same monument for a smith in the Isola Sacra necropolis, in this instance rather well documented: see D'Ambra (1988), Helttula e.a. (2007) nr 37–9.

97 George (2006).

Mart. *Ep.* 2.17

> Tonstrix Suburae faucibus sedet primis,
> cruenta pendent qua flagella tortorum
> Argique Letum multus obsidet sutor:
> sed ista tonstrix, Ammiane, non tondet,
> non tondet, inquam. Quid igitur facit? Radit.
>
> A female barber sits just at the entrance of the Subura, where the blood-stained scourges of the executioners hang, and many a cobbler faces the Potter's Field. But that female barber, Ammianus, does not crop you: she does not crop you, I say. What then, does she do? She skins you.[98]

The text paints a rather vivid picture of a woman who has her business well in order, and incidentally tells us that in Martial's social universe at least one *tonstrix* worked in the Subura.[99] Similarly, a novelist like Apuleius brings to the stage more than one labourer as part of the lively décor to his story of Lucius the Ass.[100]

Roman labour law or, to put it less anachronistically, the evidence from passages that refer to labour and labour relations in the Roman legal texts, is also an invaluable source. Law is at the heart of the influential monographs of Francesco De Robertis.[101] Mima Maxey based her work on occupations of the lower classes in Roman society on attestations of job-titles in Justinian's *Digest*.[102] The jurists provide a wealth of information about the possibilities for hiring labour or labourers, and about liability and enforcement. The position of slaves and freedmen in the economy, for example, is illuminated greatly by the knowledge that their position of dependence makes them particularly well-suited as agents for their masters.[103] The question always remains, however, to what extent written law can be equated with actual practice. Many labour agreements may have been mere verbal agreements, and one can wonder to what extent an unskilled labourer

98 Translation Delphi Classics 2013. The meaning of *radit* is crucial to the interpretation of the epigram; it is likely to be a pun on finances: one gets ripped off, cf the commentary of Williams (2004) 83.

99 There are four *tonstrices* in the occupational inscriptions, three from Rome: *CIL* 6. 941, 5865, and 9493 = 33809; one from Venafrum, *AE* (1999) 473.

100 Bradley (2012) is a wonderful collection of papers on the historical value of Apuleius' work.

101 De Robertis (1946) (1963).

102 Maxey (1938).

103 Garnauf (2009), De Ligt (1999), Aubert (1994), Kirschenbaum (1987).

could resort to (expensive) measures of contract enforcement. Nevertheless the legal framework is vital for an understanding of the economy more generally.[104]

Apart from textual evidence, there is also a great wealth of archaeological data available, ranging from the remains of settlements and the location of industry and *tabernae* in the town plan, to artefacts, tools, stamps, and finished product. This material has led to a wealth of studies on technological aspects of the production processes that actually created the artefact,[105] on the organization of particular workshops like the pottery workshops at La Graufesenque, and on the patterns of trade that can be discerned in the distribution of finds. The building trade in particular, but also other trades have become the subject of intensive scholarship.[106] The details of individual crafts and trades, although valuable, are by and large left out of consideration in this thesis, as they would contribute little to the broader picture. In recent years, however, a renewed dialogue between historians of the Roman economy and archaeologists has opened the way to new and fruitful approaches of Roman labour and work in Roman Italy starting from the material remains.[107]

URBANISATION

A focus on the urban labour market requires some discussion of urbanisation. What is urban and what is not? Up to a point, the choice of what counts as urban is based on the evidence: most inscriptions are commonly thought to originate in or near towns. This principle works both ways, however. If many inscriptions are found in one place, it will likely be termed 'urban'. To opt for the epigraphic approach, as is also the point of departure for this book, is to settle for an urban outlook. Occupational inscriptions thus cover mainly individuals who worked and/or died in the city. The implications of choosing an urban outlook are profound and deserve to be dealt with in some detail.

The urbanisation of Roman Italy is a much-debated topic. From a historical perspective, the urban landscape of Roman Italy was well developed.[108] From a contemporary perspective, too, Roman Italy was flourishing: Italy could boast a population that was

104 Terpstra (2008); Hawkins (forthcoming).

105 E.g. Strong and Brown (1976).

106 Building trade: Bernard (2017); DeLaine (1997); other trades, see e.g. the papers in Mac Mahon and Price (2005).

107 See Wilson and Flohr eds (2016); also the contributions of Bond, Flohr and Murphy in Laes and Verboven eds (2017); Flohr (2012), (2007).

108 Erdkamp (2012) is a useful introduction to the 'urbanism' of the urban economy. Patterson (2006); Jongman (1990) 43; cf De Vries (1984) for early modern Europe.

more dense than in the provinces, plus higher urbanisation rates and a greater concentration of urban settlements than anywhere else in the empire.[109]

Overall urbanisation rates for Roman Italy have been estimated at 15–20 per cent, without taking into account the supercity of Rome, and its harbour city Ostia.[110] Rome of the first century AD, with its 800,000 to one million inhabitants, was one of a kind: the city would not be surpassed by any other city in history until the rise of London around 1800.[111] The next city in line was Capua, which was significantly smaller with a population of between 40,000 and 50,000 people.[112] These are exceptions to the general pattern, however: there were only a few large towns in the Italian peninsula.[113] The urban landscape can therefore be characterized by a great variation of settlements of medium and small sizes. Regional differentiation was probably significant as well: Campania was more urbanized than Picenum, for example.[114] Apart from variation in settlement sizes, it is likely that there was also variation in their nature. While the economies of most cities seem to have been sustained by governmental or elite expenditure, entrepot trade or production of manufactured goods for export played an important part in at least some cities. The existence of an intricate road network unlocked at least the potential for urban integration and migration towards the cities.[115]

The diversity of the urban network is reflected in the sources: about half of the occupational inscriptions comes from Rome or Ostia, whereas the sizeable city of Hatria in Picenum only brought forth one.[116] The number of occupational inscriptions is not always related to settlement size. Cities of roughly equal size sometimes also spawned rather different evidence for employment. It remains to be seen whether this is because of a distinctive nature of the towns, to variation in epigraphical patterns, or whether it is simply due to the accidents of survival.

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109 Scheidel (2007a) 47 with table 3.1 on page 48. His map 3.2 on p. 76 shows the cities of the empire with greater clustering of cities in Roman Italy.

110 De Ligt (2012) chapter 5, esp. 213, 239–40.

111 Jongman (1990) 43.

112 De Ligt (2012) 236; Scheidel (2007a) 78.

113 De Ligt (2012) 235–8 with map 5.2 on page 237. Cf Erdkamp (2012) 244 without reference to De Ligt. See also Patterson (2006) 38-39 and Morley (1996) 182, both emphasising wide variation in urban population sizes. This was apparently still true for Italy in the late twentieth century, Garnsey (1998) 112–3.

114 De Ligt (2012) 231; this was predicted by Garnsey (1998) 113.

115 Laurence (1999).

116 *CIL* 9. 5018 from Hatria records a freeborn scribe (*scriba*). Cf Cristofori (2004). According to De Ligt (2012) 312 Hatria is one of two large towns in Picenum, but see De Ligt (2016) 55 for a correction of its estimated size from 45ha to 37ha, which makes it a 'medium-sized' settlement. The remaining large town is Asculum, which has 6 occupational inscriptions (to the list in Cristofori 2004 should be added *CIL* 9. 5189).

The urban population

> The city's inhabitants were always changing; at any one time they could include tourists, merchants on a regular visit, farmers in for market, immigrants who were likely to die there and natives who still hoped to get out.[117]

This quote was written about Rome. Even so, the words probably hold true for other urban settlements to some extent, many of which were performing the role of market centre where goods and services were manufactured and/or exchanged. Reading such comments, it would appear that the urban population was a rather heterogeneous body.

An urbanisation rate of about 25 per cent and the existence of a number of sizeable cities in Roman Italy both imply a significant level of migration to towns. Urban migration theory dictates that cities need a continuous influx of migrants to keep up their population. One tier of the theory is known as urban graveyard theory, based on the fact that preindustrial cities were notoriously unhealthy places. For that reason preindustrial cities have often been portrayed as 'population sinks' in need of massive numbers of immigrants to keep up their dwindling population numbers. The second argument is thought to reinforce the first. It is based on migrant fertility, assuming that a lower marriage rate and therefore a lower fertility rate among migrants – who were mostly young males – must be postulated, leading to excess mortality rates and the need for yet more immigrants. It has convincingly been argued that urban migration theory was applicable to ancient Rome, and it can be presumed that this argument extends to the largest cities of Roman Italy.[118] It may not necessarily hold for all, or even for most, of the cities in Roman Italy, however. Whereas there is no apparent population threshold for the migrant fertility problem to apply, some settlements may have been too small to actually become population sinks.[119] If part of urban migration theory does not apply to all settlements in Roman Italy, however, that does not mean that there was no migration into towns. The promise of employment opportunities and better wages were a sure draw.

The subject of migration in the Roman world has experienced an upsurge of interest in the last decade or two.[120] The relationship between migration and labour is not

117 Morley (1996) 33.

118 Tacoma (2016), especially chapter 5; cf De Ligt (2013) 155; Holleran (2011) for migration into the city of Rome; Jongman (2003) 106.

119 Tacoma (2016) 247–253 for the applicability of urban migration theory to cities other than Rome; Hin (2016) for a nuanced view of migrant fertility; De Ligt (2012) 245-6; the threshold for population sinks is traditionally thought to be 10,000 people.

120 See e.g. the edited volumes by Lo Cascio and Tacoma (2017); De Ligt and Tacoma (2016); and the monograph by Tacoma (2016); Cf Noy (2000); Scheidel (2004), (2005a).

straightforward, all the more so because the Roman world was familiar with both forced and voluntary migration.[121] Were the migrants able to find work in the city? Their options depended largely on the openness of the labour market. Was all work open to migrants? Information about labour opportunities and actual vacancies in the city must have affected migration patterns; conversely, the size and nature of migration flows will have influenced the structure of the urban population and workforce. The dominance of slavery in some sectors of the urban economy, especially in the domestic sector, may have reduced labour opportunities for free women; the presence (and influx) of slaves and ex-slaves in towns more generally could have severely impeded the opportunities for voluntary labour migration.[122] An analysis of the openness or segmentation of the labour market is one of the underlying goals of this work.

Rome and the rest

There was no place like Rome. Rome potentially accounted for up to 18 per cent of the entire population of Roman Italy.[123] The existence of a primate city is not in itself anomalous; it is the absence of secondary centres in Roman Italy that makes Rome so extraordinary.[124] Therefore the structure of the population and the nature of institutions in the capital may also have been very different from any other urban settlement in Roman Italy. Rome is where the emperor and the imperial government resided. Rome was also the main attraction for both the elite, and the poor. The elite spent lavishly, and their taste for luxury goods and services created money-making opportunities for a whole segment of urban labourers. The clustering of urban poor in the capital, the (imperial) building trade and other jobs in which they scraped a living, and the grain distributions to help support them are well known and have been the subject of many scholarly works to date.[125]

The nature of the ancient evidence from the capital should also be considered. Contemporary Rome still is a cosmopolis and is now home to some 2.9 million inhabitants. The current built-up area obscures much of the ancient city, and much remains to be learnt. The other side of the coin is that much of the ancient city remains visible in the current town plan. Moreover, there is no other city that has been studied and excavated so extensively.[126] Ancient Rome was exceptional, but because it has also been treated

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121 Chapter 2 below; cf Tacoma (2016) chapter 6; Holleran (2011) for voluntary migration to Rome.

122 Garnsey and De Ligt (2016) for Herculaneum (and other cities in the Bay of Naples by proxy, p. 74): imported slaves may have been the majority of migrants, p. 94.

123 De Ligt (2012) 195.

124 Outside of Roman Italy, one might mention Alexandria and Carthage, although it remains to be seen exactly how sizeable these cities were.

125 E.g. Bernard (2017); Holleran (2011), Aldrete and Mattingly (1999), Brunt (1980).

126 With the possible exception of Ostia, but see below.

as such by many generations of scholars it is also much better documented than any other settlement. The fact that about half of the occupational inscriptions from Roman Italy actually originates from Rome is therefore more than a reflection of reality. The gap between Rome and the rest deepens.

That Rome was a very distinct place should be kept in mind throughout this analysis. There are good reasons to believe that the functioning of *collegia,* for example, was different in Rome.[127] Subterranean *columbaria* are attested virtually exclusively in the capital.[128] Rome had a large free proletariat, which is why the proportion of slaves among the population is likely to have been lower in the capital than in other urban settlements.[129] The only settlement that approximates Rome at all is Ostia, which to some extent might be viewed as an extension of the capital itself.[130]

Urbanisation and labour differentiation

Urbanisation is often causally linked with economic growth and complexity, and vice versa.[131] Economic prosperity may lead to a division of labour between town and country: Adam Smith in the *Wealth of nations* noted that job differentiation develops when sufficient agricultural surplus is produced to allow part of the labour population to take up other occupations than agriculture.[132] Urbanisation therefore leads to increased job differentiation.[133] It is tempting to conceptually locate the labourers with an 'urban' occupation in towns, and to place farmers and farmhand on the land. That idea is in fact corroborated by Garnsey's answer to the question where Italian peasants lived – that is, mostly on the land –, and it is also the distinction that Hopkins used for his calculation of urbanisation rates in Roman Italy.[134] To be sure, the division between the urban and rural workforce of Roman Italy was not as convenient as that. Not all artisans and craftsmen lived in the city, and not all farmers lived on the land. There was industrial activity in the rural areas, too.[135] There certainly was plenty of movement between town and country.

127 See chapter 5.

128 See chapter 4.

129 Cf Garnsey and De Ligt (2016).

130 Not everyone agrees, e.g. Bruun (2010) 110–11 with n. 5.

131 Erdkamp (2012) 243-4; Scheidel (2007a) 81: "institutional arrangements and even moderate levels of intensive economic growth appear to have been the main driving force behind the success of urbanism".

132 On the rural-urban distinction, but starting from Procopius rather than Adam Smith, see also Erdkamp (2012) 241–3.

133 As opposed to 'specialisation' in the sense of breaking up the production process, cf. Van Minnen (1987) 45.

134 Garnsey (1998) 107–33, contra the concept of agro-towns, cf Lo Cascio (2009) 89–91; Hopkins (1978) 68–9.

135 Cf De Ligt (1991).

But the nature of the evidence in this thesis legitimates a model of non-agricultural cities as opposed to an agricultural countryside.

The high degree of occupational differentiation is a defining feature of the urban labour market in Roman Italy – my catalogue of job titles records no less than 564 different occupations.[136] Treggiari remarks for the city of Rome: "The opportunities available contrast favourably with the 101 jobs (...) for which regulations were made in 13th-century Paris (where specialisation went far enough to allow three types of rosary-makers)".[137] This phenomenon has been noted by many scholars, but it has led to radically different explanations.

The high degree of specialisation attested has been connected to the existence of large workshops exhibiting extreme specialisation: such specialisation in the sense of breaking up the production process demanded only low levels of skill, because all workers made only a tiny contribution to create a complex final product that nobody knew how to manufacture anymore.[138] A similar argument was advanced recently by Cam Hawkins, who stresses the risks of investing in the acquisition of a full skill-set, because of the inherent instability and insecurity of the market in ancient Rome.[139] The most eloquent ancient source for this type of decentralization perhaps, is Augustine's *De Civitate Dei* 7.4 from the early fifth century, which has relevance for the early empire too. Augustine notes how polytheistic deities are all active within a specific territory, "like craftsmen in the quarter of the silversmiths, where one vessel passes through the hands of many artisans in order to come out finished, when it could have been completed by one perfect artisan."[140] Further on in the text, Augustine's description of the silversmiths hints at the existence of industrial districts, where those in the same line of work clustered together to facilitate subcontracting.[141] It is more a metaphor than it is an actual attestation concerning the work of silversmiths, but in order for the metaphor to work it must reflect reality.

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136 See appendix 1: catalogue of job titles.

137 Treggiari (1980) 56; cf Tran (2007b); compare Harris (2002) for the extensive differentiation of occupational designations in classical Athens.

138 Morel (1992) 232-4 on the existence of this type of decentralization.

139 Hawkins (2016); Also Hawkins (2017) 44-5 for the option of decentralization on the level of the 'firm' (workshop).

140 Hawkins (2006) 52-58 on this text and its relevance for the early empire, at 52 cites Aug. *Civ. Dei* 7.4: *tamquam opifices in uico argentario, ubi unum uasculum, ut perfectum exeat, per multos artifices transit, cum ab uno perfecto perfici posset*. It is not difficult to identify the tenor of the 'one perfect artisan' of the metaphor.

141 Topographical names hinting at clustering like this are well-attested for the early empire, Holleran (2012) 51–60, MacMullen (1974) 70–79. The extent to which economic zoning existed despite these names may be debated, however. See chapter 5.

It is likely that this division of labour, or breaking up the production process, accounts for some of the job differentiation attested in the cities, but there is more to it. Highly specialized jobs attested regularly are also highly skilled, such as a *gemmarius* (gem-setter) or *caelator* (engraver); their high skill-levels are also to be argued on the basis of the quality of products that have come down to us. Large-scale and factory-like settings where decentralization may have taken place are solely attested in Rome and Ostia, and even then only to a limited degree.[142] There are fulleries where it does seem that some employees were either trampling clothes or rinsing them all day. More generally, however, it appears that fullers were engaged with the whole process from A to Z.[143] In some jobs it was riskier to invest in job-training than in other occupations with a more stable demand, as Hawkins allows.[144] The modest mean size of workshops in the urban landscape suggests that very often one artisan or craftsman did possess the complete set of skills. Occupational variation as a reflection of economic complexity therefore should not be overlooked, all the more since it is generally thought that the Roman economy was thriving.[145]

Some of the attested job differentiation must also be a result of conspicuous consumption or, in other words, the fact that elite owners liked to show off by employing a slave for every single task one can think of, however petty or insignificant. The elite *domus* thus account for a large share of the occupational differentiation, particularly in the city of Rome.[146] There is a *margaritarius* who appears to be a caretaker of pearls, a *cubicularius* (bedchamber servant), and a *capsarius* (carrier of scroll-holders), for example, none of whom we might perhaps expect to have spent all day at their appointed tasks.[147] Not all of these occupations fell to slaves, but the fact that freedmen and the occasional freeman are also attested in the elite household does not diminish the conspicuousness of a large and differentiated household.

Each of these explanations accounts for part of the attested occupational differentiation, and none of them is exclusive of the others. In other words: these factors taken together account for the wide range of occupations attested.

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142 Flohr (2007).

143 Flohr (2013).

144 Though see Hawkins (2006) 68-74 on the existence, but the marginal influence of, markets with a more stable demand.

145 Scheidel, Saller, Morris (2007) 5–6; Temin (2006), or Saller (2002/2005). Examples could be multiplied.

146 For elite domus and occupational differentiation, see also chapter 4. Cf Joshel (1992) 73–6, Bradley (1994) 57–80, who mentions on page 58 that in the *familia rustica* as well as the *familia urbana* "the number of occupations discharged was virtually limitless".

147 Bradley (1994) 60 takes as examples an *ostiarius* and *scoparius*.

THE ROMAN ECONOMY AND NEW INSTITUTIONAL ECONOMICS

The enormous influence of Moses Finley can perhaps largely be held responsible for the fact that it has taken so long for ancient historians to catch up with economic theory. It is no secret that Finley propagated the ancient economy as something fundamentally different from modern economies. In the eyes of Finley and his followers, Roman society had an economy that was embedded socially and culturally. The publication of Finley's *The ancient economy* initiated a debate between those who agreed that the ancient economy should be studied by itself, and those who chose to make the link with economics.[148] Recent decades have seen important converging trends in this primitivist-modernist debate, which has lost much of its intensity.[149]

The ultimate reconciliation between the two came, perhaps, with the introduction of New Institutional Economics (NIE) to ancient history.[150] Douglass North introduced the concept of institutions to economics, at a time when economics was concerned chiefly with performance, particularly the performance of contemporary entities: North held that contemporary economies as well as historical economies are embedded.[151] This approach opens up all of history as comparative material for economic theory. A focus on social and cultural factors does not mean that NIE has dismissed the matter of economic performance. On the contrary, the focus on institutions stems from an interest in the structural determinants of economic performance, and therefore takes into account both structure, and performance.

> If neo-institutional economics can be seen as an attempt to bring history to the attention of economists, it may equally well be a way to make economic theory serve the interests of historians; it is situated at the crossroads of the two disciplines.[152]

NIE is therefore well-suited to the needs of ancient historians and has been taken up with enthusiasm, particularly in the last decade or so. An indication of the widespread acceptance of NIE is the explicit acknowledgement of the importance of the work of North in the *Cambridge economic history of the Greco-Roman world* already referred to above.[153] The first part of the book is devoted entirely to structural determinants of the

148 Cf Jongman (1988) for a Finleyan analysis that does make use of modern economic theory.

149 E.g. Saller (2002/2005).

150 For a useful introductory piece, Bang (2009).

151 Esp. North (1990). See also North (2005).

152 Bang (2009) 197.

153 Morris, Saller and Scheidel (eds)(2007) 1, 6. Bang (2009) is in fact a review of that work.

economy or, in the words of the editors, "core analytical categories": the chapters are dedicated respectively to ecology, demography, household and gender, law and economic institutions, and technology.[154] NIE was also implemented in both Bang's influential *Imperial Bazaar* and its theoretical opposite, Temin's *Roman market economy* – two main contributions to the discussion on the nature of the Roman economy.[155] Others have engaged with the institutional framework provided by Roman law, transaction cost theory, or the *collegia* as social institutions.[156] New Institutional Ancient Economics has become an established, vibrant field of research.

The knights who say NIE[157]

It must be expressed that New Institutional Ancient Economics hardly resembles the original New Institutional Economics. NIE itself has gone through important developments, and is now better suited for the Roman case. A full understanding of institutions includes the ways in which they furthered market forces, as well as the ways in which they may have restricted them. A distinction was made between formal and informal institutions, the latter based on social and cultural beliefs. It is simple enough to underline that relevant institutions existed, but the mere existence of institutions does not imply that they were economically efficient.[158] Cultural beliefs and social circumstances largely determine the shaping of institutions and an individual's choices, recognition of which led NIE to branch out into behavioural economics. Strictly speaking, then, New Institutional Ancient Economics is perhaps not NIE, but it is more eclectic, benefiting also from behavioural and development economics more generally.

With all this in mind, how should this modern, inclusive understanding of NIE be applied to the study of Roman labour? The advantages of applying NIE to studies of labour in Antiquity specifically, were advocated by Zuiderhoek.[159] His view of what a focus on institutions could mean, is explained in this fragment:

> Focussing on institutions/organisations allows us to bring some analytical order to the great variety of different categories of labour and types of labourers which we come across in ancient sources. This is so because institutions/organisations functioned as structuring actors, that might simultaneously 'consume', i.e. buy/hire and employ, and supply labour to third parties. Thus, they in effect operated

154 Morris, Saller and Scheidel (eds) (2007), at 9.

155 Bang (2008); Temin (2013a).

156 Terpstra (2008) and Hawkins (2017); Hawkins (2016) and Venticinque (2006); Liu (2017).

157 Reference to the title of Verboven (2015), which is a programmatic article and the basis for much of what follows in this paragraph.

158 E.g. Ogilvie (2007); Liu (2017) 204-6, Bang (2009) 203.

159 In his contribution to *Workers of the world* 1:3 (2013), a special issue on Global labour history.

> as allocation mechanisms (or channels) via which labour and labour power were distributed in ancient society. An institutional/organisational focus, moreover, can also provide us with some rationale for the great diversity of labour statuses which we encounter in antiquity, since within a given institutional/organizational context, different status positions and the specific labour relations associated with them might well serve to reduce costs of oversight, transaction and information so as to maximize 'efficiency', in terms of output, profit or, indeed, exploitation (rent-seeking, predation).[160]

The number of institutions that are relevant to Roman labour, are probably too numerous to list. For a very brief exploration, Zuiderhoek selects the institutions of the household, associations, and cities. In my analysis of urban labour, too, I have opted to deal with the family, and associations, both in an urban context. That is not to deny the importance of other institutions or organizing principles like Roman law. But in Roman labour history, that ground has been covered relatively well. Verboven acknowledged the widespread use of many aspects of NIE amongst ancient historians, but emphasized the need to incorporate more fully the impact of cultural beliefs.[161] Cultural values and norms certainly also had a profound impact on the functioning of the urban labour market. They had an influence on familial norms and values, and family form, and on the social and more formal characteristics of associations. To me, ancient history is about real life individuals, in this instance, individuals who were subject to many factors that worked together to determine his or her daily occupation, be it in the household or the workshop.

Discovering the Roman family[162]

Easily the most important structural factor that determines labour, is the family.[163] Considering the hypothesis that the family was so crucial in labour economics, the first question that should really be addressed is what we mean by 'family'.

In modern-day English, 'family' can denote basically any group of individuals, or even any group of things, all according to context.[164] It is used, for example, in the expression 'having a family', that is having children, or in a 'family weekend', indicating a meeting

160 Zuiderhoek (2013) 43.

161 Verboven (2012b) 599: "Historians of antiquity are now familiar with several key concepts of the New Institutional Economics – such as transaction costs or path dependence – but until now they have paid very little attention to the role of cultural values and norms". See now more fully Verboven (2015).

162 This is the title of Bradley's influential 1991 monograph on the Roman family.

163 See also the preliminary observations of Saller (2007).

164 *OED* online (2013)[3] s.v. *family*: A. I "Senses relating to a group of people or animals"; A. II "Senses relating to things".

attended by a random selection of close as well as more distant relatives, and sometimes even by unrelated friends from outside the nuclear family.[165] Generally, however, family is defined by kinship. Whereas the English word family is certainly derived from Latin *familia*, *familia* is not equivalent to family.[166] The Romans, however, were no less versatile in their use of both *familia* and *domus*.[167]

Familia can cover a wide variety of meanings. With reference to persons, not things, *familia* may refer to the agnatic kin group, which appears relatively familiar to us. More exclusively, it may also indicate the slaves of the household. Throughout my thesis, however, I will limit the use of *familia* to one of its more specific legal definitions: the *familia* encompasses all persons under the power (*potestas*) of the *paterfamilias*, including wife, children, slaves and freedmen:

***Dig*. 50.16.195.2**

> Familiae appellatio refertur et ad corporis cuiusdam significationem, quod aut iure proprio ipsorum aut communi universae cognationis continentur. Iure proprio familiam dicimus plures personas, quae sunt sub unius potestate aut natura aut iure subiectae, ut puta patrem familias, matrem familias, filium familias, filiam familias quique deinceps vicem eorum sequuntur, ut puta nepotes et neptes et deinceps.
>
> The term *familia* also refers to a collection of persons, connected either by their own legal rights vis-à-vis each other, or by a more general kinship relationship. We say that a family is connected by its own legal bond when several persons are either by nature or by law subjected to the *potestas* of one person – for example, the *paterfamilias*, *materfamilias*, and son and daughter under paternal control, as well as their descendants, such as grandsons, granddaughters, and their successors.[168]

165 Bradley (1991) 3-4: "even at the level of ordinary discourse, *family* is an ambiguous, elusive term, whose meaning for any individual is shaped primarily by the variables of age and marital status, and if divorce and remarriage have anywhere entered the picture, the complications of understanding and defining are greater still".

166 It is interesting that the lemma of the *OED* online (2013)^3 s.v. *family* still includes a historical definition that does sometimes approximate the Latin *OLD* s.v. *familia*.

167 Saller (1994) chapter 4 offers a good analysis of Roman 'family, *familia*, and *domus*'; See also Dixon (1992) 1-12, and Saller (1984).

168 *Dig*. 50.16.195.2 (Ulpian); translation Dillon and Garland (2005) 342.

Technically a wife was only part of the *familia* if married *cum manu*, whereas *sine manu* marriage was common during the Principate. It is nevertheless likely that she was often implicitly considered a part of the *familia*.

Latin *domus* can include both cognate and agnate kin, and is perhaps a better approximation to our broader understanding of family. But it, too, has a variety of other meanings, and was also used to refer to the household and everyone in it (including servants), or merely to the physical house.[169] For this reason I have limited the use of *domus* to the elite *domus* of chapter 4.

Households may be defined concisely as "those sets of relationships, historically variable yet relatively constant, that have as one of their principal features the sharing of sustenance gained from the widest possible variety of sources".[170] In terms of economic functionality, then, the household provides a better focus than the family. It includes non-kin living in the household.[171] The addition of non-kin is significant for the current analysis of the Roman situation as well, where many households contained a number of slaves and freedmen. It should be noted that the criterion of coresidence is applied more loosely than in various other publications.[172] Household members who are temporarily away for seasonal labour or apprenticeships – and who may contribute substantially to the family income by doing so – are to be included.[173]

The economic unity of the family has been well established in scholarly literature, and requires little further elucidation.[174] The study of the family as an economic unit of individuals working and acting together took off with the development of New Home Economics in the second half of the twentieth century.[175] It was recognized that within the family, decisions on family expenses are made, the demand for which is in turn determined by the structure of the family. Likewise, how to manage the family income, labour allocation, and investment in human capital, is typically decided within the

169 See, for example, Harlow and Laurence (2002) chapter 2.

170 McGuire, Smith and Martin (1986) 76; quoted by Van der Linden (2002) 4.

171 An important notion found first in Laslett (1972) 24–5.

172 Laslett (1972) 27 speaks not of household, but of 'coresident domestic group' – still opting for a coresidence criterion. His wish to uphold this measure results primarily from the fact that non-coresident individuals would not have been registered in the census records that are the main source of evidence for many sociologists, rather than from any functional criterion.

173 E.g. Netting, Wilk and Arnould (1984), introduction; also Van der Linden (2002) 4: "households do not necessarily entail co-residence".

174 Van der Linden and Lucassen (1999) 9: "workers simply cannot be understood as individuals". E.g. Cigno (1991) 2: "It is not, therefore, the economic relevance of household organization and behaviour – even when looked at from the narrow point of view of the traditional interests of economists – that can be in any doubt".

175 The development is summarized in Engelen e.a. (2004a) 124.

family group.[176] With reference to occupation, family was important to everyone: to an emperor who inherited his position, to a slave or a slave's slave bound to their master's family, and to everyone in between.

There is a significant difference between family forms, and their relation to labour and labourers.

> ... there were considerable differences in household composition between the elite and the lower classes, and between urban and village populations. Composition and size of households depended on the economic basis from which the family made its living, since different forms of property and economic activities required different kinds of labor. Families that were smaller and simpler in organization have been observed for day laborers, small traders, craftsmen, and fishermen, whereas peasant farmers usually lived in larger, more complex families because they needed a sufficient pool of labor to meet peak periods of labor demand.[177]

This thesis focuses on urban labourers. It seems reasonable to distinguish between broad categories of urban families: small nonelite family features in chapter 3, and elite *domus* in chapter 4. In both instances, it will be argued that adaptive family strategies can account for the choices that were made in their engagements with the labour market. Family was an important indicator for economic success and development. The larger rural families also referred to by Hübner largely fall outside of the scope of my research, except at those times when they migrated to the city for (seasonal) labour.

Non-familial labour collectives: private associations

The Roman empire expanded to encompass increasingly more people, people who thronged together in cities to find an income through work. Associations provided a solution to the anonymity of being part of an enormous population, a situation that we may envisage as particularly vivid for the city of Rome.[178] The *collegia* gained momentum over the course of the second and third centuries, when the formation of the empire transformed the civic make-up to give pride of place to the associations and

176 Mincer and Polachek (1974) 397.

177 Hübner (2011) 82.

178 This view is eloquently summarized by MacMullen (1966) 174: "Their objects were simple, summed up in the phrase 'social security': to have a refuge from loneliness in a very big world, …". Cf Hopkins (1983) 214.

their members.[179] *Collegium* membership was a privilege and was always reserved for a minority of the population.

The associations are generally referred to as 'voluntary' or 'private' associations in scholarly research, a useful terminology that was "designed to distinguish them from institutions such as the state, city, or family, where membership was automatic – a question of birth rather than choice".[180] I deliberately adhere to this broad definition. The advantage of an open approach like this is that it includes all relevant social collectives: for current purposes, the gains of understanding the workings of group formation and group processes trumps the loss of the specific. Needless to say, this does not obviate a general need for investigations into particular associations in any way.[181]

The Latin terminology of association is varied. Most common both in Roman antiquity and in secondary literature on the subject today is *collegium*, but in Antiquity *corpus*, *sodalitas*, *sodalicium*, *koinon*, and other synonyms in both Latin and Greek, were also widespread, which in itself indicates the reality of a large variety in social collectives.[182] Not all associations were recognized by the law as formal *collegium*. It has proven virtually impossible to distinguish formal from informal associations and most scholars include most or all recognizable collectives in their analysis; because all types of collective are meaningful contributions to an individual's economic and social network I will do the same here. For the sake of clarity, throughout this thesis the current terms '*collegia*' and 'association' will be used to indicate any private collective.

Roman private associations were named according to religious affiliation, location (either current location or place of origin), or occupation. A strict distinction into separate categories, however, will not hold: religious, funerary, convivial/congregational/social, and economic functions often overlapped.[183] Even the primary identity reflected in the names of associations may not be an indication of their main activities, as members of the cult for Asclepius and Hygieia were very likely doctors, for example.[184] Perry's conceptual

179 Patterson (2006) especially chapter 3; see also Patterson (1992) 23.

180 Wilson (1996) 1, defining 'voluntary' in the 'voluntary associations' of the title of Kloppenborg and Wilson (1996). On the same page, Wilson writes: "the term 'private association', which some prefer, is a possible alternative, though it too would have required careful definition".

181 Liu (2009) 4–11 on the merits of a synthetic analysis, and on the need for complementary investigations into particular *collegia*, to which her study of the *collegia centonariorum* is an important contribution.

182 For a brief overview of terminology, see Ausbüttel (1982) 16–22, with n. 10 for earlier references.

183 Van Nijf (2002) 311–5; Van Nijf (1997) 10–11; Van Minnen (1987) 51-2 on Roman Egypt; Ausbüttel (1982) 29, 30.

184 Verboven (2017b) 176 n12 with reference to *CIL* 6. 10234, Rome 2nd century AD. Compare *AE* 1937, 161 for a *collegium Aesculapi et Hygiae structorum Caes(aris) n(ostri)*, who were apparently not doctors, but masons.

deconstruction of *collegia funeraticia* (burial colleges) as identified by Mommsen, "calls into question the need to 'categorize' colleges at all, a notion owed, in great measure, to this exposition of the subject in the *De collegiis* [Mommsen (1843)]."[185] In sum, in order to investigate the structural influence of associations on the labour market, it is not sufficient to take into account only *collegia* identified by a common occupation.

The category of 'professional' or 'occupational' *collegia* when singled out in secondary literature, generally collects *collegia* that were occupational in name. Similarly, in this monograph, the terms 'professional' or 'occupational' *collegia* will be used to refer to such associations. It bears repeating, however, that there was no clear dividing line between professional and other associations: scholars have become increasingly aware of the social function of occupational *collegia* and, conversely, of the economic activities also of *collegia* that – at least in name – were not trade-based.[186]

CONCLUSION

The daily labour of the people in the Roman empire has left many traces for a historian to follow. From an ancient historian's viewpoint in particular, the sources for workers are very promising. Documentary texts including occupational inscriptions, law, contracts, letters, anecdotes from a literary context that refer to labour in passing, a wealth of material remains such as tools, or the countless artifacts that are the result of unflagging industry, reliefs or frescos of people at work, and the archaeological remains of workshops, have come down to us. The wealth of evidence has of course not gone unnoticed, and many ancient historians have already been motivated by this remarkable opportunity to explore what life was like below the elite.

Although many valuable studies exist on work in the ancient world, and although many of the sources that I will be using are well-known in themselves, a systematic analysis of occupational data placed in their historical context is lacking. The aim of this monograph is to offer such an analysis for the cities of Roman Italy in roughly the first three centuries AD.

This study has the advantage that much of the evidence has been made available before and that many of the biases in the evidence are now known. Constructing an image of Roman labourers from the ancient sources alone, however, can only go so far. In my opinion, the advance of the use of New Institutional Economics makes it possible to use comparative material from other historical periods in order to delineate interpretative frameworks. In other words, comparative history can be used, not to accept

185 Perry (2006) 32, with reference to his dissertation from 1999 on *collegia funeraticia*.

186 Verboven (2017b).

without thinking that the situation in Rome must have been similar, but rather to build hypotheses and models, that should always be tested against the evidence.

An economic subject like labour screams for numbers. One inscriptions tells us very little about the economy as a whole, but a few thousand texts that document workers may well further our understanding of the labour market by uncovering underlying patterns. The quantitative aspect of this thesis cannot go much further than that, however. It has of necessity become a qualitative account of the urban labour market of Roman Italy, not a quantitative one. As such, however, I believe that the context of social structures provides a rich and insightful picture of how the Roman labour market is likely to have functioned.