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PART VII

**THE URBAN ECONOMY**

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## CHAPTER TWENTY

# The Labor Market<sup>1</sup>

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*Laurens E. Tacoma*

### Introduction

By the time of Augustus, Rome had in every sense of the word become a cosmopolis. It was a very populous city and its population had to be fed, housed, and clothed on a massive scale, the wealthy elite had to be supplied with whatever it fancied, and then there were the imperial building projects of staggering size. The high volume of production implies a large demand for labor, of a wide variety. The sources attest to an enormous range of economic activities: from making jewelry to unloading the boats coming from Ostia at the Tiber quays, to waiting on the table of a senator.

Given the wide range of activities, it is hardly surprising that Rome's labor market was complex. Six characteristics immediately strike the eye. In the first place, and somewhat paradoxically, much of the urban production was small-scale. Aggregate levels of production were high, but much of the urban labor was carried out in small workplaces that functioned also as shops (though see Flohr 2013 for other production forms). Even the large imperial building projects appear to have been subcontracted to smaller workforces (Brunt 1980). Second, although the demand for labor was high, it is an open question whether it was sufficient to supply an income for all. The free grain distributions clearly were meant to cushion the uncertainties of the free market. Third, much of the labor was carried out by slaves and freedmen. The exact proportion between free and servile labor is hotly debated and is in all likelihood beyond recovery. There is however no doubt that the size of

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the servile population was large. In the fourth place much of Rome's population will have consisted of newcomers. Again, the exact proportions of such migrants relative to the Rome-born population is difficult to establish (and depends on definitions), but it is clear that migrants can be found among all social groups of Rome (Noy 2000; Holleran 2011). Fifth, it seems likely that many jobs were held on a temporal basis. Some occupations would be subject to seasonal variation, many other jobs were held for longer but finite periods (Erdkamp 2008, 420–37). Lastly, a significant part of the urban economy was structured around the elite *domus*, the complex, large households where hundreds of slaves and freedmen were working for the senatorial elite (Treggiari 1973; Hasegawa 2005).

These characteristics raise a series of questions about the nature of labor in Rome: about the organization of labor, the openness of the labor market and the extent of labor mobility. Most fundamentally, to what extent is it legitimate to speak of a labor market at all, in which supply and demand of labor could meet unhindered? These questions underlie the analysis of this chapter on labor in Rome. For the Romans, work covered a very wide set of activities, ranging from unpaid activity in homes to salaried positions in the bureaucracy. Here, the focus is on the labor of the masses in the early imperial period, on the people below the elite, who worked in the civilian sphere, outside the imperial bureaucracy or the army. This is not to suggest that other areas of the urban economy were unimportant, but the subject is already large as it is, and there can be little doubt that the majority of the population found employment here.

## Sources and Methods

Before the analysis starts, a sketch of the possibilities and impossibilities is necessary, for the questions posed in the introduction cannot be answered in a straightforward way (Garnsey 1980, 43–5).

It is not that sources are lacking. We have statements in Roman authors about attitudes to labor, we have various snippets in Latin and Greek literature about particular jobs, epigraphy supplies numerous attestations of a wide range of occupations and information about *collegia*, the legal sources help to explain the institutional organization of work and offer vignettes of actual practices, archaeology supplies information about the commercial infrastructure and production techniques, and then there are depictions of work scenes on epitaphs, and, less frequently, on building decoration and frescos. Given the usual dearth of ancient sources, the material to study labor is actually quite good.

However, for all their richness, the sources do not cover all parts of the subject equally well and need context and interpretation. Elite attitudes have often formed the starting-point for discussions of labor, but it is an open question to what extent the moral taxonomy of acceptable and non-acceptable economic behavior penetrated lower down the social scale (Treggiari 1980, 48–9 with further refs). The evidence about professional *collegia* is certainly important, but next to nothing is known about their economic functioning, and according to most scholars this silence reflects reality: the main function of the *collegia* was social (Perry 2011). The occupational inscriptions are biased towards skilled artisans, and come in large numbers from the *columbaria*, the tombs that members of the elite created for their slaves and freedmen (Treggiari 1973; Joshel 1992). The legal infrastructure of the urban economy was certainly well-developed, but it is precisely the level of sophistication that raises classic problems of the sociology of law: can artisans be supposed to be versed in the legal niceties of a concept like *imperitia* (inexperience) in the *locatio conductio* contracts that they were supposed to conclude (Martin 2001)?

Nevertheless, several observations can be made immediately. The care with which scenes, objects and tools are depicted and the specificity with which jobs are mentioned in the epitaphs and reliefs is remarkable. The implication must be that, for the people under consideration, jobs could function as a primary marker of identity (Joshel 1992). In that sense, many sources reflect a positive attitude towards labor that is plainly at odds with elite prejudices against work. It also becomes immediately apparent that the range of jobs was virtually infinite and covered an enormous range. In the city of Rome, at least 160 different occupations are attested in the inscriptions alone (Treggiari 1980, 56 with appendix).

But it is difficult to advance beyond these simple observations. To be sure, there are many possibilities for further analysis: it is possible to analyze the structure of particular sectors of the economy, the existence of occupational hierarchies, the degree of segmentation of the urban economy, and the degree of specialization (Doorn 1993). Nevertheless, a fundamental problem remains. The high number of jobs has been noted by many scholars, but it has led to radically different interpretations. On the one hand, the large occupational differentiation has been interpreted as a sign of specialization and economic complexity. On the other hand, given the fact that many of the occupations belong to the servile population of elite households, it has also been interpreted as a sign of conspicuous consumption, connected to the elite ideal of self-sufficiency and the social imperative to display wealth.

Given the uncertainties about the interpretation, any straightforward analysis of occupational lists is likely to lead into a blind alley. In order to take the interpretation of the Roman labor market further, a different route has to be

followed. Four basic dichotomies that have often structured scholarly analysis will be subjected to further scrutiny in the four succeeding sections: that between servile and free labor, that between skilled and unskilled labor, that between male and female labor, and that between dependent and independent labor.

## Servile and Free Labor

Slavery used to be seen as *the* fundamental institute of the Roman economy. It was assumed that the servile population (of both slaves and freedmen) dominated urban labor. Such a dominance may have had extremely important economic repercussions. It may have blocked important avenues to freeborn people looking for work (Noy 2000, 88–9), and ultimately may have resulted in an idle population completely dependent on grain distributions. At a more general level, the availability of cheap slave labor would have blocked technological progress, for there would be little incentive to use labor-saving devices. It would also have blocked the emergence of a labor market in the technical sense of the term: an open, integrated market where supply of labor and demand for labor would meet through price-setting mechanisms. In recent years all these ideas have come under attack (Temin 2003/4).

The extent to which servile labor dominated the economy was in the first place dependent on the prominence of the servile population in the urban economy: put simply, the size of the group. The proportions of slaves, freed, and free among the population of Rome are by and large unrecoverable, but on any estimate the servile part of the population was large. Slaves formed a substantial part of the population, with guesstimates running as high as 33%. But the key lies perhaps not so much in estimating the size of the servile population, but rather in evaluating the role of the free population. The sources clearly show freeborn people in significant numbers at work. In fact this is not really surprising, given the fact that the grain dole only supplied part of the income of a selected part of the freeborn population. Most free people must have found a (supplementary) income through work. Whatever the proportions, the labor force will therefore have consisted of both significant numbers of freeborn people and significant numbers of slaves and freedmen.

In addition, epigraphic and other sources abundantly show that slaves and free persons performed the same types of work. Occupations attested in the inscriptions or other written evidence appear to have been held by the servile and free population indiscriminately. This applies even to relatively high-ranking occupations, such as that of architect (Brunt 1980, 82). Conversely,

free persons performed functions that we might in a Roman context intuitively associate with servile labor, such as wet-nursing (Bradley 1991, 13–75).

The functional equivalence of slave and free labor squares ill with the notion that slaves dominated the urban economy. The similar occupations of the servile and freeborn population have led in recent years to the reverse argument that slavery was *not* an economic institute. The distinction between slavery and freedom certainly was of fundamental importance to Roman society, but it was of a social and legal, not of an economic kind (Bradley 1994, 65; Temin 2003/4, 515, 529). In consequence, slavery should be regarded merely as a specific (though rather peculiar) type of labor relation, at one end of a spectrum of possibilities.

Although in a general sense this series of arguments seems correct, they also call for closer analysis. The sources certainly show that the freeborn and servile population served in similar economic roles in the city of Rome, but some separation can also be surmised, partly attested, partly outside the sources. In this context, the fact that stories circulated about voluntary slavery is certainly relevant (Ramin and Veyne 1981).

Domestics in close personal service in elite *domus* are likely to have consisted exclusively of slaves (Maxey 1938, 5). It is difficult to imagine a *nomenclator*, a *ministrator* (table-servant) or a *pedisequus* (attendant) as freeborn. Then, there is evidence of slave gangs used for regular maintenance of state projects. In the case of the aqueducts, major projects would be contracted out, but there were also two permanent gangs employed consisting in total of 700 slaves (Frontin. *Aq.* 96–101, 116–19). Connected to the existence of such gangs, dirty, dangerous or laborious tasks were presumably carried out by slaves. For example, the people running treadmills of the type depicted on the monument of the Haterii (Galli and Pisani Sartorio 2009, 93) are unlikely to have been anything other than slaves. It is also telling that other mechanic devices that needed muscle power could be driven both by humans and animals interchangeably. In all such cases, it seems rather unlikely that free persons would voluntarily sign up for such jobs, at least not in significant numbers. As some of the examples also show, the numbers of slaves involved could be large. Lastly, it is also significant that all of the examples of exclusive economic domains concern the servile population. In the case of the free population, the only area that was exclusively their preserve was the army (Bradley 1994, 65). In consequence, it seems likely that some areas of the urban economy did remain confined to servile labor.

Servile and free labor are thus best seen as structurally equivalent but *imperfect* substitutes. The servile population probably dominated some areas of economic life. In many others there was free choice between the types of laborers.

## Skilled and Unskilled Labor

A second categorization is also often used in the analysis: that between skilled and unskilled labor. This categorization is to some extent an analytical one, for in reality a spectrum rather than a strict dichotomy will have existed: within the group of skilled workers there existed a large variety of skills and experience; there were also people we should call semi-skilled workers, and people might themselves move through the spectrum, by learning on the job.

It is important to realize that much of the evidence we have for labor is biased towards the skilled part of the labor force. In particular, the occupational inscriptions and reliefs are heavily biased towards the arts and crafts, though unskilled workers are also attested. It is perhaps also relevant that of the people buried in the elite *columbaria* an occupation is mentioned for only about a quarter, which may (but need not necessarily) imply that the rest formed an unskilled workforce of a more flexible nature (Hasegawa 2005, 30).

There is also a serious possibility that the character of unskilled labor was quite different from skilled labor in other respects. Much unskilled work will have been casual labor: it was of a temporal nature, and it is also likely that the demand for casual labor was subject to seasonal variation (Frontin. *Ag.* 122–3, for building). This might have attracted different types of laborers, for example people from the Italian countryside who wanted to supplement their income (Erdkamp 2008).

The fact that the unskilled are under-represented in the sources, and that casual labor is ephemeral, makes quantification of proportions of skilled to unskilled work extremely difficult. Of course, the enormous amount of muscle-power involved in building and transport implies in itself a large unskilled labor force. For some of the individual sectors of the urban economy or for particular projects it is possible to come up with estimates. Unloading the ships coming from Ostia at the Tiber quays may have offered permanent employment to some 3,000 persons (Aldrete and Mattingly 1999, 197). Of the 6,000–10,000 persons estimated to be necessary to build the Baths of Caracalla, about half would be unskilled or semi-skilled. The same site also serves as a reminder that many of the large imperial building projects were built on artificially created terraces for which enormous amounts of earth were moved without any mechanical aid (DeLaine 2000, 129–31). But more general evaluations are hindered by other considerations: there is somewhat more evidence for lifting devices than is often admitted (Galli and Pisani Sartorio 2009), some of the required muscle power was that of animals, not slaves, and the concept of labor-saving was not completely alien to Roman minds (Brunt 1980, 83). Furthermore, even in sectors where large workforces



were required, many of the workers appear to have been skilled. So in the estimates just mentioned for the Baths of Caracalla, the other half of the 6,000–10,000 employed consisted of skilled workers. All we can say is that in the case of Rome, an unknown but significant part of the population is likely to have been engaged in unskilled labor.

In trying to conceptualize the other end of the spectrum of possibilities, that of skilled labor, the main question is who had access to training and in what form. It is often thought that slaves were in a better position to obtain a training and that this is part of the explanation of their ambiguous position: on the one hand they had the lowest status in society, on the other they could experience real social mobility upon manumission thanks to the skills acquired during slavery. It seems however more likely that both slaves and freeborn had access to training in equal measures.

People, both free and unfree, started to work from an early age onwards. There are quite a number of epitaphs for children with an occupational title (Bradley 1991, 115–16). Many occupations were inherited from father to son, even in the case of slaves. There are epitaphs for young children with depictions of the tools of the job of their father, or depictions of tools that do not refer to specific members of a family (e.g. Zimmer 1982, no. 105). In many such cases, the training of the children is likely to have been informal. Children would start by helping their father and gradually acquire the necessary skills.

Some of the education might be formalized. There is no intrinsic reason to assume that the apprenticeship system attested in Egypt and to a more limited extent elsewhere (e.g. Lucian, *The dream*) did not function in a similar way in Rome. As it is known from Roman Egypt, the system concerned both free persons and slaves alike (which incidentally forms an additional argument to equate the economic roles of slaves and free persons). Apprentices started around age 12 to 14; an age at which it can be assumed that children did not make their own choices. Apprenticeships could take anything from 6 months up to 6 years. Even in cases where fathers/owners held the same occupation, children and slaves could still be apprenticed outside the own household (Forbes 1955, 328–35; Bradley 1991, 107–12).

It thus seems that the possibilities to acquire training were relatively large, for both the servile population and free population alike. All this required of course an investment that some people were not prepared or able to make: not every family could miss the labor of a child. The fact that training was available does not imply that everybody obtained one. Many people would end up among the unskilled. At the same time, it is clear that no equation between slave and skilled work, or free and unskilled work can be made. Both categories can be found in both groups.

## Male and Female Labor

A third distinction concerns male and female labor. Many discussions of labor implicitly focus on men. However, there is quite some evidence for working women. They constitute a significant minority in the sources (Treggiari 1979a, b; Kampen 1981, 107–29 with catalogue III; Hasegawa 2005, 32). Their position on the labor market is of real interest. However, it is difficult to get beyond the simple observation that working women occurred among the labor force. What complicates matters is that within the already biased sources additional gender biases may have been at work. There is, therefore, a real possibility that working women are under-represented.

One important question is to what extent the labor market consisted of separate domains for men and women. That some gendered separation existed causes little surprise. It seems likely that certain sectors of the urban economy were closed to women, most notably those unskilled jobs that required muscle power. Women will not have been working in significant numbers in the building or transport industry. Predictably, women are found mostly in the domestic sphere, as child nurses, or in textile production (Pomeroy 1975, 191). At the same time, what constitutes this domestic sphere turns out to be quite large, extending to midwives and female physicians. Then, there are also jobs that fall under any definition outside it. Some were of the disreputable type, such as inn-keepers, or prostitutes. But there is also a host of other occupations attested, some of them in areas that one would associate with the male domain. The fact that several reliefs show them at work excludes the possibility that the actual work was delegated to men. Conversely, many jobs within the domestic domain were not monopolized by women. The case of male child nurses is the best example (Bradley 1991, 37–75), but one might also point to men working in textile production. Given the fact that in many societies a strict separation into male and female domains occurs, the fact that in Rome the boundaries were vague and permeable is more remarkable than the fact that they existed.

However, there might have been a difference between the free and the servile population. The jobs just mentioned were held both by freeborn women and by women of the servile population. Nevertheless, it is clear that a disproportionately large amount of the attested cases of working women concerns the servile population. This revives in a somewhat different form the question addressed earlier, on the extent to which slave and free labor were substitutes.

The position of female slaves seems relatively unambiguous: they had to work, and they seem to have remained at work during their slave marriage and after manumission. But it is noteworthy that some of them, relatively

more than male slaves, did not have a formal occupation. Presumably they were part of a flexible workforce (Hasegawa 2005, 32). On the other hand it need not be forgotten that in a slave system that was at least partly based on slave breeding, many women will have been engaged in just that: breeding slaves.

What applies to the acquisition of skills mentioned earlier applies to female slaves as well. The evidence from Egypt suggests that slave women could be and were apprenticed. In Rome much of the education could in addition also have taken place within elite households. The evidence from the apprenticeship contracts suggests at the same time that the range of skills women acquired is likely to have been more limited than that of men.

The position of free women is more ambiguous. Elite disdain for working women among the lower classes is well-known: they were usually classified as (akin to) prostitutes and slaves (Pomeroy 1974, 190–204; Treggiari 1979a, b). If elite ideology had any effect lower down the social scale, it would have resulted in a prejudice against free working women, with detrimental effects both on their possibilities to work and to their identification with it. At the same time, it seems likely that no matter what ideological preferences prevailed, economic necessity might have forced many women to work anyway.

In this context, the ability of women to receive training is relevant. Free women are by and large absent from the Egyptian apprenticeship contracts (Bradley 1991, 108). It is certainly significant that women married young; around the same time that apprenticeships were concluded. Marriage is likely to have impeded receiving an education outside the new home and in that sense have served as a barrier to work. At the same time, this increases the likelihood that newlywed young women received a more informal training within marriage, and that as a consequence this training focused more on activities of the new household, including, but not exclusively consisting of, domestic roles.

It seems, therefore, intrinsically likely that many women worked in a subsidiary role next to their husbands. This is confirmed by the sources, which show a number of cases of women who worked alongside their husbands without mentioning an occupation, and/or were in a subordinate position, assisting their husbands with whatever was at hand (see Zimmer 1982; Groen-Vallinga 2013).

If anything is clear, it is that the position of working women was ambiguous. The labor market was dominated by men in more than one way. But women clearly also occupied a significant niche. In a sense, this rephrases the problem: why was female work sometimes formalized into what was regarded as an occupation, and why were their roles sometimes subsumed in those of the husband?

## Dependence and Independence

A last distinction often used is that between dependent and independent labor. We may posit the existence of a spectrum of possible labor relations running from complete dependence to complete independence. It is clear that in the case of Rome all varieties along the spectrum can be found.

At one end of the spectrum of possible labor relations, the case of complete dependency is relatively clear. It is confined to slaves (and therefore has been discussed above from a somewhat different perspective). Some slaves were completely subjected to the control of their masters, who would tell them what to do, and gave them the most degrading types of work, requiring little to no skill. An example would be a slave in the treadmill, or in the mill of a baker, or female slaves set to work in a brothel, or the slave gangs used for cleaning the aqueducts or the sewers. As such work was hardly subject to positive self-identification, it has left few traces in the sources, at least not by the actors themselves. The types of work associated with complete dependency might have been used as a direct punishment to unruly slaves, or simply been given to slaves thought unfit for other work. Although in the absence of adequate sources one can only hazard guesses, it seems a fair bet that whereas this type of labor relation certainly occurred in Rome, it was more widespread outside urban contexts, at the large slave-run *latifundia* and the mines (Bradley 1994, 71–2).

At the opposite extreme the situation of complete independence is also clear. By definition it was confined to freeborn people, for even the most independent freedman at least still had the stigma of his former slave status attached to him. No doubt among the many freeborn people that are attested in the occupational inscriptions (Zimmer 1982, 6) a part, if not all, operated independent of anyone else. A large group will have consisted of freeborn artisans working and selling goods in the workshops that dotted the urban landscape.

The situation at either end of the spectrum is relatively clear, but many people will have found themselves somewhere in-between these two outer ends, in some form of dependency. The type of these dependent ties could however vary greatly. Not all have left in equal measure traces in the sources, and in consequence we should look at the subject from different angles and discuss a number of seemingly unrelated topics: interference of the state in the urban economy, ties of dependence among the servile population, hired labor, and the position of business managers.

Through its indirect interventions in the economy the state created ties of dependence. The emperors gave some thought to providing people an income through work; at least this was one consideration in the creation of

the almost continuous series of imperial building projects in the city. A small vignette is offered by the famous passage in Suetonius, where Vespasian rejects the invention of a labor saving device with the comment that he has to feed his people (Suet. *Vesp.* 18). The implications of the passage have been hotly debated (Casson 1978 and Brunt 1980), but no matter whether some sort of policy can be read into it, it is important to realize that in creating work, the state operated mostly indirectly, because it seems to have contracted out work in smaller parts to *redemptores*, who were supposed to bring in their own workforce. In consequence, a vast hierarchical network of labor ties was created by the imperial projects.

In a different vein, the state also intervened indirectly in the urban economy through its distributions of free grain (Jongman and Dekker 1989). As was stated above, the dole did not alleviate the need to work at all. At the same time, many freeborn people will have become dependent for a part of their livelihood on the distributions, among them many of the independently working craftsmen that were just mentioned (who in consequence might not have been as independent as they appear).

In thinking about ties of moderate dependency, we should again consider the servile population. It is a well-known characteristic of Roman slavery that many urban slaves were not completely dependent on the whims of their master, but had much room for maneuver. The fact that many were skilled is in themselves already significant, for training created knowledge that was partly outside the control of the supervisor. Moreover, many sources testify to the remarkable degree of freedom that some urban slaves had.

It is equally remarkable that freedmen, who by definition had much more room for maneuver than slaves, very often remained circling around their former master (Mouritsen 2011). There is a natural and understandable tendency by modern observers to see manumission as the major event in the life of a Roman slave, for it led to the subsequent integration of the freedman into the world of citizens. But it seems that in many cases a change of legal status had few economic repercussions. It is improbable that many freedmen changed their occupation upon manumission, and some simply remained in the service of their former master. Nor do we hear of former slaves starting a new life elsewhere. It is telling that the *columbaria* of the *domus* were occupied by slaves and freedmen alike. In some cases the obligations to the former master were formalized in claims to *operae libertorum*, work that had to be performed for free to the master. In a more general sense an ideology of loyalty pervaded the relation between freedman and patron – loyalty was expected through the legal requirement of *obsequium*, but inscriptions set up by grateful freedmen for their deceased patrons show that it was also internalized.

One other relevant issue is that of hired labor. Although higher up the social scale, somewhat different arrangements could be used (Lucian, *On working in great houses*, Corbier 1980), normally *mercenarii* were employed, people who hired out their labor. Conditions could vary, from informal oral agreements to perform a specific task or work for a specified number of days to written *locatio conductio* contracts. Conditions could be very hard, especially for the day laborers. Work not done was work not paid for, and often the work was dangerous (Treggiari 1978; 1980).

The relative silence of the sources about hired labor hinders judgments on the extent to which it occurred. Many forms of hired labor were ephemeral and have left little trace in the sources (Mrozek 1986). It seems likely that many of the large state projects were based on such labor (Brunt 1980), and it is certainly also significant that hired labor could concern slaves, freedmen, and freeborn alike. Slaves could and did work as hired laborers under exactly the same conditions as other laborers (though the wage might have gone to the master). Elite prejudice to working for others was high: it was famously equated to slavery (Cic. *Off.* 1.150–51; Lucian, *On working in great houses*). Ironically, in a sense that may not have been wide of the mark, for it is likely that many freeborn people did in fact work in the service of others alongside slaves and freedmen.

In that respect the figure of the *institor* is also of importance (Aubert 1994). An *institor* was someone who was in charge of a business owned by someone else. The concept of indirect agency was widely applied and could comprise practically any economic activity. It was not only used for the wealthier people, but also at quite modest economic levels of society. It is telling that again it could be used for men, women, slave, freed, and free alike. It was in other words not merely slaves and freedmen who were under the direct control of their masters.

The various forms of dependency are perhaps best shown in the many workshops that dotted the city. It is clear from inscriptions that many free workers worked side by side with freedmen and slaves, and in many respects there existed no clear distinction between employer and employee (Treggiari 1980, 52). What is more, as we have seen, some employers will have been independent owners of the shops, but many others were not. There can be no doubt that at least some of the workshops were owned by wealthier members of the population who set up their *institores* there.

Thus, dependency played a large role in structuring labor relations. We should conceptualize a large part of the working population enmeshed in webs of hierarchically structured relations. Some of these were formalized, others left open.

## Conclusion: An Open Labor Market?

By way of conclusion, and looking from a somewhat different angle at the subject, it is legitimate to ask to what extent we can speak of an open labor market, in which supply and demand of labor met without impediments. Can we draw a balance-sheet?

Several factors point to openness. As by now will be clear, slave and free labor were in many respects structural equivalents, which implies that the pervasiveness of slavery does not in itself constitute an argument against the openness of the labor market. Economically, many slaves behaved in the same way as free persons. Second, there existed no real obstacles to the acquisition of skills. Just as slaves could and often did get an education through their masters, so the freeborn could receive a training either inside the familial home or outside it. Third, women seem to have participated in a relatively wide range of economic activities. They certainly operated well beyond the narrow confines of the domestic activities traditionally assigned to them. Lastly, hired labor was an important form of labor. Hired labor is conducive of relatively high levels of labor mobility.

But there are also several factors that point in the opposite direction, to a not fully functioning labor market. In the first place, slave and free formed only imperfect substitutes: some sectors of the economy remained in the hands of the servile population. In the second place, the availability of training does not imply that education was available for everybody with talent: money and tradition remained of paramount importance. Third, women participated in a wide range of economic activities, but they certainly did not enjoy complete freedom. Last, and most importantly, many working people were enmeshed in ties of dependency. Many free workers relied on supplementary income through the dole. Some were in various ways dependent on members of the elite, or, indirectly, on the emperor.

The outcome, then, is mixed. How the balance is drawn obviously depends on the weight assigned to the individual arguments. But rather than choosing between either option, it is perhaps better to speak of an imperfect labor market. This raises the issue whether full openness is to be expected: it has been argued that market imperfections are a standard feature of pre-industrial societies (Temin 2003/4; cf. Pleket 1988; Bang 2007). Be that as it may, from the discussion it is also clear that simple statements cannot do justice to the complexities of Roman labor relations. The labor market was not dominated by slaves, the unskilled did not consist completely of the free poor, women were not completely confined to domestic roles, most slaves were not in complete subjection to their masters. If anything, complexity rather than transparency forms the hallmark of the Roman labor market.

## Guide to Further Reading

Though its potential value for discussions of the Roman economy, migration history and gender studies is difficult to miss, there are few overviews of Roman labor. Important exceptions are Brunt (1980) and a host of articles by Treggiari published in the 1970s and 1980s, though in all cases only parts of the subject are covered and substantial previous knowledge is supposed. Apart from these, an excellent and balanced introduction from a somewhat different angle forms the chapter on slave labor in Bradley (1994, 57–81). Temin (2003/4) forms an important if polemical contribution to the same subject. Mouritsen (2011) is of importance for understanding the position of freedmen. Joshel (1992) has studied the occupational inscriptions mainly from the point of identity and representation. Hasegawa (2005) is a very useful study of the *columbaria*. Kampen (1981) (though strictly speaking on Ostia, not Rome) has raised numerous issues relating to women's work. A series of papers by J. DeLaine has elucidated labor relations in the building industry – a subject of particular importance in evaluating unskilled labor. The difficulties faced by immigrants entering Rome's labor market are discussed by Holleran 2011. Flohr 2013 in his discussion of fulleries shows the possibilities of using archaeological evidence for analyzing labor. A collection of essays entitled *Work, labor and professions in the Roman World* edited by K. Verboven and C. Laes was published in 2017.

### ENDNOTE

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