

Matters of Trust: Associations and Social Capital in Roman Egypt
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I. Cicero, *De Officiis* 1.150-151. trans. M. I. Finley

Now in regard to trades and employments, which are to be considered liberal and which mean, this is the more or less accepted view. First, those employments are condemned which incur ill-will, as those of collectors of harbor taxes and money lenders. Illiberal, too, and mean are the employments of all who work for wages, whom we pay for their labor and not for their art; for in their case their very wages are the warrant of their slavery. We must consider mean those who buy from merchants in order to re-sell immediately, for they would make no profit without much outright lying... And all craftsmen are engaged in mean trades, for no workshop can have any quality appropriate to a free man. Least worthy of all are those trades which cater to the sensual pleasures: 'fishmongers, butchers, cooks, poulterers and fishermen' as Terrance says; to whom you may add if you please, perfumers, dancers, and all performers in low grade music halls. But the occupations in which either a higher degree of intelligence is required or from which society derives no small benefit—such as medicine or architecture or teaching—they are respectable for those whose status they befit. Commerce, if it is on a small scale, is to be considered mean; but if it is large scale and extensive, importing much from all over and distributing to many without misrepresentation, is not to be greatly censured. Indeed, it even seems to deserve the highest respect if those who are engaged in it, satiated, or rather, I should say, content with their profits, make their way from the harbor to a landed estate, as they have often made it from the sea to a harbor. But of all things from which one may acquire, none is better than agriculture, none more fruitful, none sweeter, none more fitting for a free man.

II. Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, 1.25 trans. J. Lindsay

When he heard this, he grabbed my hand and led me straight back into the market square. "And from which of these men," he said, "did you buy this stuff?" I pointed to a little old man, who was sitting in the corner. Pythias, by the power vested in him as public works official, began right then to berate him harshly, shouting "So now, now you lot don't even spare our friends, or any strangers whatsoever, since you advertise your trashy little fishes at such a high price, and make the jewel of the region of Thessaly out to be some desert on a cliff, by the cost of its edibles? But you won't get away with it! I shall see to it that you learn right now how evildoers are to be treated when I'm in charge," and, emptying the basket out in the middle of the market, he ordered his officer to jump on top of the fish and to mash them all up with his feet. My Pythias was satisfied with this sternness of his character, and urged me to leave: "This great insult to the little old man," he said, "is good enough for me, Lucius." When this was over, I went on to the baths, confused and bewildered. My wise friend's clever plan had deprived me at once of both my money and my dinner, and after I had washed, I returned to my host Milo's and from there to bed.

III. Cicero, *De Officiis* 2.40, trans. W. Miller

So also to buyers and sellers, to employers and employed, and to those who are engaged in commercial dealings generally, justice is indispensable for the conduct of business. Its importance is so great, that not even those who live by wickedness and crime can get on without some small element of justice. For if a robber takes anything by force or by fraud from another member of the gang, he loses his standing

even in a band of robbers; and if the one called the “Pirate Captain” should not divide the plunder impartially, he would be either deserted or murdered by his comrades. Why, they say that robbers even have a code of laws to observe and obey. And so, because of his impartial division of booty, Bardulis, the Illyrian bandit, of whom we read in Theopompus, acquired great power, Viriathus, of Lusitania, much greater. He actually defied even our armies and generals. But Gaius Laelius—the one surnamed “the Wise”—in his praetorship crushed his power, reduced him to terms, and so checked his intrepid daring, that he left to his successors an easy conquest.

IV. P. Mich. V. 243, 14-37 CE trans. A. E. R. Boak

...have chosen as president for the *x* year of Tiberius Caesar Augustus Heron, son of Orseus, in whose company they shall hold a banquet each month on the twelfth, each one contributing for his monthly dues the twelve silver drachmas assigned equally to each. If anyone fails to meet his obligations in these or the other matters, the president has the right to exact pledges. If anyone misconducts himself, let him be fined whatever the society may decide. If anyone receives notice of a meeting and does not attend, let him be fined one drachma in the village, but in the city four drachmas. If anyone marries, let him pay two drachmas, for the birth of a male child two drachmas, for a female child one drachma, for the purchase of property four drachmas, for a flock of sheep four drachmas, for cattle one drachma. If anyone neglects another in trouble and does not give aid to release him from his trouble, let him pay eight drachmas. And each one who in taking seats at the banquets shoves in front of another shall pay an extra three obols for his own place. If anyone prosecutes another or defames him, let him be fined eight drachmas. If anyone intrigues against another or corrupts his home, let him be fined sixty drachmas. If anyone is given into custody for a private debt, let them go to bail for him up to one hundred silver drachmas for thirty days, within which he will release the men. May health prevail! [But] if one of the members dies, let all be shaved and let them hold a feast for one day, each bringing at once one drachma and two loaves, and in the case of other bereavements, let them hold a feast for one day. Let him who is not shaven in case of a death be fined four drachmas. Whoever has taken no part in the funeral and has not placed a wreath on the tomb shall be fined four drachmas. And let the other matters be as the society may decide. Let the law be valid when subscribed by the majority. When validated let it be returned to the president.

IV. P. Mich. V 245, 47 CE, trans. A. E. R. Boak

The undersigned men, salt merchants of Tebtunis, meeting together have decided by common consent to elect one of their number, a good man, Apunchis, son of Orseus, both supervisor and collector of the public taxes for the coming eighth year of Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus Imperator, the said Apunchis to pay in all the public taxes for the same trade for the same coming year, and [they have decided] that all alike shall sell salt in the aforesaid village of Tebtunis, and that Orseus alone has obtained by lot the sole right to sell gypsum in the aforesaid village of Tebtunis and in the adjacent villages, for which he shall pay, apart from the share of the public taxes which falls to him, an additional 66 drachmas in silver; and that the said Orseus has likewise obtained by lot Kerkesis, alone to sell salt therein, for which he shall likewise pay an additional eight drachmas in silver. And that Harmiusis also called Belles, son of Harmiusis, has obtained by lot the sole right to sell salt and gypsum in the village of Tristomou also called Boukolou, for which he shall contribute, apart from the share of the public taxes which falls to him, five additional drachmas in silver; upon condition that they shall sell the good salt at the rate of two and one-half obols, by our measure or that of the warehouse. And if anyone shall sell at a lower price than these, let him be fined eight drachmas in silver for the common fund and the same for the public treasury; and if any of them shall be found to have sold more than a stater's worth of salt to a merchant, let him be fined eight drachmas in silver for the common fund and the same for the public treasury; but if the merchant shall intend to buy more than four drachmas' worth, all must sell to him jointly. And if anyone shall bring gypsum and shall intend to sell

it outside, it must be left on the premises of Orseus, son of Harmiusis, until he takes it outside and sells it. It is a condition that they shall drink regularly on the 25th of each month, each one a chous of beer...in the village one drachma, outside four drachmas, and in the metropolis eight drachmas. But if anyone is in default and fails to satisfy any of the public obligations, or any of the claims that shall be made against him, it shall be permissible for the same Apunchis to arrest him in the main street or in his house or in the field, and to hand him over as aforesaid.

V. IG II² 1343, 37-35 BCE, trans. J. S. Kloppenborg

The association (*koinon*) has honored Diodoros son of Sokrates of the deme Aphidnai (*in a crown*).

In the year that Theopeithes was leader (archon), on the sixth of the month of Mounichion: Whereas Diodoros son of Sokrates of Aphidnai has continued to be well-disposed to the association of *Soteriastai*, doing in both word and deed what is beneficial for the *sunodos*. And whereas he shared responsibility for the initial gathering (*syllogē*) and, having also created the *sunodos*, he remained as its head of the club (*archeranistēs*), and having served as treasurer in the year that Euthydomos was leader (archon), he presided over the foundation of the *sunodos*. During the year that Nikander was leader (archon) he continually exerted himself as treasurer and similarly he enhanced the common funds. Tirelessly he made himself available and, in the year that Diokles of Melite was leader (archon), as he served as treasurer, he did what is right to the fullest. As to the present, in the year that Kallikratides was leader (archon), serving as treasurer, he has showed earnestness and zeal in respect to the association. And when he was appointed as priest of Artemis Soteira (“Savior”) during the year that Menandros was leader (archon), he sacrificed with favorable omens and, not being addicted to money, he hosted the club members (*eranistai*) at his own expense, spending not a little money. On account of all these things, the *sunodos*, having been the beneficiaries of his assiduousness and zeal, proposed unanimously that those who are to introduce motions on their behalf – that is, Lucios son of Artemidoros of the deme Azenia, Demetrios son of Artemidoros of Lamptrai, Diotimos son of Demetrios of Kephisia, and Philippos son of Philippos of Ikarion – should bestow the appropriate honors. For good fortune, it was resolved by the association of the Soteriasts, whose head of the club is Diodoros son of Sokrates of Aphidna, to commend Diodoros son of Sokrates of Aphidna and to crown him with an olive wreath on account of the zeal that he has continually shown for the *sunodos*. He is to be crowned yearly by whoever happens to be the treasurer in the same way that the priests and the head of the club are crowned. There shall be a proclamation, that “the association of the *Soteriastai* crowns Diodoros in accordance with this decision.” This decision shall be inscribed on a monument and set up in the sacred enclosure of Soteira, so that when these things have been completed, all members might be zealous to enhance the synod, seeing that its founder obtained a fitting token of good will and a memorial. Leukios son of Artemidoros of Azenia proposed the motion. Those in favor of enacting the decision: sixty. Those opposed: none.