

*The artisan household and the Roman economy*

The funerary monument erected in memory of Mecia Dynata offers a rare and valuable snapshot of a family that was embedded firmly in Rome's artisanal economy. The distinguishing feature of the monument is its lengthy (if highly abbreviated) inscription, consisting of two main clauses. The first informs the reader that the monument was commissioned on behalf of Dynata by the members of her natal family and in accordance with the terms of her will:

To the Sacred Shades. To Mecia Dynata, daughter of Lucius. In accordance with her will and because of a gift specified in one of its clauses [the following people dedicated the monument]: her father Lucius Ermagoras, son of Lucius; her mother Mecia Flora, a wool-comber; her brother Lucius Mecius Rusticus, son of Lucius, a wool-worker in the quarter [of the goddess] Fors Fortuna.

The second clause details several pieces of property that Dynata bequeathed to her parents and to her brother.<sup>1</sup>

Dynata's inscription is notable primarily because it illustrates the complexity of the household strategies that artisans and entrepreneurs at Rome were capable of crafting for themselves and for other members of their households. By providing information about the occupations pursued by Dynata's family members, it suggests that members of artisan households in Rome could and did take advantage of a wide range of economic opportunities that presented themselves in the urban market. Dynata's father unfortunately chose not to name his own occupation in the inscription, but her mother and brother both seem to have pursued careers of their

<sup>1</sup> *CIL* 6.9493. This is a vexed inscription, primarily because its extensive abbreviations can produce variant readings. Here, I largely follow Mommsen's editorial notes. The first clause, which I have translated above, is the least problematic. It reads as follows: "Dis Man(ibus) / Meciae L(uci) f(iliae) Dynat(a)e / ex testam(ento) et dona(tione) t(estamenti) c(ausa) / L(ucius) Mecius L(uci) f(ilius) Ermagoras / pater Mecia Flora mater / tonstrix L(ucius) Mecius L(uci) f(ilius) Rusticus / frater lanarius ad vic(um) Fort(is) / Fortun(ae)."

own: her mother Flora worked as a wool-comber (possibly in a business based in the household itself), and her brother Rusticus not only identified himself as a wool worker but also laid claim to a shop address somewhere in the vicinity of the temple of Fors Fortuna – a detail implying that he was an independent artisan in his own right. Beyond providing insight into occupations of members of Dynata's family, the inscription also demonstrates that members of households in this particular socioeconomic stratum were capable of using complex legal instruments to manage or even reconfigure their property rights and the formal relationships that bound them together, all while maintaining strong reciprocal ties. The key detail is that Dynata possessed substantial property of her own, which she distributed to her family members according to the terms of a relatively complex will. While her use of a will to allocate property is interesting in and of itself, more significant is the fact that she held property in her own right at all. Since her father was still alive at the time of her death, one would expect that she would have fallen under his *potestas*, in which case she would have possessed no property rights of her own; that she instead appears to have been legally independent (*sui iuris*) and capable of owning property therefore indicates that she had been freed from the *potestas* of her father. Her father may have transferred her formally into the power of a husband by arranging for her to marry *in manu*, and her husband may have subsequently died, leaving her legally independent. Alternatively, her father may have legally emancipated her so that she could benefit personally from the terms of a will – probably the will of a wealthy husband, who bequeathed to her the assets that are cataloged in the second clause of the inscription, and which she herself then distributed to the members of her own natal family.<sup>2</sup> Since marriage *in manu* was mostly obsolete by the late Republic, the latter possibility is more likely, and in that sense the inscription reveals a high degree of legal literacy and sophistication in Rome's working population.<sup>3</sup>

By offering clues about the occupations of Dynata's family members and about the sophistication of the legal strategies they employed, Dynata's inscription evokes questions concerning the nature of the relationships between work, the household, and the family in Rome's artisan economy.

<sup>2</sup> Gardner 1998: 104–13 discusses potential motives for emancipation, including the desire to permit a child to benefit from the terms of a will.

<sup>3</sup> By the late Republic, marriage *in manu* seems to have given way mostly to marriage *sine manu*, in which a wife remained in the *potestas* of her own father (or grandfather) until she became *sui iuris* upon his death. For brief remarks on the chronology of this development, see Treggiari 1991: 32–6 and Dixon 1992: 41–4.

It also evokes questions about the extent to which artisans manipulated those relationships in navigating the seasonal and uncertain demand characteristic of urban product markets in antiquity and, by extension, about the aggregate impact exerted by individual artisans' household strategies on the Roman world's urban economies. The information communicated by the inscription therefore intersects nicely with recent trends in the historiography of the Roman family, which has increasingly focused on the strategies implemented by the members of individual households and on how those strategies affected the performance of the Roman economy as a whole. In particular, recent contributors to this historiography have stressed two main points. First, they have noted that households in antiquity – which tended to be conceptualized by Romans themselves as “nuclear family plus” households consisting primarily of parents, their children, and their slaves, and which functioned primarily as units of coresidence and economic cooperation – could be adaptable structures and that their members could tailor their strategies of economic production and inheritance to meet the specific demographic and economic needs of the group.<sup>4</sup> Second, they have also stressed that the strategies of individuals, although highly adaptable, were nevertheless constrained by various asymmetries of authority and gender that structured their relationships with other household members and created strong expectations about their roles and behavior.<sup>5</sup>

While this work has certainly not neglected the households of working people in the Roman world's urban environments, much of it has tended to focus primarily on the strategies of individuals from elite or peasant households. Only recently have Roman historians begun to focus explicitly on the complicated question of how household members made decisions about allocating their time and labor in urban environments.<sup>6</sup> For that reason, and in spite of the current trends in the historiography, we are still in the early stages of exploring both the household strategies pursued by members of the Roman world's urban population and the potential effects that those strategies wrought on the economy as a whole. To cite just the most obvious example, the inscription of Mecia Dynata strongly implies that her brother Rusticus ran a business of his own – a detail that runs counter to the common view that artisans often employed their sons

<sup>4</sup> The fundamental study in this respect remains Saller 1994, which concentrates chiefly on strategies of property transmission. On strategies of labor allocation, see Erdkamp 2005: 55–105 on peasant households and Groen-Vallinga 2013, who discusses women's work in urban contexts by drawing on the adaptive family economy model proposed by Wall 1986.

<sup>5</sup> See especially Saller 2003 and 2007. <sup>6</sup> E.g., Saller 2003; Groen-Vallinga 2013; Holleran 2013.

personally (a problem to which I return in much more detail below). In this chapter, I therefore seek to refine our knowledge of household strategies among urban working populations by addressing these issues more explicitly. I do so by concentrating on the roles played within artisan households by two key members of the “nuclear family plus” model of the household: sons and wives. As we shall see, the roles assigned to sons in the family economy reflect artisans’ efforts to respond to the challenges created by the Roman world’s seasonal and uncertain product markets. Wives, on the other hand, found their roles shaped strongly by preferences rooted in strong ideologies of gender, which had profound implications for the Roman world’s ability to sustain intensive economic growth after the end of the late Republic.

### Roman artisans and their sons

When Richard Wall proposed his model of the adaptive family economy, stressing simply that families could be expected to “attempt to maximize their economic well-being by diversifying the employments of family members,” he broke away from an earlier strand of scholarship that conceptualized the household not just as a unit of consumption and production but also as one in which household members devoted much of their labor to a single and dominant productive enterprise – whether the cultivation of a farm or the operation of a manufacturing or retail business.<sup>7</sup> According to this older “family economy” model of the household, the head of a household employed its other members directly whenever possible. The family enterprise therefore gave the household much of its coherence – so much so that if individual members could not be employed within the household, they tended to leave it.<sup>8</sup> As applied to urban households, this model systematized a long-held view that artisans and other urban entrepreneurs naturally relied heavily on the labor of family members, especially sons.<sup>9</sup>

Following in Wall’s footsteps, other historians of early modern Europe have shown that it was not necessarily typical for artisans and businessmen to employ their own sons. Instead, fathers were more likely to establish their sons in careers outside of the household, whether in their own line of work or in a different trade. For sons, the typical career trajectory involved an apprenticeship in the workshop of one or more artisans, followed by a

<sup>7</sup> Wall 1986, esp. 265. <sup>8</sup> E.g., see Medick 1976, esp. 297; Tilly and Scott 1987, esp. 21–2.

<sup>9</sup> Ehmer 2001: 189.

period in which they worked for wages as journeymen (often in multiple establishments), and finally by establishment as master artisans in their own right, often with the help of resources they inherited from their own families or acquired through marriage. Much of the evidence supporting this view is indirect but compelling. Several studies, for example, show that family continuity was often weak among the members of any given guild or trade corporation. In spite of the fact that the membership profiles of guilds and trade corporations differed tremendously from one geographical and chronological context to the next, sons of established masters in a given trade rarely constituted a majority of newly admitted members; in most cases, they were outnumbered by the sons of artisans who belonged to other corporations. Other historians emphasize that artisans were much more likely to rely on the labor of apprentices and journeymen recruited from outside the household itself than on the labor of their own family members, even when their sons were trained in the same trade they practiced themselves.<sup>10</sup>

These revised views of artisan households in the early modern period have not yet been taken up in detail by ancient historians, who remain influenced by the older “family economy” approach. The work of Roger Bagnall and Bruce Frier is a case in point. In their groundbreaking study of the census returns from Roman Egypt, Bagnall and Frier drew a parallel between the economic structure of the households recorded in their evidence and the structure of households based on the “family economy” model by observing that “‘inherited’ professions are not uncommon in premodern societies; the household is conceived as a single economic unit, with sons succeeding to their fathers.”<sup>11</sup>

As Bagnall and Frier noted, however, the Egyptian census records do not necessarily support the view that sons in Roman Egypt typically worked alongside and succeeded to their fathers. There are a number of census documents recording households in which co-resident adult males (typically fathers and sons) shared the same occupation, but these must be read alongside other documents showing that adult sons could just as easily remain in their natal households even though they did not practice the

<sup>10</sup> For a recent survey of the literature, see Farr 2000: 244–51. For more detailed discussion, see Ehmer 1984 and 2001; Sonenscher 1989: 99–243; Cerutti 1991. Finally, see Knotter 1994: 40–3 for a more general criticism of the utility of the “family economy” as a concept for understanding the organization of preindustrial craft production.

<sup>11</sup> Bagnall and Frier 1994: 73. Dixon 2001a: 124 likewise assumes that the transmission of occupational skills (and ultimately of workshops) from father to son was the norm in the Roman world. Cf. the view of Finley 1999: 19, originally written in the 1970s, and Tran 2013: 161–4.

same trades as their fathers. Bagnall and Frier ultimately concluded that their sample was too small to permit easy generalizations about which kind of household organization was more common than the other.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, there is no guarantee that co-resident males worked alongside one another even when they worked in the same trade, since one can easily imagine that sons in such households spent some or even much of their time working for wages in the shops of other artisans (and perhaps even engaging in seasonal migration to do so).

Inscriptions from the Latin West present comparable problems of interpretation. The inscriptions of professional associations point to a degree of family continuity in particular trades, since fathers and sons sometimes appear together in membership lists, and honorific inscriptions permit historians to trace the careers of multiple members of the same family who became magistrates of individual *collegia*.<sup>13</sup> Family continuity in a given trade, however, is not the same thing as family continuity in a business, and since most members of professional associations were likely men who ran their own enterprises, those fathers and sons who held contemporaneous memberships in the same association were arguably proprietors of separate workshops rather than co-workers.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, some funerary inscriptions either demonstrate or strongly imply that sons did not find employment in the business or workshops of their fathers. While the funerary monument dedicated to Mecia Flora offers one example, the inscription commissioned by the freedman Lucius Maelius Thamyrus is more explicit: it demonstrates that although Thamyrus himself earned his living as an artisan who manufactured metal tableware

<sup>12</sup> Bagnall and Frier 1994: 72–3. Their most striking example (*BGU I 115 i*) documents a large household that was composed of twenty closely related kin (the declarant, his wife, their children and grandchildren, and the children of the declarant's deceased brother) along with seven other peripheral kin (mostly spouses). Although the declarant and one of his sons shared an occupation (in this case, weaving), one of his other sons was a goldsmith. The sons of his deceased brother were, respectively, a cloth-beater, a goldsmith, and a laborer. While we cannot rule out the possibility that there were close business relationships between the two weavers and the two goldsmiths, the overall picture is one of heterogeneity: clearly, neither of the two nuclear family units that belonged to this household formed a discrete family enterprise. Other interesting documents include a case in which a father and his co-resident son worked, respectively, as a scribe and a doctor (*P. Giss. 43*), and a case in which one of two brothers who lived together worked as a doctor, while the other worked as a turner (*P. Hamb. I 60*).

<sup>13</sup> Burford 1972: 162–3; Meiggs 1973: 323; Tran 2006: 474–8. But cf. Joshel 1977: 410–11 and 623–4, who catalogs a number of inscriptions in which family members practiced different occupations.

<sup>14</sup> The diary of Jacques-Louis Ménétra offers the best comparandum from the early modern period: he, his father, and at least one of his uncles were all glaziers and members of the glaziers' corporation in Paris; they also ran workshops of their own. (Ménétra 1986, esp. 168–9.)

(a *vascularius*), his son pursued a career as a scribe in the offices of the curule aediles and quaestors.<sup>15</sup>

When read against recent work on fathers and sons in early modern Europe, these ambiguities in our evidence encourage us to revisit the question of whether or not artisans in the Roman world regularly employed their own sons, especially if the answer has relevance for our understanding of the Roman economy's structure. In what follows, I begin by exploring two lines of evidence that bear indirectly on this question. The first consists of the many references to apprenticeship that appear in our legal, literary, and epigraphic sources and the second of Roman funerary inscriptions commissioned by or on behalf of artisans. Together, these lines of evidence indicate that artisans and retailers in the Roman world employed their own sons infrequently, and that they generally sought instead to establish those sons in careers of their own. I then consider the factors responsible for this pattern, as well as its implications for our understanding of the Roman economy more broadly. Here, I show that the rarity with which fathers employed their own sons can be understood primarily as a product of the seasonal and uncertain demand typical in urban product markets. Unless fathers possessed especially valuable business-related capital that gave them an incentive to transmit their enterprises to their sons, seasonal and uncertain demand tended to limit their own need for regular and permanent help and to encourage them to diversify their households' sources of income. Finally, I suggest that this pattern builds upon some of the conclusions advanced in previous chapters about market integration in the Roman Empire, namely by confirming that product and labor markets remained thin relative to those of early modern Europe even if artisans clearly did have an interest in ensuring that their sons were productively employed.

### *Artisans, sons, and apprenticeship*

Embedded in our ancient sources is a considerable amount of information on the importance of apprenticeship as a means for transmitting craft skills from one generation to the next. By itself, this information cannot tell us whether or not it was more common for fathers to arrange apprenticeships for their sons in other workshops than to train them personally, particularly since our sources say little about sons who were trained at home. That said, this information remains significant because

<sup>15</sup> *CIL* 6.1818.

the early modern evidence suggests that apprenticeship can serve as a proxy indicator for the willingness of artisans and other entrepreneurs to establish sons in careers of their own. Artisans in the early modern period apprenticed their sons to other craftsmen with some frequency, whether to men who practiced different trades or to those who specialized in the same craft as they did themselves. Those who apprenticed their sons to craftsmen in different trades did so in the expectation of launching their sons on independent careers. Likewise, although some fathers who apprenticed their sons to craftsmen in their own trades undoubtedly intended to employ those sons personally once their training was complete, these seem to have been in the minority; instead, even fathers who apprenticed their sons to other artisans in the same trade often hoped that those sons would establish themselves as independent entrepreneurs or wage earners in their own right.<sup>16</sup> As I suggest in the following paragraphs, the ancient evidence for apprenticeship, though far from comprehensive, is at least consistent with the early modern pattern. Not only was apprenticeship widespread, it was also used to secure training for sons by fathers who operated their own enterprises, and who therefore could have trained their sons personally – perhaps as the first step in preparing those sons for careers of their own.

The strongest indication that apprenticeship was a familiar institution in the Roman world is the mention of apprentices or apprenticeship in several different categories of evidence.<sup>17</sup> A handful of opinions preserved in the *Digest* indicates that apprenticeship was common enough to attract attention from the Roman jurists, who were interested in the legal problems that arose when apprentices were mistreated or represented their instructors in transactions with clients.<sup>18</sup> Some of these opinions clearly reflect cases in which slaveholders contracted with artisans to have slaves instructed in a particular craft, but others just as clearly refer to freeborn apprentices. The

<sup>16</sup> This, at any rate, seems to be the implication of a low degree of continuity in most trades (see the scholarship cited above, n. 10). Here, I necessarily simplify for the purposes of generalization what was, in reality, a social process that exhibited a wide range of variation from place to place, time to time, and profession to profession. De Munck and Soly 2007: 18–20 offer a recent overview of the kinds of factors that were relevant when artisans made decisions about the careers of their sons; as they note, much additional research will be necessary to flesh out our understanding of general patterns. For a recent contribution to this debate, see Harding 2009, who notes not only that fathers rarely trained their own sons in most trades in medieval and early modern London, but also that they rarely passed down their businesses to their sons.

<sup>17</sup> The most accessible introduction to the evidence remains Bradley 1991. See now Tran 2013: 147–85, who offers particularly strong coverage of the epigraphic evidence from the Latin West.

<sup>18</sup> For brief discussions of the most important pieces of legal evidence, see Bradley 1991: 113 and Du Plessis 2012: 57–60 and 67–70.



most famous of these is Julian's discussion of the remedies available to a father whose son had been blinded in one eye when the shoemaker to whom he had been apprenticed punished him by striking him with a last,<sup>19</sup> but Ulpian too may have had freeborn apprentices in mind when discussing a (possibly hypothetical) case in which a fuller left his business in the hands of several apprentices while he himself went abroad.<sup>20</sup>

Periodic references to apprenticeship also exist in the texts of literary authors from the first two centuries CE, who – like the Roman jurists – appear to take for granted the notion that both slaves and freeborn boys were often apprenticed to artisans. Cicero mentions several apprentices who worked alongside the building contractor Cillo, whom he had hired to work on his brother's estate near Arpinum, albeit in a context which suggests that they were slaves.<sup>21</sup> Vitruvius, on the other hand, believed that freeborn Romans regularly learned architecture (if poorly) as apprentices in the Augustan period; such, at any rate, seems to be the thrust of his complaint that architects no longer followed the example of the ancients, who transmitted their knowledge only to their sons or other close relatives.<sup>22</sup> Apprenticeship also appears in works of fiction or satire: in Petronius' *Satyricon*, the freedman Echion, an artisan specializing in woollen textiles (a *centonarius*), contemplates having his son trained as a lawyer, an auctioneer, or a barber, and Lucian of Samosata based a significant part of one of his satires on his own brief career as a stonemason's apprentice in his uncle's workshop.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, several dozen pieces of documentary evidence also refer directly to apprentices or apprenticeship. Some funerary inscriptions from the Latin West were commissioned by or on behalf of young men who had served apprenticeships in the workshops of artisans and entrepreneurs; some died before completing their training, while others outlived and then memorialized their instructors.<sup>24</sup> More interesting are the apprenticeship documents from Roman Egypt. About forty documents produced between the first and third centuries CE survive; they include not only notices of apprenticeship filed with municipal authorities for tax purposes but also actual apprenticeship agreements.<sup>25</sup> As Christel Freu has pointed out, the sheer number of surviving apprenticeship documents is itself impressive:

<sup>19</sup> Julian, quoted by Ulpian at *Dig.* 9.2.5.3 (and cf. his remarks at *Dig.* 19.2.13.4).

<sup>20</sup> Ulpian, *Dig.* 14.3.5.10. <sup>21</sup> Cic., *QFr.* 3.1.3. <sup>22</sup> Vitruv., *De arch.* 6.pr.6.

<sup>23</sup> Petron., *Sat.* 46 and Luc., *Somm.* 1–4.

<sup>24</sup> Tran 2011: 128–9 presents some particularly clear examples. Cf. Tran 2013: 169–70.

<sup>25</sup> For a general overview, see Bradley 1991: 107–12 and Freu 2011. Bergamasco 1995 offers more in-depth discussion.

by comparison, only about a hundred marriage contracts survive from the same period.<sup>26</sup> While this could simply be an accident of preservation, it may just as easily indicate that young men (and the occasional young woman) who learned craft skills normally did so as apprentices, and not in their parents' workshops.

The demographic realities of urban living ensured that many freeborn young men would have needed to acquire craft skills through apprenticeship if they acquired them at all, for the simple reason that approximately one-third of freeborn boys in the Roman world may not have had living fathers by the time they became old enough to start learning a trade in earnest.<sup>27</sup> A number of the Egyptian documents drive that point home by demonstrating that a young man's mother or guardian was often compelled to arrange his apprenticeship, presumably because his father had died.<sup>28</sup> That said, several pieces of evidence imply that fathers consciously chose to place their sons as apprentices in the workshops of others, even though they may have been capable of training them personally. Petronius' characterization of the fictional Echion is an obvious example, but Julian's discussion of the apprentice blinded by his instructor possibly fits this pattern too: at the very least, it is clear that the boy's father arranged the apprenticeship,<sup>29</sup> perhaps hoping to establish his son in an independent career. Lucian's account of his own brief apprenticeship is equally illuminating. The story is so heavily layered with sophisticated literary allusions that it is impossible to disentangle fiction or embellishment from genuine autobiographical details, but Lucian seems to have been interested in constructing a plausible depiction of family life in an artisanal or entrepreneurial household. For that reason, his portrayal of his father's approach to the question of Lucian's own career speaks to an outlook that was probably common among households of this type.<sup>30</sup> Two aspects of that portrayal deserve emphasis. First, Lucian depicts his father's deliberations not as something exceptional, but rather as a typical

<sup>26</sup> Freu 2011: 29 n. 12.

<sup>27</sup> See Saller 1994: 52, table 3.1.e, which suggests that only 63 percent of young men had a living father when they reached the age of fifteen.

<sup>28</sup> See the data compiled by Bergamasco 1995: 162–7, in which it is clear that some of the freeborn apprentices in the Egyptian documents were under the care of their mothers or of male relatives other than their fathers when they were bound to instructors.

<sup>29</sup> In fact, the central issue in the case is what kind of legal action a father could bring against the artisan to whom he had apprenticed his son.

<sup>30</sup> On the literary quality of Lucian's autobiographical writings, see Humble and Sidwell 2006. C. Jones 1986: 9–10 argues that the details of the account are at least plausible in spite of the account's artifice.

family event, which featured considerable discussion between his father and various family members and friends about what occupation would be most suitable for his son. Second, Lucian attributes to his father a clear belief that apprenticeship was an important first step toward establishing Lucian in an independent career that would provide the household as a whole with additional income.<sup>31</sup>

Unfortunately, neither Julian nor Lucian specifies whether the fathers who feature in their accounts operated their own enterprises. It is therefore not clear that we can read these anecdotes as reflections of strategies that were typical among artisans or entrepreneurs who had the option to train and employ their sons personally. Other pieces of evidence can partially dispel that ambiguity by demonstrating that artisans too may have placed their sons as apprentices in other workshops with some regularity. Echion's deliberations about his son's future are especially interesting, since they imply that it was not unusual for a successful artisan to consider having his son trained by another and in a different profession.<sup>32</sup> No less valuable are several Egyptian apprenticeship documents reflecting the arrangements made by three weavers in Oxyrhynchus on behalf of their sons or other relatives. As we saw in Chapter 2, the weaver Pausiris had at least three sons, all of whom he apprenticed to fellow weavers in Oxyrhynchus during the first century CE; he also accepted the nephew of one of these weavers as an apprentice of his own.<sup>33</sup> Likewise, Pausiris' contemporary Tryphon son of Dionysios helped his mother arrange an apprenticeship for his younger brother in another weaver's workshop, in 36 CE, and secured apprenticeships for his own two sons in the enterprises of colleagues some years later, in 54 CE and in 66 CE.<sup>34</sup> Although these documents say little about the intentions of these men, it is not unreasonable to believe that they, just like Lucian's father and the fictional Echion, saw apprenticeship as a necessary step in their efforts to secure employment for young men in their charge outside of their own households.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Luc. *Somn.* 1–2. <sup>32</sup> Petron. *Sat.* 46, with the comments of Mayer 2012: 32–3.

<sup>33</sup> The apprenticeships of Pausiris' three sons are documented in *P. Mich.* III 170, *P. Wisc.* I 4, and *P. Mich.* III 172; for his agreement to accept the weaver Epinikos' nephew as an apprentice, see *P. Mich.* III 171.

<sup>34</sup> The apprenticeship contracts of Tryphon's brother Onnophris and his younger son Thoonis are documented in *P. Oxy.* II 322 and *P. Oxy.* II 275, respectively. The apprenticeship of his elder son is known from a tax receipt, *P. Oxy.* II 310.

<sup>35</sup> I deal with this point in much more detail below.

*The Roman occupational inscriptions and patterns of inheritance  
in artisan households*

Although the qualitative evidence for apprenticeship in the Roman world shows that artisan fathers certainly did not feel compelled to train or employ their sons personally, on its own it cannot reveal whether it was more typical for sons to strike out in independent careers or to remain in the family workshop (or even to return to the family workshop after serving an apprenticeship elsewhere). Only quantitative evidence can be used to address these issues satisfactorily, and ultimately only the funerary inscriptions from Rome offer a sizeable-enough body of data to permit quantification, in spite of the limitations of the inscriptions as sources of evidence.

The surviving funerary inscriptions from Rome can provide a crude sense of the familial and household strategies typical among Roman artisans, albeit in a roundabout way – by generating insight into patterns of succession and inheritance in urban households. Broadly speaking, Romans not only expected that a deceased's formal heirs would assume the primary obligation for performing the *sacra* or funerary rites on his or her behalf but also conceptualized the act of commemoration both as an opportunity to display their own *pietas* and as an important element of the *sacra* themselves. For that reason, even though the individuals who commissioned the tens of thousands of funerary inscriptions found within Rome itself did so for a complex cluster of reasons in which sentiment and affection obviously mattered,<sup>36</sup> they were often motivated just as strongly by cultural and legal expectations concerning succession. Several scholars have accordingly concluded that we can reconstruct approximate patterns of succession in Roman households by analyzing the patterns of commemoration visible in these inscriptions – that is, by assessing how frequently the deceased were commemorated by individuals belonging to one of several different categories of kin and non-kin relations.<sup>37</sup>

Because the decisions household heads made about succession were influenced by numerous individual factors – legal, cultural, economic, and personal – those decisions need not always have been closely linked with other decisions they made about their sons' careers. On the other hand, since it is difficult to imagine factors that would have prompted men who employed their sons in their own enterprises to name individuals other than those sons as primary heirs, we can anticipate that there was a

<sup>36</sup> Good introductions to the various social expectations mediating commemoration can be found in Joshel 1992: 16–24, in Bodel 2001b: 30–9, and in Saller 2001.

<sup>37</sup> Saller and Shaw 1984, esp. 126–8. Cf. Meyer 1990: 76–8.

correlation between the household strategies they pursued during their lifetimes and the dispositions they made in their final testaments. In the following pages, I explore that correlation by analyzing patterns of commemoration in those Roman funerary inscriptions in which at least one individual is identified by his or her occupation. As I demonstrate, these inscriptions provide indirect evidence that Roman entrepreneurs – particularly artisans and retailers – generally chose to establish their sons in independent careers rather than to employ them in their own businesses. They do so primarily by demonstrating that artisans and retailers were unlikely to appoint their sons as their heirs. This is true even if the freeborn are underrepresented in the inscriptions relative to freed slaves, who were perhaps more likely to subscribe to the “epigraphic habit” and to commission inscriptions than the freeborn, but less likely to leave behind grown sons when they died. As a group, the artisans in the sample were commemorated by their sons so infrequently that the patterns in the inscriptions can be explained more convincingly as the product of conscious strategies of succession than as the result of the uneven representation of freeborn and freed artisans or of demographic factors affecting the lives of freedmen. Those strategies can in turn be interpreted as an indication that artisans and retailers normally did not employ their sons personally and that they consequently had some incentive to appoint others – chiefly wives or former slaves – as their primary heirs.

Although more than 200,000 funerary inscriptions have survived from Rome of the late Republic and early Empire, only about 1,200 are inscriptions in which individuals identified either themselves or those whom they commemorated by citing specific occupational titles.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, of these so-called occupational inscriptions, only a minority provides information about the social networks of independent entrepreneurs or artisans (whether freeborn or freed). Many refer instead to slaves or freedmen who remained associated with large aristocratic households and who were ultimately laid to rest within *columbaria* maintained by their owners or patrons.<sup>39</sup> These inscriptions were often commissioned by other members of the slave *familiae* to which the men and women they commemorate belonged, and while they therefore offer valuable information about social relationships in large, slaveholding households, they say little about social conditions in other sub-elite strata of the urban population: the rhythms of

<sup>38</sup> These are conventionally referred to as the occupational inscriptions. Joshel 1992 offers the most comprehensive discussion of these inscriptions as a group (but cf. Joshel 1977).

<sup>39</sup> See Joshel 1992: 94–8 for a discussion of the social contexts of commemoration.

patronage and manumission in large households produced patterns of family life among their slave and freed members that differed significantly from those experienced both by the freeborn and by slaves and freedmen attached to small artisan households.<sup>40</sup> At the same time, few occupational inscriptions reveal more than the briefest details about the social relationships of the deceased even when they do refer to freeborn entrepreneurs or former slaves who had established businesses of their own. Some, for example, record only the deceased's name and occupation, without revealing any information about the identity of his or her commemorators, while others list the names of two or more individuals, but neither distinguish between commemorator and deceased nor provide concrete information about the nature of the social relationships tying those individuals together.

Given these limitations, I have chosen to analyze patterns of commemoration and succession among Roman entrepreneurs by concentrating on a sample of 208 inscriptions.<sup>41</sup> Each of these inscriptions provides a straightforward (if selective) snapshot of the social world in which at least one individual identified by his or her occupation was embedded. Some of these inscriptions present evidence for more than a single dyadic social relationship. These include ante-mortem inscriptions, which individuals typically commissioned not just for themselves but also for other family members and for dependents entitled to share their tombs. They also include inscriptions commissioned by more than one commemorator, like the inscription dedicated to Caius Fufius Zmaragdus:

To Caius Fufius Zmaragdus, pearl-seller on the Sacred Way. [Erected under] the guidance of Fufia Galla, his wife, and of Atimetus and Abascantus, his freedmen. [They also dedicated this monument] to their freedmen and freedwomen and to their posterity.<sup>42</sup>

Most, however, are very simple inscriptions in which the commemorator stated his or her own name along with the name of the person being memorialized and either claimed an occupational title personally or assigned one to the deceased. The inscription commissioned by Marcus Sergius Eutyclus for his patron is a true outlier in the sense that Eutyclus paid to have both his own occupation and that of his patron engraved on the stone: "Marcus Sergius Eutyclus the wheelwright, freedman of

<sup>40</sup> See Weaver 1972 on the *familia Caesaris* and the degree to which the social status and opportunities available to many of these slaves differed drastically from those available to slaves outside the imperial *familia*.

<sup>41</sup> A full list of the inscriptions in the sample can be found in Appendix B. <sup>42</sup> *CIL* 6.9547.

Marcus, [set this monument up] for himself and for his patron, Marcus Sergius Philocalus the wheelwright, freedman of Marcus.”<sup>43</sup>

I have followed the procedure employed by Richard Saller and Brent Shaw in their analysis of Roman family relations during the early Empire. Saller and Shaw approached several large samples of funerary inscriptions by tabulating the various kinds of interpersonal relationships memorialized in each inscription.<sup>44</sup> The inscription commissioned by Marcus Sergius Eutyclus, for instance, would yield a single entry in the “freedman-to-patron” column in their table when subjected to this methodology, whereas the one commissioned jointly by Fufia Galla, Atimetus, and Abascantus would produce both a “wife-to-husband” and a “freedman-to-patron” entry. Although there are weaknesses in this approach – among other things, it can distort our view of family structure by overemphasizing selected dyadic relationships in any given household at the expense of extended family structures – the main advantage it offers is the ability to compare the commemorative pattern produced by the occupational inscriptions with the patterns Saller and Shaw extracted from their own samples.<sup>45</sup>

In Table 4.1, I present the preliminary results of this analysis. The first panel displays the commemorative pattern produced by the occupational inscriptions. For comparative purposes, the other panels display the patterns produced by the inscriptions belonging to two of the samples studied by Saller and Shaw: those produced by members of the lower orders at Rome and those produced by members of the senatorial and equestrian orders.<sup>46</sup> As this table indicates, commemorations from sons to fathers are no more common in the occupational inscriptions than in the inscriptions of the Roman lower orders in general. More importantly, they are decidedly less common within the occupational inscriptions than they are in the inscriptions of the senatorial and equestrian orders. This point is significant, since if we can legitimately assume that members of the senatorial and equestrian orders tried to ensure that sons in particular would have had access to the wealth and connections necessary to maintain their social status, we would expect to see sons serving often as heirs within this particular social group.<sup>47</sup> Their inscriptions therefore offer a good baseline

<sup>43</sup> *CIL* 6.9215.    <sup>44</sup> Saller and Shaw 1984: 130–3.

<sup>45</sup> D. Martin 1996 offers the most in-depth critique of this particular methodology.

<sup>46</sup> The data for the senatorial and equestrian order can be found at Saller and Shaw 1984: 147, columns 3 and 4.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Saller and Shaw 1984: 138. They note that “[A]mong the wealthy the transmission of property from the deceased to his or her descendants was a central factor in shaping family life,” and attribute the relatively large number of son-to-father and daughter-to-father commemorations among the senatorial and equestrian orders to this factor.

Table 4.1 *Commemorative patterns*

Dedication		Occupational inscriptions		Rome: senators & equites		Rome: lower orders	
From	To	N	%	N	%	N	%
Husband	Wife	66	23 (36)	10	12 (16)	48	20 (26)
Wife	Husband	45	16 (25)	5	6 (8)	31	13 (17)
Total: conjugal family		111	39 (61)	15	18 (24)	79	33 (42)
Parents	Son	4	1 (2)	6	7 (10)	24	10 (13)
Parents	Daughter	0	0 (0)	1	1 (2)	6	3 (3)
Father	Son	14	5 (8)	7	9 (11)	9	4 (5)
Father	Daughter	10	3 (5)	3	4 (5)	6	3 (3)
Mother	Son	1	0 (1)	6	7 (10)	11	5 (6)
Mother	Daughter	2	1 (1)	0	0 (0)	6	3 (3)
Total: descending nuclear family		31	11 (17)	23	28 (37)	62	26 (33)
Son	Father	10	3 (5)	7	9 (11)	6	3 (3)
Son	Mother	4	1 (2)	2	2 (3)	13	5 (7)
Daughter	Father	6	2 (3)	11	13 (17)	2	1 (1)
Daughter	Mother	3	1 (2)	2	2 (3)	5	2 (3)
Total: ascending nuclear family		23	8 (13)	22	27 (35)	26	11 (14)
Brother	Brother	13	5 (7)	1	1 (2)	12	5 (6)
Brother	Sister	3	1 (2)	0	0 (0)	1	0 (1)
Sister	Brother	2	1 (1)	2	2 (3)	3	1 (2)



Table 4.1 (cont.)

Dedication		Occupational inscriptions			Rome: senators & equites			Rome: lower orders		
From	To	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Sister	Sister	0	0	(0)	0	0	(0)	3	1	(2)
Total: siblings		18	6	(10)	3	4	(5)	19	8	(10)
Total: nuclear family		183	64	(100)	63	77	(100)	186	78	(100)
Extended family		4	1		4	5		11	5	
Heredes		2	1		4	5		1	0	
Amici		35	12		8	10		5	2	
Patron	Freedman	21	7		0	0		6	3	
Master	Slave	1	0		0	0		3	1	
Freedman	Patron	40	14		3	4		25	11	
Slave	Master	2	1		0	0		0	0	
Total: servile		64	22		3	4		34	14	
Total: relationships		288			82			237		

*Notes:*

- (a) The data for the panels labeled “Rome: senators and equites” and “Rome: lower orders” are taken from Saller and Shaw 1984.  
 (b) The figures without parentheses in the percentile columns are the proportions of all relationships in the panel represented by a particular category of relationship; those enclosed in parentheses are the proportions of nuclear family relationships represented by each particular category.

value for the frequency of son-to-father commemorations we might expect to see in a social group in which son-to-father succession was important. The comparative rarity of these kinds of commemorations in the occupational inscriptions thus offers preliminary grounds for believing that household heads in the social group from which these inscriptions originated were not often succeeded directly by their sons.

Yet even though fathers do not seem to have been succeeded by their sons in this social group as often as in senatorial and equestrian families, the social and economic factors that produced this pattern are far from self-evident. While it is tempting to suggest that artisan fathers rarely appointed sons as their heirs simply because they rarely employed them in their own businesses, two considerations raise the possibility that the small number of son-to-father commemorations in this sample was instead the product of demographic factors rooted in slavery and manumission, which may have exerted an undue influence on the epigraphic record. First, most Roman historians believe that freed slaves subscribed more heavily to the “epigraphic habit” than the freeborn and are therefore overrepresented in Rome’s funerary epigraphy. Advocates of this position generally stress that the kind of funerary display responsible for most of our inscriptions was fashionable among the freeborn only briefly during the late Republic and early Empire and chiefly among the municipal elite, but that freed slaves – who saw commemoration as a way to celebrate both their freedom and their ability to form families of their own – adopted the practice on a much larger scale. In this view, roughly 75 percent of the individuals known to us from Roman funerary inscriptions are likely to have been former slaves, even though freed slaves almost certainly made up a much smaller proportion of the city’s actual population than this figure implies.<sup>48</sup> Second, freed slaves as a group may have been less likely than the freeborn to form stable families and thus less likely to produce freeborn children while they were still young enough to survive until those children reached an age at which they could commemorate their parents. This was particularly true after the creation of the *lex Aelia Sentia* in 4 CE. Among other things, this legislation restricted the ability of slaveholders to manumit their slaves formally unless both master and slave met certain conditions, one of which stipulated that the slave was to be at least thirty years of age; to the extent that this provision encouraged slaveholders to keep slaves in

<sup>48</sup> In particular, see Mouritsen 2005. As noted by Mouritsen 2011: 120–3, how much of Rome’s population consisted of freed slaves is largely a matter of guesswork. For recent estimates that place the number of freedmen in Rome itself in the range of 50,000–100,000 (as compared to a free population of roughly 500,000–800,000), see Morley 2013: 39–43 and Hermann-Otto 2013: 72–3.

bondage longer than they may have in other cases, it meant that former slaves may have started families of their own at a later age than was typical among the freeborn. Together, these factors could explain many of the characteristics of the commemorative pattern visible in the occupational inscriptions.

In fact, certain features of the occupational inscriptions can initially be interpreted as evidence that freed slaves who suffered from limitations on their ability to form families are more heavily represented in this sample than they are in the inscriptions of the Roman lower orders in general. In their original analysis of the Roman funerary inscriptions, Saller and Shaw invoked both the prevalence of former slaves in the urban population and the impact of manumission on their ability to form families as potential explanations for the relative scarcity of commemorations among specific members of the nuclear family in the epigraphy of the Roman lower orders: between children and parents, between parents and children, and between siblings.<sup>49</sup> With the exception of commemorations from sons to fathers – which occur with roughly the same frequency in both samples – commemorations among members of the nuclear family in each of these categories are less common in the occupational inscriptions than they are in the inscriptions of the lower orders. These differences would hardly be surprising had the population responsible for the occupational inscriptions skewed more heavily in favor of freedmen than did the populations responsible for other samples, or had freedmen in the sample been especially unlikely to leave behind grown children when they died.

Ultimately, however, it is difficult to assess these different hypotheses in any direct way, because it is often impossible to differentiate precisely between former slaves and the freeborn in any given sample of inscriptions reflecting Rome's non-elite population. As a result, while we can generate crude estimates concerning the proportion of freed slaves in any epigraphically attested population, those estimates remain too provisional to permit us to detect all but the most obvious variations across different samples. Only a minority of those who commissioned inscriptions either employed formal indications of freed or freeborn status in their nomenclature or signaled clearly in other ways that they were freed slaves – by, for example, making explicit references to their former masters or to their fellow freedmen.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, although historians have argued that certain

<sup>49</sup> Saller and Shaw 1984: 138.

<sup>50</sup> Taylor 1962 offers the classic discussion of the use of formal status markers in the epigraphic material. Cf. Huttunen 1974 and Joshel 1992: 37–46.

features of personal nomenclature are more likely than not to indicate that an individual was a former slave rather than a freeborn citizen, those features are at best only suggestive, not determinative. It is often thought, for instance, that most individuals who bore Greek rather than Latin *cognomina* were former slaves.<sup>51</sup> Yet, while it seems indisputable that Greek *cognomina* are more common than Latin *cognomina* among securely identified freedmen in several epigraphic samples, parents did continue to give freeborn children Greek names, sometimes in significant numbers. For that very reason, Greek *cognomina* may not be as reliable as indicators of freed status as is sometimes maintained.<sup>52</sup> Likewise, when presented with cases in which spouses shared the same *nomen*, historians have often concluded that both were former slaves who had been freed by the same master. This is certainly one way of explaining why spouses shared the same *nomen*, but it is not at all apparent that this should be the preferred explanation in any given case, since in the sample drawn from the occupational inscriptions alone, almost all of the few men who can be identified securely as freeborn Roman citizens were married to women who bore the same *nomen* as they did themselves. The inscription commissioned on behalf of Mecia Dynata provides a convenient example: not only did Dynata's parents share the same *nomen* (Mecius / Mecia), her father was also freeborn and indicated as much in the inscription.<sup>53</sup> One can imagine a number of different scenarios capable of producing this kind of homonymy, including both simple coincidence or a tendency on the part of men to marry relatives, but one that deserves emphasis is the possibility that men in this particular social stratum often manumitted and married their own slaves, who necessarily would have assumed their husbands' names when they were freed. The framers of the *lex Aelia Sentia* clearly believed that men regularly chose to marry their slaves, since they specifically exempted slaveholders who freed slaves in order to marry them from some of the provisions of the law that otherwise would have constrained their ability to manumit slaves formally.<sup>54</sup> That belief clearly reflected social realities to some extent, since several of the occupational inscriptions

<sup>51</sup> Solin 1971 is fundamental in this respect; see esp. 123–4. Mouritsen 2011: 123–6 offers a more recent defense of this position, along with more extensive citations.

<sup>52</sup> Huttunen 1974: 148–9 and n. 59, and 194–7; Bruun 2013: 21–5, 34–5.

<sup>53</sup> *CIL* 6.9493. For other good examples in the occupational inscriptions, see 6.8455 (the castor Publius Calvius Iustus and his wife, Calvia Asclepias); 6.9573 (the doctor Tiberius Claudius Leitus and his wife Claudia Glaphyra); 6.10000 (the perfume-dealer Gaius Iulius Clementus and his wife Iulia Prisca).

<sup>54</sup> Gai. *Inst.* 1.18–19. After the *lex Aelia Sentia* of 4 CE, formal manumission was generally restricted to slaves who were older than thirty.

explicitly identify couples in which the wife had been manumitted by her husband.<sup>55</sup>

Although these uncertainties prevent us from accurately assessing how slavery and manumission affected the commemorative patterns in the occupational inscriptions, those patterns – far from simply reflecting the potential demographic challenges encountered by freed slaves – can provide evidence that many Roman entrepreneurs consciously chose not to appoint their sons as their heirs. First, although it is true that commemorations among certain members of the nuclear family are unusually rare in the occupational inscriptions, there are grounds for concluding that this feature of the commemorative pattern exists not so much because these inscriptions skew heavily in favor of former slaves, but rather because they skew heavily in favor of adult men. Men, for instance, were much more likely than women to claim an occupational title, or to be assigned one by others, especially in those inscriptions that do not refer to slaves or former slaves who remained attached to large, aristocratic households.<sup>56</sup> Likewise, boys who died in or before their early teens were less likely to be given an occupational title by those who commemorated them than were those who died later in life. Although some boys in their early teens certainly do appear in our inscriptions as trained artisans, most would not have completed their apprenticeships until they were a few years older.<sup>57</sup> For these reasons, the occupational inscriptions inevitably fail to report certain kinds of commemorative relationships that are more prominent in the inscriptions of other social groups – those between mothers and daughters, those between parents and young children of both sexes, those between sisters – and skew instead in favor of relationships featuring adult men identified in terms of their occupation, both as commemorators and as the recipients of dedications.

Table 4.2 presents the data in a way designed to compensate for these biases, and in so doing it confirms that the demographic profile of the population represented by the occupational inscriptions does not necessarily differ dramatically from the profile of the population represented in the inscriptions of the lower orders analyzed by Saller and Shaw. In this table, I have included only those commemorative links documented in occupational inscriptions which commemorate men to whom the dedicators assigned an occupational title. It therefore emphasizes those

<sup>55</sup> E.g., *CIL* 6. 9590; 6.9567; 6.9569; 6.9609; 6.9975; 6.33880; 6.33882.

<sup>56</sup> Joshel 1992: 69, table 3.1; her data show that most of the women who were assigned an occupational title in the inscriptions were attached to large households as domestic servants.

<sup>57</sup> Bradley 1991: 114–15; Laes 2011: 189–95; Tran 2013: 150–9.

Table 4.2 *Commemorations to adult males*

Commemorator	Occupational inscriptions			Rome: senators & equites			Rome: lower orders		
	N	%		N	%		N	%	
Wife	41	35	(63)	5	11	(19)	31	30	(57)
Son	9	8	(14)	7	16	(27)	6	6	(11)
Daughter	6	5	(9)	11	24	(42)	2	2	(4)
Brother	7	6	(11)	1	2	(4)	12	11	(22)
Sister	2	2	(3)	2	4	(8)	3	3	(6)
Total nuclear	65		(100)	26		(100)	54		(100)
Extended	2	2		4	9		11	10	
Heredes	2	2		4	9		1	1	
Amici	18	15		8	18		5	5	
Patron	4	3		0	0		6	6	
Master	0	0		0	0		3	3	
Freedman	26	23		3	7		25	24	
Total relationships	117			45			105		

*Notes:*

(a) The data for the panels labeled “Rome: senators and equites” and “Rome: lower orders” are taken from Saller and Shaw 1984.

(b) The figures without parentheses in the percentile columns are the proportions of all relationships in the panel represented by a particular category of relationship; those enclosed in parentheses are the proportions of nuclear family relationships represented by each particular category.

relationships that are most likely to reflect instances in which the commemorator(s) succeeded to the estates of individual entrepreneurs. Alongside those figures, I also present corresponding subsets of the data gathered by Saller and Shaw, representing both the inscriptions of the lower orders and the senatorial and equestrian inscriptions. It is important to note here that there is only an approximate correspondence in this table between the data drawn from the occupational inscriptions and the data excerpted from the analysis of Saller and Shaw, because the tables provided by Saller and Shaw do not break down commemorative links

outside the nuclear family by gender. As a result, their data for these categories undoubtedly includes commemorations that were dedicated to women rather than to men. Even with that caveat, however, Table 4.2 shows that the commemorative patterns generated by the occupational inscriptions and by the inscriptions of the lower orders do not differ from one another as dramatically as initially seemed to be the case. In particular, although differences between the two patterns remain when the data are configured in this way, commemorations from children to their fathers now appear to have been somewhat more common in the occupational inscriptions than they are in the inscriptions of the lower orders. This would hardly be the case had the population represented by the occupational inscriptions been dominated more heavily than other populations by former slaves, who may have been less likely than were the freeborn to be survived by adult children.

Second, a closer look at the occupational inscriptions reveals that men practicing certain occupations were far more likely than others to be commemorated by their own children. As we shall see, this pattern seems difficult to explain on demographic grounds alone, and it therefore suggests that household heads belonging to the social group reflected in these inscriptions made conscious choices about which family members would succeed to their estates. Although our data are too sparse to yield meaningful patterns of commemoration when broken down by individual occupations, they can be partially disaggregated to reflect patterns of commemoration in broad occupational categories. In Table 4.3, I summarize those inscriptions in which children both commemorated their fathers and assigned them occupational titles and group them into three principal categories on the basis of economic conditions common to individual trades or professions. The first category includes artisans and retailers. Men practicing these occupations did not necessarily possess trade-specific capital assets of high value but did often hold a substantial amount of their assets in the form of credit that they had extended to clients; they also frequently carried substantial liabilities in the form of debts that they had incurred to their own suppliers. The second includes men who provided skilled or professional services; while they too extended considerable credit to their clients, they were much less likely than artisans and retailers to be heavily indebted to suppliers. In the third category are bankers, merchants, and wholesalers. Even though many of these were no less reliant on debt and credit than were artisans and retailers, on average they may have been more wealthy than men in the latter category and therefore better able to bequeath estates of considerable value to their

Table 4.3 *Commemorations to adult males in the occupational inscriptions, by occupational category*

Commemorator	Artisans and retailers			Skilled and professional services			Bankers, merchants, wholesalers		
	N	%		N	%		N	%	
Wife	24	40	(80)	9	27	(53)	8	31	(44)
Son	1	2	(3)	4	12	(24)	4	15	(22)
Daughter	1	2	(3)	1	3	(6)	4	15	(22)
Brother	2	3	(7)	3	9	(18)	2	8	(11)
Sister	2	3	(7)	0	0	(0)	0	0	(0)
Total nuclear			(100)			(100)			(100)
Extended	0	0		1	3		1	4	
Heredes	1	2		1	3		0	0	
Amici	11	19		7	21		2	8	
Patron	4	7		0	0		0	0	
Master	0	0		0	0		0	0	
Freedman	14	23		7	21		5	19	
Total relationships	60			33			26		

*Notes:*

(a) The figures without parentheses in the percentile columns are the proportions of all relationships in the panel represented by a particular category of relationship; those enclosed in parentheses are the proportions of nuclear family relationships represented by each particular category.

heirs.<sup>58</sup> As Table 4.3 reveals, most of the fathers commemorated by their children practiced occupations belonging to the second and third of these three categories. Of the nine fathers who were commemorated by their

<sup>58</sup> See Earle 1989b: 112–23, who offers a useful framework for conceptualizing the assets and liabilities held by businessmen of different kinds in London during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century.



sons, four were merchants or wholesalers,<sup>59</sup> four provided professional services (two were educators, one was a professional philosopher, and the fourth a doctor),<sup>60</sup> and only one – an armorer or weaponsmith (*armamentarius*) – worked as an artisan.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, although inscriptions in which daughters commemorated their fathers are fewer in number, these too conform to the same general pattern: while one father commemorated by his daughter operated what was probably a retail business devoted to the sale of papyrus or writing tablets,<sup>62</sup> the rest worked in occupations that fell into the second and third categories enumerated above.<sup>63</sup>

Since it is difficult to identify the formal legal status of most individuals in the occupational inscriptions, we cannot exclude the possibility that men who worked as artisans and retailers were simply more likely to have been freed slaves than those in other occupations. On this view, the pattern displayed in Table 4.3 would reflect nothing more than the impact exerted by slavery and manumission on their ability to leave behind adult children when they died. Yet, at the same time, it is important to stress that the limited information we possess about the legal statuses of the individuals in this sample does not provide much support for this interpretation because it does not reveal any kind of direct relationship between legal status and occupation that could have produced dramatic differences in family formation among men who worked in different kinds of professions. Table 4.4 makes this point by tabulating the legal status of adult men in the sample who were assigned occupational titles by their commemorators. As should be clear from the table itself, our data, when organized in this way, provide no real grounds for believing that former slaves were more numerous among artisans and retailers than in the other occupational groups. In fact, men who can be securely identified as freeborn represent a slightly larger proportion of the individuals in this group than is the case in the other two occupational categories, while the proportion who can be identified as former slaves is lower among artisans and retailers than it is

<sup>59</sup> *CIL* 6.9661, 6.9669, and 6.9674 are all dedicated to men identified as *negotiatores*; 6.33887 commemorates a dealer in swine and sheep (*negotiator suariae et pecuariae*).

<sup>60</sup> The educators (*grammatici*) are commemorated in *CIL* 6.9445 and 6.9448; the philosopher in *CIL* 6.9785; the doctor in *CIL* 6.9606.

<sup>61</sup> *CIL* 6.37778. For another possible case of son-to-father commemoration that may point to the inheritance of a business, however, see *CIL* 6.9659, in which a freeborn *negotiator* commemorates his father, his mother, and his brother.

<sup>62</sup> He is identified as a *chartarius* (*CIL* 6.9255).

<sup>63</sup> These include the professional philosopher mentioned above in n. 60, who was commemorated jointly by his daughter and his son; two bankers, or *argentarii* (*CIL* 6.9156, 6.9159); and two *negotiatores* (*CIL* 6.9661 and 6.9674).

Table 4.4 *Juridical status of males commemorated with occupational title, by occupational category*

Juridical status	Artisans and retailers		Skilled and professional services		Bankers, merchants, wholesalers	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Freeborn ( <i>ingenuus</i> )	4	8	1	5	1	4
Freed slave ( <i>libertus</i> )	13	24	7	35	6	22
Free, status otherwise unknown ( <i>incertus</i> )	36	68	12	60	20	74
Totals	53		20		27	

among bankers, merchants, and wholesalers (although it is somewhat higher among artisans and retailers than it is among practitioners of skilled or professional services).

More importantly, by differentiating between occupational categories in this way, Table 4.3 emphasizes that artisans and retailers were commemorated by their sons so infrequently that this pattern is difficult to explain by invoking demographic factors alone. Tables 4.5 and 4.6 reinforce that point by modeling the proportion of freeborn fathers belonging to Rome's upper and lower orders that would have been survived by sons old enough to serve as their heirs and commemorators when they died. These tables are based on Richard Saller's simulation of the kinship networks in which individuals were embedded at different moments during their life courses; together, they show that men belonging to the senatorial and equestrian orders were only about 25 percent more likely to leave behind sons over the age of fourteen than were freeborn men in other social strata<sup>64</sup> – a difference largely

<sup>64</sup> These tables suggest that roughly 28 percent of freeborn men in the lower orders were survived by a son over the age of fourteen when they died, whereas 35 percent of those in the senatorial and equestrian orders left behind a son of the same age. In Tables 4.5 and 4.6, Q(x) and L(x) represent, respectively, an individual's probability of dying before reaching the next age bracket and the notional number of individuals from a putative birth cohort of 100,000 people still alive at a given age x. I draw these figures from Saller 1994: 24, table 2.1, *Level Three Female* (for Table 4.5) and *Level Six Female* (for Table 4.6). I take the values for the columns labeled *Proportion with living sons* and *Son's mean age* from Saller 1994: 52–3 (tables 3.1.e and f) and 64–5 (tables 3.3.e and 3.3.f). For a discussion of the assumptions and data behind these mortality figures, see Saller 1994: 12–25. Debate about typical mortality profiles in antiquity is ongoing and intense. Kron 2012 offers a recent and revisionist perspective; Scheidel 2012b surveys recent developments in the field and proposes that the framework employed by Saller remains sound enough, even if it could stand some modification.

Table 4.5 *Deceased fathers with surviving sons, freeborn lower orders*

Father's age	Q(x)	L(x)	Proportion with living sons	Son's mean age	Fathers deceased, no son older than 14	Fathers deceased, sons older than 14
25	0.08565	42,231			3,617	
30	0.09654	38,614	0.16	0.9	3,728	
35	0.10541	34,886	0.51	2.7	3,677	
40	0.11227	31,208	0.65	5.4	3,503	
45	0.11967	27,705	0.67	8.8	3,316	
50	0.15285	24,389	0.69	12.4	3,728	
55	0.19116	20,661	0.69	16	1,224	2,725
60	0.27149	16,712	0.68	19.5	1,452	3,085
65	0.34835	12,175	0.65	23.7	1,588	2,653
70	0.47131	7,934	0.62	28.4	1,421	2,318
Totals:					27,254	10,781 (28.34%)

*Notes:*

Q(x) represents an individual's probability of dying before reaching the next age bracket; L(x) represents the notional number of individuals from a putative birth cohort of 100,000 people still alive at a given age x.

attributable to the fact that men from senatorial and equestrian families both enjoyed slightly better life expectancies than average and also tended to marry for the first time at younger ages than men in other social groups.<sup>65</sup> By contrast, when read in conjunction with Table 4.2, Table 4.3 shows that men in the “artisans and retailers” group were far less likely to be

<sup>65</sup> For the model on which this claim is based, see Saller 1994: 12–69. For men, Saller adopts twenty-five and thirty as the average age at first marriage among the “senatorial” and “ordinary” strata of the population, respectively. These ages themselves are founded on a comprehensive analysis of the funerary inscriptions: by tabulating the ages at which men began to be commemorated more often by members of their conjugal families than by members of their natal families, Saller is able to derive approximate values for the ages at which they first married. (Lelis et al. 2003 argue that average ages at first marriage were in fact much lower in the Roman world, but their views have not been widely accepted; see Scheidel 2007b for an overview of the current debate.) Coupled with certain assumptions about mortality, these figures permit Saller to project model kinship universes for individuals in various age categories and provide hypothetical values for three important variables: mean numbers of living kin, mean ages of living kin, and the proportion of individuals in any given age cohort who possessed living kin of different categories.

Table 4.6 *Deceased fathers with surviving sons, senatorial and equestrian orders*

Father's age	Q(x)	L(x)	Proportion with living sons	Son's mean age	Fathers deceased, no son older than 14	Fathers deceased, son older than 14
25	0.06551	53,037	0.15	1	3,474	
30	0.07393	49,563	0.49	3.1	3,664	
35	0.08112	45,899	0.58	6.2	3,724	
40	0.08725	42,175	0.59	10.3	3,679	
45	0.09462	38,496	0.58	14.9	1,530	2,113
50	0.12200	34,853	0.57	19.8	1,828	2,424
55	0.15472	30,601	0.55	24.7	2,130	2,604
60	0.22153	25,867	0.52	29.7	2,750	2,980
65	0.29119	20,137	0.5	34.6	2,932	2,932
70	0.40306	14,273	0.47	39.5	3,049	2,704
Totals:					28,760	15,757 (35.40%)

*Notes:*

Q(x) represents an individual's probability of dying before reaching the next age bracket; L(x) represents the notional number of individuals from a putative birth cohort of 100,000 people still alive at a given age x.

commemorated by their sons than were those belonging to the senatorial and equestrian orders: whereas commemorations from sons to their fathers represent 27 percent of commemorations to men from members of their nuclear families in the latter group, they represent only 3 percent of commemorations to men from members of their nuclear families in the former (a ninefold variance). Demographic factors arising from slavery and manumission can only account for this variance if we make two critical and highly pessimistic assumptions: first, that more than 85 percent of the men in the "artisans and retailers" category were freedmen; second, that virtually none of these freedmen was able to produce children old enough to commemorate him when he died. If either of these assumptions were relaxed, then these factors would only account for at most two-thirds of the actual variance visible in the inscriptions. Moreover, under what could plausibly be characterized as a more realistic set of assumptions – that roughly 75 percent of the artisans and retailers commemorated in the inscriptions were former

slaves and that perhaps a quarter of these were able to marry at a young-enough age to produce freeborn and legitimate children at roughly the same rate as freeborn entrepreneurs – demographic factors would only account for about a third of the observed variance.<sup>66</sup>

### *Succession in artisan households*

As rough as these figures are, they suggest that artisans and retailers intentionally passed over their sons as heirs, particularly when the rate at which artisans were commemorated by their sons is compared to the rates at which other men in Rome's working population or men in Rome's senatorial and equestrian orders were commemorated by theirs. Yet although the occupational inscriptions provide convincing evidence that Roman artisans and retailers did not normally name their sons as heirs, they unfortunately offer no direct insight into why this was the case. Nor, for that matter, do any of the other kinds of evidence that occasionally offer information about the business and family strategies of Roman entrepreneurs. For that reason, any explanation for this pattern will necessarily be speculative.

<sup>66</sup> The most straightforward way to model these various scenarios is to begin by treating all of the deceased tallied in the sixth and seventh columns of Table 4.5 (that is, the 27,254 who did not leave behind sons over the age of fourteen when they died, and the 10,781 who did) as the freeborn minority in a larger cohort consisting of a majority of freedmen. The size ( $n$ ) of this mixed cohort can then be defined as  $(27,254 + 10,781)/(1-l_r)$ , where  $l_r$  is the proportion of freedmen (*liberti*) in the cohort. The total number of individuals in this enlarged cohort who could expect to leave behind a son older than fourteen when they died can then be expressed as

$$s' = 10781 + s l_r n f$$

where  $s$  is the proportion of freeborn fathers who left behind sons over the age of fourteen when they died (28.34 percent, or 0.2834), and  $f$  is the proportion of the freedmen in the cohort who married at roughly the same age as their freeborn counterparts. The result,  $s'$ , can then be expressed as a fraction of the overall enlarged cohort if it is divided by  $n$ .

If we assume a population in which 85 percent of the members were former slaves ( $l_r = 0.85$ ), none of whom were likely to marry at the same age and reproduce at the same rate as the freeborn ( $f = 0$ ), then the model produces an enlarged cohort of 253,567 individuals ( $n$ ), 10,781 (or 4.3 percent) of whom would have left behind sons over the age of fourteen. These circumstances would come close to accounting for the ninefold variance between the rates at which fathers were commemorated by sons in the "senatorial and equestrian orders" group and the "artisans and retailers" group, respectively (i.e., 35.4 percent is greater than 4.3 percent by a factor of roughly 8.4). If, however, we assume a population in which 75 percent of the members were former slaves ( $l_r = 0.85$ ), and as few as a quarter of those were able to marry at the same age as the freeborn ( $f = 0.25$ ), then the model produces an enlarged cohort of 152,140 individuals, 18,865 of whom (12.4 percent) would have left behind sons over the age of fourteen. With these as the default parameters, members of the senatorial and equestrian orders would have been only about three times as likely to leave behind sons over the age of fourteen as those belonging to the "artisan and retailers" group – well short of the ninefold variance documented in Tables 4.2 and 4.3.

That said, because a father's occupation seems to have strongly affected whether or not he chose to name his son as his heir, there are good reasons to suspect that Roman entrepreneurs based their decisions about succession and inheritance on the degree to which they did or did not integrate those sons into their own businesses. In the remainder of this section, I pursue this possibility in more detail by arguing that the rarity of son-to-father commemorations in the inscriptions of artisans and retailers can be read as indirect evidence that entrepreneurs in these trades were unlikely to employ their sons in their own businesses. More specifically, I suggest that because artisans and retailers were particularly likely to find themselves deeply embedded in networks of credit, on which the viability of their businesses often depended, they had strong incentives to appoint as legal heirs individuals who were capable of sustaining both their enterprises and their credit networks, even if in practice they distributed much of their assets to other beneficiaries in the form of legacies. The fact that they rarely appointed their sons as their heirs may therefore indicate that they tended to establish those sons in independent careers rather than to employ them personally and that their sons were typically not as capable of assuming control of their businesses as were other potential heirs. Those other potential heirs included freedmen and also wives, who could certainly manage a business on their own if they also retained access to the labor of skilled slaves or freedmen.

I begin by noting that historians of both the ancient and early modern worlds sometimes suggest that sons born to fathers with few material and financial assets were especially likely to leave their natal households, and often the communities in which they were raised. According to this argument, because sons in such households had only limited prospects for receiving a substantial inheritance, they often chose to pursue better opportunities elsewhere, and in many cases severed connections with their natal households in the process.<sup>67</sup> Since artisans and retailers in antiquity – like those in the early modern period – may have accumulated less wealth, on average, than men who pursued other occupations, it is tempting to invoke family fragmentation generated by this kind of process to explain why the rate of son-to-father succession among retailers and artisans in Rome was so much lower than it was among men belonging to other occupational categories.<sup>68</sup> Yet there are reasons to doubt that this model

<sup>67</sup> E.g., Tilly and Scott 1987: 21–2; Saller and Shaw 1984: 138.

<sup>68</sup> On the ability of artisans and other kinds of businessmen to accumulate wealth in early modern London, see Earle 1989b: 106–42 and Schwarz 1992: 57–73.

offers a convincing explanation of the commemorative pattern we see in the inscriptions of Roman artisans and retailers. For one thing, many of the artisans and retailers commemorated in the occupational inscriptions owned one or more slaves; that fact alone implies that most of the men named in these inscriptions belonged to the wealthier strata of the working population and that they were consequently capable of transmitting inheritances of at least some substance to potential heirs.<sup>69</sup> Additionally, even poorer households in Rome itself were probably less likely than those in smaller regional centers to fragment in ways that would have prompted sons to move away from their home towns, because the metropolis offered more economic opportunities than did other cities and towns in Italy and in the Mediterranean more broadly.<sup>70</sup> For both of these reasons, even sons who established households of their own in Rome were more likely than not to maintain close contact with their families and to remain available to serve as heirs. Together, these observations suggest that we should look for an explanation for the scarcity of son-to-father commemorations among artisans and retailers by identifying factors specific to these kinds of businesses that were capable of prompting men in these trades to name individuals other than their sons as heirs.

The extent to which artisans and retailers relied on credit offers just such an explanation, since entrepreneurs in these trades depended heavily on credit as both debtors and creditors, and thus had strong incentives to ensure that their heirs were capable of sustaining their credit networks. Credit was a ubiquitous feature of the Roman urban economy, and artisans and retailers in particular were probably embedded deeply in complicated networks of obligations. By way of comparison, in the early modern period artisans and retailers not only extended substantial amounts of credit to clients but also depended heavily themselves on credit advanced to them by their suppliers

<sup>69</sup> The economic status of the individuals who were commemorated in the funerary inscriptions has occasionally been a matter of debate. Some scholars have argued that inscribed tombstones were expensive enough to be beyond the reach of a sizeable fraction of the urban population and that epitaphs in general are consequently products of a relatively wealthy segment of society (e.g., Hopkins 1966: 247). More recently, historians have inclined toward the view that commemoration was available to a broader cross-section of the urban population than is sometimes acknowledged. Elaborate monuments were of course costly, but modest tombstones were considerably cheaper and could perhaps be purchased for a hundred *sesterces* or less. Associations – both professional and otherwise – also helped to defray the costs of funerals for individual members. For these reasons, it seems plausible that “[t]he bulk of our tombstone data offers evidence of social relationships of those Romans between the elite and the very poor” (Saller and Shaw 1984: 127–8), albeit possibly with some bias toward wealthier individuals. Cf. Joshel 1992: 19–20.

<sup>70</sup> In that sense, urban environments were ideally suited to the kind of adaptive household strategies envisioned by Wall 1986 and de Vries 2008.

and subcontractors. Broadly speaking, many early modern artisans and retailers tended to carry trade-specific liabilities amounting to roughly one-quarter of the value of their gross assets at any given time, and likewise held one-third or more of their own assets in the form of credit that they had extended to their own clients.<sup>71</sup> Although our evidence does not permit us to assess the portfolios of typical Roman artisans and retailers in a comparable amount of detail, there is no reason to believe that they were any less dependent than their early modern counterparts on relationships of credit. As I have noted in other chapters, there are indications in our sources that artisans and retailers in antiquity relied heavily on credit and that the magnitude of both their trade-related debts and their accounts receivable did not differ dramatically in magnitude from what was typical in later periods. This is certainly the implication of the jurists' commentary on the *actio tributoria*, which provided a remedy to creditors of businesses operated by slaves by allowing them to demand that a slave's owner liquidate the *peculium* of a slave who became insolvent.<sup>72</sup> Part of what set the *actio tributoria* apart from the *actio de peculio* was the fact that a successful claimant who sued under the former procedure was required to guarantee that if other creditors launched similar lawsuits against the slave (whose *peculium* may have been entirely depleted by the initial action), he would grant them *pro rata* payments from his own settlement.<sup>73</sup> In that sense, it reflects an awareness on the part of the *praetor* who framed it that a slave-run business was likely to have multiple creditors and leaves little doubt that slaves who operated businesses regularly incurred substantial trade-related debts to numerous different parties. Ulpian's commentary also indicates that slaves often held equally substantial assets in the form of credit that they had extended to regular customers: Ulpian notes that sums owed to a slave by his customers were to be counted among his assets (and credited to his *peculium* by his owner) if his creditors pressed for liquidation.<sup>74</sup> A case discussed by

<sup>71</sup> Earle 1989b: 112–37 offers the most detailed discussion of the assets and liabilities held by London artisans and businessmen in the early modern period; see especially 118–22 and the tables on 119 and 121. For studies of credit relationships and small business proprietors in slightly later periods, see Kent 1994 (eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England) and Young 1995 (Scotland in the nineteenth century). On the importance of credit relationships in the early economy more broadly, Muldrew 1998 remains fundamental; for a more focused study of credit in early modern commerce, see Smail 2005.

<sup>72</sup> For a brief overview of the *actio tributoria* and its relationship to related remedies like the *actio de peculio*, see Aubert 2013. Chiusi 1993 offers a much more exhaustive discussion of this procedure.

<sup>73</sup> Ulpian, *Dig.* 14.4.5.19. By contrast, if a successful claimant who sued on the basis of the *actio de peculio* exhausted the slave's *peculium*, other creditors could find themselves with no remedy (see now Aubert 2013: 198).

<sup>74</sup> Ulpian, *Dig.* 14.4.5.12.



the jurist Papinian complements Ulpian's observations by showing that both the debts and credits generated by such a business could easily be substantial enough to become the focus of a legal dispute among the heirs and other beneficiaries of an estate: Papinian seems to have been asked to deliver a ruling on whether or not a legacy consisting of a purple-seller's shop and its slave managers included not just the capital set aside to buy additional stock but also the outstanding debts and the accounts receivable associated with the operation of the business.<sup>75</sup> Finally, it is worth noting that although much of the legal evidence pertains to slave-run businesses, free artisans were no less likely to depend on credit, and snippets of evidence do refer to them as providers of shop credit and as consumers of credit provided to them by their own suppliers.<sup>76</sup>

Just as importantly, because the Romans practiced a system of universal succession, artisans and retailers had distinct incentives to appoint heirs capable of carrying on their enterprises, even if in doing so they found it necessary to disinherit their sons formally (which did not, of course, preclude them from awarding those sons generous legacies). The principle of universal succession meant that an individual's legal heirs acquired not only his or her assets but also his or her liabilities. As a result, the heirs of an artisan or retailer effectively succeeded to a complex cluster of obligations and claims linking them to the former clients and suppliers of the testator, both of whom potentially numbered in the dozens.<sup>77</sup> In these circumstances, heirs who could sustain the businesses of the deceased were not just more likely than those who could not to preserve the estate's full value, they were also less likely to perceive succession to the estate and its liabilities as a burden that they might reject. First, heirs who could keep an enterprise viable would have been better equipped than others to manage the difficult process of both honoring the testator's business obligations and realizing the full value of the assets held as accounts receivable. They could secure flexible terms of payment from the testator's creditors, who might have been more interested in maintaining an ongoing business relationship with

<sup>75</sup> Papinian, *Dig.* 32.1.91.2.

<sup>76</sup> Plaut. *Aul.* 505–519 and Sen. *Ben.* 7.21, though widely separated in time, both refer to artisans and shopkeepers offering credit to customers; Artem. 4.1 refers to an artisan who became insolvent because of outstanding debts to his creditors, who were possibly suppliers.

<sup>77</sup> Kent 1994: 52 provides figures for the number of unpaid accounts on the books of ten artisans who went insolvent in early nineteenth-century Britain. As he notes, "the number of customers with unpaid accounts could vary considerably, as could the value of the unpaid portion, but both were likely to be substantial." The most extreme case he presents is that of a chairmaker, W. Lancer. When Lancer went bankrupt in 1837, he had 202 account customers, 60 of whom had not paid their bills.

a testator's successors than in pressing for an immediate settlement of their outstanding claims. They also arguably enjoyed better prospects for calling in debts of their own than did heirs who could not maintain the business, simply because they could threaten to withdraw further shop credit from clients who did not make regular payments against their accounts. Second, heirs capable of sustaining a business were likely to see the need to manage the testator's credit network not as a burden but as an opportunity to appropriate that network for their own purposes. After all, those who succeeded in doing so could greatly enhance their own businesses' prospects, particularly if they had not yet been able to build extensive networks of their own. This would have been true especially in the case of heirs who had not yet been able to gain entry into a professional *collegium*, in which members cultivated reputation-based relationships not only with suppliers and subcontractors but also with potential clients seeking to let out work of their own. Testators could therefore feel confident that heirs capable of carrying on the business would be satisfied with portions of the inheritance that ultimately may not have consisted of much more than claims to outstanding accounts receivable once an estate's debts were cleared.<sup>78</sup>

For artisans and retailers who chose not to appoint sons as their primary heirs, wives and freed slaves were the most obvious alternatives. Both had at least some of the skills necessary to maintain an artisan's or retailer's business, and both potentially had their own incentives for accepting inheritances that may have been burdened not just by outstanding accounts payable and receivable but also by legacies allocated to other beneficiaries (such as the testator's children). As far as the skills necessary to sustain a business were concerned, slaves and freedmen often found themselves in a strong position, because many had been acquired and trained by masters intent on employing them directly in their enterprises;<sup>79</sup> they were therefore well qualified to step into new roles as proprietors of ongoing concerns, provided they were given access to the necessary capital. Wives were somewhat disadvantaged in this respect, since – as I argue in more detail in Chapter 4 – they often had few opportunities to acquire technical skills pertaining to the production side of artisanal businesses. Nonetheless, in practical terms, many women did help manage their husbands' businesses and could keep an inherited concern viable if their

<sup>78</sup> The only real limitation that constrained the testator in these cases was the *lex Falcidia* of 40 BCE. This legislation limited the amount of legacies a testator could award by specifying that the designated heir of an estate was entitled to a quarter of its value after funeral expenses, debts, and the value of any manumitted slaves were deducted. See Buckland 1921: 338–9.

<sup>79</sup> See Chapter 3 for an extended treatment of this issue.

husbands assigned them either ownership of skilled slaves or control over the outstanding labor services (*operae*) of skilled freedmen.<sup>80</sup> Wives and freedmen in this position were also especially likely to see the opportunity to gain access to a testator's credit networks as a net benefit, even if they were required to pay out substantial legacies in addition to discharging the testator's debts. This was so because both women and freed slaves could otherwise find it difficult to create networks of their own. Freed slaves were not always able to expand their own businesses quickly, especially when they had been required to discharge *operae* on behalf of their patrons for several years after their manumission. Women, on the other hand, found it difficult to secure membership in professional associations, and thus access to the networking opportunities such membership conferred; any links with clients and suppliers they inherited from their husbands therefore would have been particularly valuable.<sup>81</sup>

From this perspective, it is significant that the low incidence of son-to-father commemorations in inscriptions dedicated to artisans and retailers is complemented by relatively high numbers of commemorations from wives to husbands and from freedmen to patrons. This pattern is most noticeable in the case of wife-to-husband commemorations, which are particularly prominent among dedications to male artisans and retailers – they constitute 40 percent of this sample but no more than 30 percent in the samples drawn from the epigraphy of other occupational groups listed in Table 4.3. Freedmen too are more visible as commemorators in inscriptions dedicated to artisans and retailers than they are in other inscriptions. At 23 percent, the rate at which freedmen commemorated male patrons who were artisans or retailers is at least two to three percentage points higher than the rate at which freedmen commemorated patrons who pursued other occupations, and it would probably be higher than the rate at which they commemorated patrons in the lower orders in general (Table 4.2) if we could fully compensate for gender and age biases in the data provided by Saller and Shaw. These figures suggest that when artisans and retailers chose to pass over sons as formal heirs, they did in fact turn to wives and freedmen. This is readily comprehensible if we conclude not only that wives and freedmen were capable of sustaining businesses that

<sup>80</sup> The *operae* of skilled freedmen – that is, *operae fabriles* – were considered an asset that could be transmitted by a testator to his or her heir or legatee (see, e.g., Ulpian, *Dig.* 38.1.6 and 38.1.15), just as they could be hired out or assigned by a patron to a third party (e.g., Julian, *Dig.* 38.1.25.pr-2).

<sup>81</sup> Although it was not uncommon for women to be co-opted as patrons by members of Roman professional *collegia* (see, most recently, Hemelrijk 2008), they rarely seem to have been members of professional associations in their own right (cf. Meiggs 1973: 319).

they inherited from entrepreneurs in these trades but also that artisans and retailers typically chose to establish their sons in independent careers rather than to employ them in their own enterprises.

*Urban demand and artisans' familial strategies*

Although the occupational inscriptions show that artisans and retailers in the Roman world rarely employed their own sons, they offer little to no direct evidence about the considerations motivating this behavior, nor about how those considerations were influenced by the broader economic environment in which artisans and retailers were embedded. In the following paragraphs, I explore these issues in more detail. As I show, there are reasons to believe that the decisions artisans and retailers made about their sons were driven primarily by the seasonal and uncertain demand characteristic of urban product markets in the Roman world. Because the nature of that demand ensured that their own requirements for regular and permanent help were often limited, most artisans could not keep sons productively employed in their own enterprises and saw advantages in diversifying their household income streams by encouraging their sons to work outside of the home – whether by working for wages or (ideally) by establishing themselves in workshops of their own.

As we have seen, seasonal and uncertain demand strongly affected artisans' efforts to organize their businesses and manage their labor forces. There are thus strong *a priori* reasons for suspecting that it had an equally profound impact on their efforts to plan their sons' futures. Studies of artisans and their familial strategies in the early modern period provide support for this view, not only because they indicate that seasonal and uncertain demand did affect the familial strategies of artisans in some specific contexts but also because there are reasons to believe that the impact of such demand was more pervasive than is sometimes recognized. In a provocative study of familial strategies among Viennese artisans in the nineteenth century, for example, Josef Ehmer broke from what was then the dominant view that artisans regularly employed their own sons. Instead, he argued that artisans in German-speaking regions of Europe did not normally integrate their sons into their own enterprises during this period and that they had been even less likely to do so in the preceding century. Ehmer offered a twofold explanation for the patterns he detected in the evidence. First, he sided with several other scholars who argued that the infrequency with which sons worked in and succeeded to the enterprises of their fathers prior to the nineteenth century should be explained primarily as a product of guild structures. On this view, the “collective social relations”

fostered by trade corporations shaped the structure of artisan families more strongly than did individual familial or economic strategies. Since corporate expectations and regulations governed training, employment, and establishment as a master artisan, they often effectively prevented fathers from simply handing their enterprises over to their sons. For that reason, most artisans arranged apprenticeships for their sons, who spent several years working as journeymen in the workshops of other craftsmen once they had completed their training, before finally establishing themselves as proprietors in their own right. Because corporate regulations no longer factored strongly in the nineteenth century, however, Ehmer turned to a second factor to explain the fact that fathers were only somewhat more likely to employ sons in this period than they had been in preceding centuries – namely, to the seasonal and uncertain demand that characterized most segments of the urban product market. In Ehmer's view, the nature of demand for their products and services ensured that most nineteenth-century artisans had only a limited need for regular and permanent help and encouraged them to meet most of their own labor requirements by employing apprentices and journeymen rather than their own sons.<sup>82</sup>

Although Ehmer felt that seasonal and uncertain demand could explain artisans' reluctance to employ their own sons only as guilds lost their authority in the nineteenth century, it seems more probable that guild regulations had only formalized or amplified patterns of behavior that would have been produced in any case by the impact of seasonal and uncertain demand on artisans' requirements for regular, permanent help. This interpretation accounts not only for the essential continuity of artisans' familial strategies in central Europe after guild regulations ceased to be a primary factor in their formulation but also for the fact that artisans were not necessarily more likely to employ their own sons in contexts in which guild regulations did not limit their ability to transmit enterprises to their sons. As I have noted, the reluctance of artisans to employ their own sons seems to have been a widespread phenomenon in early modern Europe, even though the regulations of some guilds may have favored a degree of father-to-son continuity, and even where guild authority may have been weaker at certain times than elsewhere, as it was in eighteenth-century England.<sup>83</sup> The ancient Roman pattern is significant here too:

<sup>82</sup> Ehmer 1984. Cf. Knotter 1994: 40–3, who echoes many of these points.

<sup>83</sup> De Munck and Soly 2007: 19 offer some general comments on variations in guild regulations concerning the kin of master artisans. As they note, Rosser 1997: 17 has made the intriguing suggestion that efforts on the part of guilds to encourage father-to-son continuity in some medieval cities may in fact indicate that such continuity was not the norm.

since *collegia* in the early Empire were private associations with no formal regulatory functions, Roman artisans' reluctance to employ their own sons was clearly not a product of corporate regulations.

The factors that did encourage a minority of early modern artisans to integrate sons into their own enterprises only emphasize the extent to which seasonal and uncertain demand shaped the strategies of most others. Inelastic demand was one such factor: artisans who manufactured products for which demand was relatively inelastic typically possessed a stable-enough need for permanent help that they could keep their sons productively employed. The fact that bakers appear to have been more likely than other artisans to employ their own sons can be explained at least partly in these terms – not only did the difficult working hours make dependent, live-in employees useful (since work in most bakeries began in the very early hours of the morning), the demand for bread was also inelastic enough that bakers had a constant need for predictable amounts of labor.<sup>84</sup>

The nature and extent of the capital artisans had at their disposal were also factors that could encourage them to integrate sons into their own businesses. On one level, this may have been true simply because artisans who enjoyed financial security felt less pressure than others to ensure that their sons remained productively employed (or, in other words, they were less risk-averse than colleagues who possessed fewer financial resources). More important, however, were the positive incentives for family continuity that came into play when significant amounts of capital were at stake. Both artisans and their sons in these situations had a vested interest in ensuring that sons inherited their fathers' enterprises: sons because they would enjoy more long-term social and financial success by assuming control of healthy and well-capitalized businesses than by establishing enterprises of their own; fathers because they could better preserve the value of estates rich in business-related assets by bequeathing them intact to sons who were capable of employing those assets. Fathers operating businesses on this scale were therefore more likely than not to groom sons as their successors and to do so in part by employing them personally.<sup>85</sup>

Guild regulations too could mitigate problems arising from seasonal and uncertain demand in ways that encouraged fathers to employ their sons. In his analysis of the chimney-sweeping trade in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Vienna, Ehmer argues that a small number of families were able to

<sup>84</sup> Ehmer 1984: 207 (on bakers in Vienna); S. L. Kaplan 1996: 291–3 (on bakers in Paris).

<sup>85</sup> Ehmer 1984: 206–7 makes this argument about innkeepers in particular in Vienna. Cf. Baker 2009: 171–8, who notes that family continuity was higher in London trades devoted to the manufacture of scientific materials than it was in other lines of work, partly due to the affluence of these trades.

artificially constrain the supply of chimney-sweeping services, both by securing an enforceable monopoly for their corporation and by limiting membership in that corporation to a maximum of eighteen master artisans. In this environment of limited competition, demand regularly exceeded supply, and strategies emphasizing family continuity were far less risky than otherwise would have been the case; as a result, masters of the corporation sought to ensure that their sons would succeed to their positions.<sup>86</sup> The evolution of the Parisian printing industry in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries offers a comparable example from early modern France. Royal legislation limited the number of print-shops in Paris to thirty-six during the late seventeenth century and stipulated that each of those shops was to contain at least four presses; it therefore not only constrained the supply of printing services but also encouraged the owners of printing shops to invest heavily in physical capital. These developments seem to have been matched by (and possibly prompted) a renewed emphasis on family continuity among members of the printers' corporation, reflected in changes in the corporate statutes discouraging printers from accepting apprentices – which, in practice, ensured that most new members of the corporation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were the sons or sons-in-law of other master printers.<sup>87</sup>

Given these considerations, it is reasonable to hypothesize that seasonal and uncertain demand was the primary factor driving the reluctance of artisans and retailers in the Roman world to employ their own sons. Circumstances undoubtedly differed for artisans working in industries that generated relatively stable demand, or possessing sufficient capital that they had an incentive to ensure their sons could inherit and operate their businesses. For most, however, seasonal and uncertain demand made it preferable to find work outside the household for sons, who – after their apprenticeships ended – may have spent several years working as small-scale subcontractors or moving from shop to shop on short-term contracts, before finally establishing workshops of their own. This was true both in the case of fathers who operated enterprises hovering on the margins of viability, as well as those operating relatively successful businesses, albeit for different reasons. Although seasonal and uncertain demand may have ensured that individuals in neither category had a stable-enough need for regular, permanent help to keep their sons productively employed, for those struggling to stay in business, the decision to establish a son in an independent career could provide badly needed insurance against hard times by diversifying their

<sup>86</sup> Ehmer 2001: 194–6.    <sup>87</sup> Sonenscher 1989: 14–19.

households' income streams. On the other hand, while proprietors of successful businesses could also benefit from such diversification, in general they would have been less vulnerable to the severe budget pressures that drove poorer artisans to find alternative sources of employment for their children. Even so, the interplay between the life cycle of an entrepreneur's business and the seasonal and uncertain character of urban demand meant that his own labor requirements did not always align well with labor supplied by members of his family. Many entrepreneurs, for instance, may have been confronted with the opportunity to expand their businesses before their sons were old enough to contribute to their enterprises in any meaningful way. In these circumstances, they developed strategies for recruiting additional permanent and temporary help from beyond the family itself, provided that the structure of local and regional labor markets or their access to the labor of slaves and freedmen allowed them to do so in a straightforward way.<sup>88</sup> Those who succeeded in crafting such strategies could then find it difficult to integrate the labor of sons into their workshops when those sons finally matured, unless that moment coincided with a major change in their ability to enlist the help of others – as would have been the case, for instance, had an apprentice or long-term journeyman in the shop moved on in search of other opportunities.<sup>89</sup> In these circumstances, many probably encouraged their sons to work elsewhere rather than disrupt the rhythms of their own workshops, unless they felt a strong desire to groom their sons as their successors.

Although our ancient evidence is not comprehensive enough to permit an examination of the finer details of this hypothesis, it is nevertheless broadly consistent with the view that fathers with substantial capital assets were more likely to groom their sons to succeed them than were most other artisans and retailers, who found their efforts to keep those sons employed productively complicated by seasonal and uncertain demand. The commemorative patterns generated by the occupational inscriptions offer support for this view, if only indirectly, since they suggest that at least some of the men commemorated by their sons were likely to have been wealthier or better-capitalized than most artisans, and thus potentially more interested

<sup>88</sup> Ehmer 1984: 205–6 makes this point in the context of the Viennese trades in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

<sup>89</sup> Cerutti 1991: 114–16 notes that Turin tailors often took on apprentices or journeymen slightly before their own sons departed to take up apprenticeships of their own. The precise cause of this pattern remains unclear, since Cerutti notes that the labor of apprentices and journeymen otherwise does not seem to have been a substitute for the labor of children. For that reason, it is possible that the pattern indicates that most tailors became successful enough in their own businesses to employ others at roughly the same time that their own sons entered early adolescence.



in ensuring that their sons could inherit their businesses. The wholesalers (*negotiatores*) and the doctor commemorated by their sons arguably fit this model. So too, perhaps, does the arms manufacturer, who also may have enjoyed more stable demand than did most artisans.<sup>90</sup> The frequency with which daughters commemorated men in these kinds of occupations, though initially surprising, also makes sense if the entrepreneurs who practiced them were wealthier than most artisans and retailers, and thus interested in ensuring that their children succeeded to a major share of their estates. By contrast, the low rate of son-to-father succession among artisans and retailers themselves reflects the fact that men in these trades were less likely to possess enough business-specific capital to have strong incentives for ensuring that their sons succeeded them, even though many either owned skilled slaves or controlled the *operae* of freedmen – especially if the demand for their products and services made it difficult to keep those sons employed regularly.

In spite of the interpretative problems it poses, Lucian's satirical account of his own apprenticeship is also consistent with this model of the considerations that encouraged artisans and retailers to establish their sons in independent careers. Not only does it suggest that the modest amounts of physical capital required in many trades factored into a father's deliberations, it also evokes concerns that were probably widespread among artisans in an economic environment subject to seasonal and uncertain demand. Lucian is more explicit about the first of these considerations than the second, and he portrays the affordability of the equipment necessary to embark on a career as a sculptor as one of the deciding factors in his father's decision to secure an apprenticeship for him in that trade. While he claims that his father was anxious to find him a career "suitable for a man of free birth," he also stresses that his father was careful to weigh the balance between the startup costs associated with potential trades and the standards of living each could produce: he hoped to find a trade for Lucian "requiring easily accessible equipment, and bringing in an adequate income." At the same time, Lucian hints that the seasonal and uncertain nature of demand in urban product markets made his father unwilling or unable to employ him productively at home. He does so by claiming that his father's interest in ensuring that he could generate income from employment outside the

<sup>90</sup> Not only were military implements themselves relatively standard in form, they were also presumably in consistently high demand in Roman culture. In ancient Athens, comparable factors may have likewise made it possible for individuals to invest in workforces consisting of large numbers of slaves who were dedicated to the manufacture of weapons and shields (e.g., Aeschin. 1.97; Dem. 27.9; Lys. 12.19).

household itself reflected his father's desire to diversify the household's income stream. As he phrases it, "if I were to learn one of your ordinary crafts, I would straightaway earn a living from it and not be a drain on my family at such an age, and before long my father would be enjoying a share of my earnings."<sup>91</sup> Implicit in this statement is the notion that Lucian's labor had only limited value within the context of his father's household, even if our ability to parse that notion is limited by Lucian's decision not to reveal his father's occupation. Yet, because Lucian's family was embedded in an artisanal milieu – his maternal grandfather and uncles were all stonemasons<sup>92</sup> – it is not implausible to believe that his father ran his own business but found it difficult to integrate him into that business thanks to the pervasive impact of seasonal and uncertain demand on his own need for regular, permanent help.

Comparable points can be made about the apprenticeships the Egyptian weavers Pausiris, Epinikos, and Tryphon son of Dionysios arranged for their sons or wards, in spite of the fact that historians have tended to interpret them from the perspective that weavers in Roman Egypt sought regularly to integrate sons into their own businesses. That interpretation owes much to the fact that Tryphon's grandfather, Tryphon son of Didymos, is known to have headed a household that included his three adult sons, each of whom had also been trained as a weaver.<sup>93</sup> Because the four men lived together, historians typically conclude that they worked in a common family enterprise and adopt this view as a general model for understanding the organization of weaving businesses in Roman Egypt. In this model, fathers and sons both had strong incentives to ensure the continuity of individual family businesses: fathers had an interest in retaining access to the labor of their sons, and sons themselves were motivated to remain in the family workshop by the prospect of eventually inheriting the assets of their fathers. Advocates of this position then explain the apparent tendency of weavers to apprentice their sons or wards to other artisans by suggesting that men like Pausiris, Epinikos, and the younger Tryphon relied on formal apprenticeships to complement or round out the training they provided to their sons within their own workshops. On this view, sons apprenticed by their fathers to other artisans working in the same trade not only had the opportunity to learn techniques in which their fathers may not have been well versed, or to gain experience in the

<sup>91</sup> Luc. *Somm.* 1. Translations adapted from Costa 2006. On comparable motivations underlying the strategies of peasant farmers in both classical Greece and contemporary contexts, see Gallant 1991: 34–59 and Ellis 1993: 82–98.

<sup>92</sup> Luc. *Somm.* 7. <sup>93</sup> *P. Oxy.* II 314.

manufacture of specific articles their instructors were known for producing, but also experienced firsthand what it was like to be subjected to the standards of discipline expected by an employer to whom they were not closely related.<sup>94</sup>

Yet even if we accept the view that the elder Tryphon employed his sons in a family business, it is not clear that this conclusion should serve as a general model for the strategies employed by other weavers in Roman Egypt. Instead, the apprenticeships arranged by Pausiris, Epinikos, and the younger Tryphon are potentially more compatible with the model I proposed above – namely, a model in which artisans used apprenticeship as a tool for establishing sons in their own careers – both because the limited amounts of capital they employed gave them little incentive to ensure that sons inherited their enterprises and because the seasonal and uncertain demand for their products limited their own requirements for regular, permanent help.

First, the nature and extent of the capital normally employed by weavers in their trades did not normally create strong incentives for them to pass their businesses on to their sons. Some weavers were undoubtedly successful enough that they accumulated substantial amounts of business-related capital, but such cases were not the norm. Most weavers would have accumulated assets on a scale more in keeping with what seems to have been typical among artisans in general, especially given the affordability of the equipment used in this trade.<sup>95</sup> Weavers in this category would not have faced strong incentives to integrate their sons into their own enterprises, particularly if seasonal and uncertain demand posed problems insofar as their own needs for regular, permanent help were concerned. They may even have seen the affordability of physical capital in this trade as an inducement to help their sons establish themselves as independent weavers in their own right, much in the same way that the affordability of a sculptor's toolkit encouraged Lucian's father to establish him in that trade.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Wipszycka 1965: 61 and 63–5; Biscottini 1966: 65–6; Bergamasco 1995: 150–2; Freu 2011: 30–1. In the editorial comments for *P. Wisc.* I 4, Sijpesteijn makes the suggestion that Pausiris and Epinikos specialized in different branches of the weaving trade. Ruffing 2008 may add further support to that hypothesis by compiling the evidence for horizontal specialization in the textile trades (see 113–14 for an overview).

<sup>95</sup> Wipszycka 1965: 48–54 discusses the tools used in the weaving trade and concludes that they were generally inexpensive (a loom was sold in 54 CE for 20 *drachmai*, or about 75 kg wheat-equivalent).

<sup>96</sup> Also relevant in this context is a dialogue written by Lucian, in which the characters – a blacksmith's widow and her daughter – are able to support themselves for only seven months after the widow sells the anvil and tools of her husband (Luc. *DMeretr.* 6). This too suggests that equipment in many trades was not prohibitively expensive. In trades like baking and fulling, which required more in the way of physical plant, it was more difficult for fathers to establish sons in independent careers, and

Second, artisans who had a regular-enough demand for skilled help that they could employ their relatives personally may have been unwilling to incur the opportunity costs necessary to apprentice those relatives to others in the late stages of their training. As we saw above, the opportunity costs many parents incurred when arranging apprenticeships for young men were substantially higher than ancient historians have recognized, since the income adolescents could generate by undertaking even unskilled work instead of serving apprenticeships was substantial enough to make a notable difference in the standards of living enjoyed by other household members. For Pausiris, Epinikos, and Tryphon, who apprenticed their relatives to others after investing time and energy in training them personally,<sup>97</sup> the opportunity costs would have been steeper yet, especially if they needed the labor of those relatives within their own workshops. By apprenticing them to other artisans in these circumstances, they would have foregone access to skilled labor that they presumably would have needed to replace if they did not wish to absorb a loss in overall productivity, and replacing that labor would have been costly in and of itself. In theory, these men could have recruited substitutes for their relatives at a reduced rate by accepting apprentices of their own, provided that those apprentices already had a basic level of training. In practice, however, it was difficult to arrange matters so precisely, and the timing of Pausiris' one known decision to enlist an apprentice does not correlate in any obvious way with his decisions to place his own sons in the workshops of other artisans.<sup>98</sup> Nor could fathers substitute the labor of younger children for the labor of sons they apprenticed to others, since in most cases younger children would have needed to invest further time in observation and practice before becoming capable of matching the skills of their older

they may have aimed instead to pass down their own businesses to their sons. (For the nature of the equipment required by fullers, see now Flohr 2013: 121–48.) In other respects, workspace was liable to be one of the major expenses for a craftsman attempting to establish a business. In smaller centers these costs were not excessive. In 18 BCE, for example, Evangelus son of Archoneus made an advance payment on a goldsmith's shop in Roman Egypt and received possession when he paid the remaining balance of 300 *drachmai* (*BGU IV* 1127). The document once recorded the amount of the advance payment, but this figure is now unfortunately lost. Because it is unlikely to have exceeded the remaining balance, however, the shop sold for no more than 600 *drachmai* – roughly 1,970 kg of wheat-equivalent at 9 *drachmai* per *artaba* (Rathbone 1997: 217 and Duncan-Jones 1990: 143–55). The sale price of a pottery in 324 CE was comparable in magnitude: 15 talents or roughly 900 kg of wheat-equivalent at 300 *drachmai* per *artaba* (*PSI IV* 300; see Bagnall and Worp 1980: 16 for the date of the sale, and Bagnall 1985: 64 for the price of wheat). In a city like Rome, however, rents were likely to be high in general.

<sup>97</sup> See especially Biscottini 1966: 65–6 and Bergamasco 1995: 151. Cf. Bradley 1991: 111.

<sup>98</sup> Epinikos and Pausiris apprenticed their relatives to one another in 58 and 62 CE, respectively. Pausiris had apprenticed his other two sons in 49 and 53 CE (*P. Mich.* III 170–172, *P. Wisc.* I 4).

siblings.<sup>99</sup> And, although artisans like Pausiris could have hired skilled help during a son's apprenticeship, the wages they would have had to offer to attract such help would have been high – certainly much higher than the value of the small subsidies they received from the artisans to whom they had apprenticed their children, which often amounted to no more than a monthly sum of 4 or 5 *drachmai*, plus an additional allowance for clothing.<sup>100</sup>

Third, although artisans seeking to establish sons in independent careers likewise incurred opportunity costs when they apprenticed those sons to others (albeit chiefly in the form of foregone income, rather than in the form of diminished productivity in their own shops), they were arguably likely to see these costs as an important and justifiable investment in their sons' future prospects than were artisans hoping to employ their sons personally. This was so because apprenticeship was, from the perspective of a young man, an opportunity not just to learn skills but also to establish his own networks of personal and business contacts. Throughout their terms, apprentices had multiple opportunities to forge connections with suppliers, subcontractors, and clients: in early stages, they could find themselves visiting clients or suppliers to make deliveries or take possession of raw materials and intermediate goods; in advanced stages, they could be entrusted with the responsibility of managing the shop itself.<sup>101</sup> Connections of this sort, though not without value for young men intending to return to their fathers' workshops, were absolutely critical for those hoping to establish themselves in careers of their own when their apprenticeships ended.

Fourth, and finally, some incidental details revealed by the apprenticeship agreements of Pausiris, Epinikos, and the younger Tryphon are consistent with the view that they hesitated to employ their own relatives

<sup>99</sup> *Contra* Biscottini 1966: 66.

<sup>100</sup> For further discussion of the typical terms of these agreements, see below. Tryphon's younger brother was compensated at a rate of 4 *drachmai* per month in 36 CE (*P. Oxy.* II 322); his son at the rate of 5 *drachmai* per month in 66 CE (supplemented by an additional lump-sum payment of 12 *drachmai* for clothing). By contrast, and judging from the payment *entolae* from Mons Claudianus, the going rate for skilled labor at this particular moment in time was perhaps on the order of 50–60 *drachmai* per month if employers hired workers on long-term contracts or 3–4 *drachmai* per day when employers relied on the spot market (see Chapter 2 for more details).

<sup>101</sup> On the contacts that an apprentice could forge while making deliveries, see Lane 1996: 76–7 (and in particular her observation that William Masters “remarked in his memoirs that in this way he had come to know many watchmakers, journeymen and customers in the community, and these acquaintances had helped him as an adult workman”). Ulpian, on the other hand (*Dig.* 14.3.5.10), imagines that a fuller in the ancient world might leave his apprentices to manage the shop and deal with his clients while he himself went on a journey. Cf. Wallis 2008: 845, who notes that master artisans almost necessarily revealed “their client, credit, and supplier networks” to their apprentices.

because seasonal and uncertain demand made it difficult for them to guarantee those sons regular employment. They do so only indirectly, by suggesting that weavers in Roman Egypt were reluctant to shoulder the financial risks they would incur when they expanded their permanent workforces. The clearest sign of that reluctance is the terms on which they accepted skilled or semi-skilled apprentices who had already received some training in the profession from their own fathers: those terms reveal that instructors who accepted the sons of colleagues as apprentices were willing to do so only because they negotiated apprenticeship agreements designed to minimize their own additional costs. When, for example, the weaver Abaros agreed to take on Tryphon's younger brother Onnophris as an apprentice, he did so on the understanding that Onnophris' mother would remain responsible for most of the boy's living expenses and that his own costs would amount only to a monthly stipend of 4 *drachmai* (supplemented, perhaps, by a clothing allowance).<sup>102</sup> At an effective rate of 48 *drachmai* per year – equivalent to what a weaver would have needed to pay every month to maintain a regular employee – Onnophris' labor was a bargain from Abaros' perspective and would not have increased his fixed costs to the extent that unanticipated fluctuations in demand were likely to drive him into financial ruin. Likewise, when the weaver Ptolemaios accepted Tryphon's son Thoonis as an apprentice some thirty years later, he did so on comparable terms: he agreed to pay a stipend of 5 *drachmai* per month, along with a one-time clothing allowance of 12 *drachmai*, on the understanding that Tryphon would provide for the boy's remaining needs.<sup>103</sup> Lastly, although it is structured differently, the contract recording Pausiris' decision to apprentice his son Dioskos to the weaver Apollonios also seems weighted in favor of the instructor, if not quite so strongly. In this case, Apollonios assumed primary responsibility for Dioskos' daily maintenance, while Pausiris agreed to offset his costs by paying him a lump sum of 14 *drachmai* for clothing and providing a monthly food allowance of 5 *drachmai*.<sup>104</sup> If we assume that Dioskos' living expenses fell within the range of 75–100 *drachmai* per year,<sup>105</sup> then Apollonios' own financial exposure remained minimal. The fixed costs assumed by the instructors in all these cases, while not insignificant, were still exceptionally low compared to what they would have been required to pay in wages had

<sup>102</sup> *P. Oxy.* II 322. The document is unfortunately damaged precisely where a stipulation about a clothing allowance may have fallen.

<sup>103</sup> *P. Oxy.* II 275. <sup>104</sup> *P. Wisc.* I 4.

<sup>105</sup> I base this figure on Scheidel's estimate that the bare-bones living expenses of an adult male in Roman Egypt at this time were roughly 112 *drachmai* per year (Scheidel 2010: 434).

they recruited semi-skilled or skilled help for only a fraction of the year, and low even when compared to the costs of housing and feeding one of their own family members. The fact that they accepted apprentices only under these conditions signals a strong aversion to risk, which can itself be interpreted as a product of the pressures that seasonal and uncertain demand exerted on artisans in the Roman world and on their own willingness to maintain permanent workforces. If this interpretation is correct, then it seems safe to conclude that the same factors undoubtedly influenced the tendency of artisans to establish their sons in careers of their own rather than to employ them personally. Doing so permitted artisans not only to limit their own fixed costs but also to generate insurance against risk by gaining access to additional revenue streams for their households once their sons had acquired the skills necessary to find gainful employment.

*Artisans, sons, and the market structure of the Roman world*

In the preceding discussion, I emphasized important points of similarity between the familial strategies crafted by artisans in the Roman world and those in early modern Europe in the hope of clarifying our understanding of the former. In both historical contexts, seasonal and uncertain demand was a daily reality for most entrepreneurs in urban environments. For artisans in particular, the nature of urban demand was a key factor motivating them to establish their sons in independent careers rather than to employ them in their own businesses.

Presented in this way, however, my argument risks obscuring changes in the dynamics of artisans' household strategies between 1650 and 1850 (the long eighteenth century), which – while seemingly small – nevertheless reflect a profound point of contrast between the structure of the early modern economy and the structure of the Roman economy. In the final pages of this section, I draw attention both to those changes and to the ways in which they differentiated the dynamics of artisans' household strategies in the early modern period from those in the Roman world. In the process, I offer some thoughts about the significance of these differences for our understanding of the Roman economy more broadly. As I suggest in what follows, detectable differences between the familial strategies of artisans in these two periods confirm that the product and labor markets of the Roman world, though sophisticated in some ways, remained thin relative to those of northwestern Europe during the long eighteenth century. First, our evidence for apprenticeship in antiquity

indicates that Roman artisans found it more difficult to arrange apprenticeships for their sons than did their early modern counterparts, and thus implies that the market for this kind of labor was not as fluid as in later periods, perhaps because most artisans themselves had little demand for apprentices. Second, from the late seventeenth century onward, the development of increasingly thick demand for goods and commodities in the lower and middle segments of the urban market encouraged artisans in different industries to integrate their sons more firmly into their own enterprises, albeit in ways that depended on their own individual fortunes. The fact that Roman artisans rarely integrated their sons into their enterprises therefore signals indirectly that the urban populations of the Roman world did not generate enough demand for goods and services to thicken product markets in a comparable way, despite the sizeable aggregate purchasing power these populations commanded in large cities like Rome. In both cases, the strategies Roman artisans devised to arrange for their sons' futures therefore further support the arguments I have advanced in previous chapters about the performance and structure of the Roman economy during the late Republic and early Empire.

By stressing the importance of family connections in his account of his own brief apprenticeship, Lucian emphasizes a point made implicitly in the documents from Roman Egypt – namely, that artisans in the Roman world relied heavily on relationships of trust based in strong social ties when they sought apprenticeships for their sons, whether by apprenticing those sons to colleagues in professional associations, or by placing them in the care of relatives.<sup>106</sup> Lucian himself, of course, was apprenticed to his maternal uncle, but he further emphasizes the importance of strong social ties when he depicts his father's deliberations about his future as a long and protracted process in which his father discussed the issue with several close friends and family members. Finally, Lucian's uncle too had probably learned his trade with the help of relationships anchored in family ties or professional associations, since he shared that trade with his own father and brother.<sup>107</sup>

If this reliance on strong social ties can be taken to reflect a general pattern in the Roman world, then it suggests that the market for apprentices was less fluid in antiquity than it was in parts of early modern Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Recent research on the

<sup>106</sup> On the importance of relationships of trust in apprenticeship agreements, cf. Venticinque 2010 and esp. 288–92.

<sup>107</sup> Luc. *Somm.* 1–4 and 7.



market for apprentices in London has stressed that strong networks were much less important to a young man's ability to secure an apprenticeship in early modern England than historians had previously believed. Rather, apprenticeship opportunities in London were remarkably open, and young men from the provinces who had no clear connections to the London market were able to find positions with seemingly little difficulty. To the extent that personal ties played a role in the process, apprentices or their parents relied primarily on acquaintances to pass on information about prospective job opportunities.<sup>108</sup>

Although it is not yet clear why London's apprenticeship market was so fluid, one potential explanation is that slow growth in the metropolitan consumer market provoked a complementary growth in artisans' own demand for the labor of apprentices. If so, then the seeming importance of strong ties to prospective apprentices in the Roman world may be a symptom of product markets that were not so favorable to artisans as those in the early modern period. On this view, Roman artisans may have been reluctant to accept apprentices in the absence of strong personal ties based on family connections or anchored in *collegia*.

Differences in the frequency with which artisans in the ancient and early modern contexts employed their sons also point to product markets that remained thin in all segments in antiquity. Although many artisans in the early modern period chose not to employ their own sons, there was nevertheless an increasing tendency among certain groups of urban producers to integrate sons into their own enterprises. That trend was partly a consequence of the thickening product markets in which they were embedded. In particular, the growing demand for relatively affordable manufactured goods among members of urban working and middle classes made it possible for some artisans to produce longer runs of undifferentiated products than had been feasible in the past. Those pursuing this strategy developed enterprises that were more heavily capitalized than most: even though they continued to subcontract for some services and intermediate goods, they nevertheless chose to invest in the space and working capital necessary to coordinate production on a relatively large scale. Because those who succeeded had strong incentives to transmit their businesses intact to their sons, they were increasingly inclined to integrate their sons into those enterprises.<sup>109</sup>

At the same time, the growing demand for undifferentiated goods provoked poorer artisans to make heavy use of the labor of their sons as

<sup>108</sup> Leunig et al. 2011. <sup>109</sup> Ehmer 2001: 191–3.

well, albeit for different reasons. Thickening markets led to an expansion of specific kinds of subcontracting networks that developed to supply low-cost semi-finished goods and component parts to emerging capital-intensive enterprises. Subcontracting networks of this type differed from those common in segments of the market catering to the demand for quality or high-end populuxe goods, in which artisans had long economized on fixed costs by subcontracting for specialized skills or extra capacity as necessary. Instead, subcontracting networks in low-end segments of the market permitted coordinating artisans to economize on costs by breaking the production process down into a series of low-skilled or semi-skilled steps that could be performed by subcontractors in their own homes. In these circumstances, craftsmen who accepted work as subcontractors enlisted the help of family members – including sons – to boost their output: the necessary steps were simple enough that subcontractors could train wives and children quickly and on the job, and family labor was much less expensive to enlist in this context than was the help of semi-skilled or even unskilled workers recruited from outside of the household.<sup>110</sup>

Here, the evidence presented by the occupational inscriptions converges with our evidence for industrial organization in the Roman world to support the claim that all product market segments remained thin during the late Republic and early Empire. Subcontracting networks designed to minimize production costs through the exploitation of unskilled labor do not appear in our sources, and while this may simply reflect gaps in our evidence, it could also indicate that demand in low-end segments of the market did not become stable enough to support such networks. The commemorative pattern in the occupational inscriptions, however, supports the latter interpretation. The frequency of son-to-father commemorations in the occupational inscriptions offers only a crude index of the extent to which fathers integrated sons into their own enterprises in the Roman world, but it nevertheless implies that they did so rarely – more rarely, perhaps, than their early modern counterparts. Additionally, since the inscriptions probably reflect a prosperous slice of Rome's artisan population, the rarity of son-to-father commemorations suggests that artisans in this group did not use that prosperity to increase the capital assets of their businesses sufficiently to motivate them to bequeath their enterprises to their sons. That observation can be understood best as evidence that there was little development in the depth of the Roman world's product markets during the early Empire. To understand fully why

<sup>110</sup> Ehmer 1984: 203; Schwarz 1992: 179–207 and esp. 206–7; Riello 2006: 172–6.

that was the case, however, it is necessary to invoke the nature of household consumption goals in antiquity – a topic best explored by examining the role of women in artisan households.

### Wives in artisan households

Historians of the Roman world are increasingly sensitive to the fact that women worked hard to enhance the well-being of their family members, whether by handling tasks necessary to keep a household running smoothly or by contributing directly to the family income. In particular, historians have focused much of their recent research on determining how often and in what ways women engaged in work designed to generate income, despite various social constraints that could limit their economic opportunities. This research has demonstrated that while freeborn women in particular could enjoy extensive property rights and considerable freedom of action, they nevertheless faced more limitations on their ability to market their labor or engage in production in their own right than men, thanks largely to constraints that were themselves the product of a strongly gendered ideology of work. This ideology stressed not only that women ideally belonged within the home rather than in public but also that certain kinds of work were more suitable for women than others – principally, those that drew on traditional domestic skills. It operated chiefly by curtailing freeborn women's ability to acquire specialized skills or training, especially outside of the home: although the apprenticeship documents from Roman Egypt suggest that both male and female slaves were often apprenticed to craftsmen by their owners (particularly to weavers), freeborn girls were far less likely to be apprenticed to artisans than freeborn boys. Moreover, even enslaved women who were apprenticed to artisans by their masters were trained in a narrow range of trades, and probably less frequently than male slaves.<sup>111</sup>

Although this recent research has done much to clarify our understanding of the economic roles women could adopt when they chose to allocate time to income-generating work, it has devoted less attention to two important and interrelated problems. The first is the nature of the considerations that shaped women's choices about how to allocate their time. Many, of course, had no real choice at all. Those who were unmarried and

<sup>111</sup> For the most recent general surveys, see Saller 2003 and 2007. For conditions in the urban economy, see Treggiari 1979; Kampen 1981, esp. 107–29; Joshel 1992, esp. 141 n. 25; Groen-Vallinga 2013; Holleran 2013. For women in agriculture, see Scheidel 1995 and 1996a; Erdkamp 2005: 87–94.

had no family members to support them needed to earn money just to keep body and soul together. Married women too could find themselves compelled to work to ensure that their households were able to make ends meet, like the wife of the impoverished craftsman in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, who spins wool in order to supplement the meager day-wages brought home by her husband. Given the nature of our evidence, however, it is more difficult to identify how women made decisions concerning work when they belonged to households with better access to resources, and when they therefore faced genuine choices about how they would allocate their time and labor. The second is the relationship between women's choices and the overall performance of the economy. Here, Richard Saller has established the basic groundwork by arguing that growth was constrained by women's poor access to training.<sup>112</sup> This was undoubtedly true, but inasmuch as growth was possible in other contexts in which women were disadvantaged in comparable ways, Saller's argument can potentially be pressed further.

De Vries' recent study of work and the household in early modern Europe provides a framework capable of generating insight into both problems. De Vries has emphasized that household consumption goals played a crucial role in shaping decisions about how women in particular would allocate their time between two broad categories of work – work designed to generate income and work designed to address the internal needs of the household.<sup>113</sup> De Vries draws heavily on the work of Gary Becker, who modeled the household as an organization in which members produce goods (so-called *Z*-commodities) to satisfy their consumption goals by combining two different kinds of inputs: (1) goods and services purchased on the market and (2) tasks performed within the household itself, many of which add value to (or extract utility from) inputs in the first category. The model therefore implies that members of a household must decide how much of their time to allocate to income-generating activities in order to purchase desired goods and services, and how much to allocate to the household tasks that are necessary to exploit them fully.<sup>114</sup> In de Vries' elaboration of this model, the specific consumption goals targeted by individual household members profoundly affect how they weigh the relative merits of devoting time to one type of work versus the other. In particular, if they believe both that tasks performed within the household are critical to their well-being and that they cannot find acceptable

<sup>112</sup> Saller 2003, 2007, and 2012. <sup>113</sup> De Vries 2008, and esp. 25–37.

<sup>114</sup> Becker 1991, esp. 20–9.

substitutes for them by purchasing goods and services on the market, then they will be reluctant to reallocate time from household tasks to income-generating work. Conversely, if household members adopt goals prioritizing the consumption of purchased goods and services, they will allocate more of their time to work directed at the market in order to fund their purchases. Crucially, if consumption goals of this sort become widespread, the aggregate impact of countless individual decisions to allocate time to income-generating work can transform both labor and product markets, thus giving rise to the kind of thick market externalities so vital to per capita growth in preindustrial contexts.<sup>115</sup>

For de Vries, Europe's long eighteenth century (1650–1850) stands out because of the intensity with which household members realigned their consumption goals and women reallocated their time – and because of how that behavior affected the performance of the early modern economy. In this period, members of working- and middle-class households began to place increasingly less emphasis on consumption goals in which leisure time was important to their overall satisfaction. In their place, they adopted new goals prioritizing the consumption of both comestibles (such as tea, coffee, and sugar) and certain kinds of manufactured goods (like clothing, furniture, and tableware). Because these goods needed to be acquired on the market, the spread of new consumption goals triggered changes in the way household members (especially women) allocated their time. Since household tasks were often coded as women's responsibility, and since men enjoyed a competitive advantage in the labor market thanks to better access to training, women had devoted much of their time to household tasks before 1650. As households began to place more emphasis on the consumption of marketed goods and services, however, women reallocated much of that time to income-generating work and, in the process, transformed labor and product markets in ways that provoked a period of sustained, if gentle, growth.<sup>116</sup>

De Vries' analysis suggests that we cannot fully understand how women allocated their time in artisanal and entrepreneurial households in the Roman world without first attempting to identify the consumption goals prioritized by the members of such households, since these would have been pivotal in determining how individuals split their time between income-generating work and household tasks. In what follows, I therefore

<sup>115</sup> De Vries 2008: 71–2. Cf. Grantham 1999, who focuses on thick market externalities generated by improvements in the technologies and infrastructure of trade and communication rather than on those created by changes in individual consumption preferences.

<sup>116</sup> De Vries 2008: 1–185.

pursue this problem in detail. I suggest that members of households at all ranges of the socioeconomic spectrum prioritized consumption goals that could be met only if they allocated the time of some of their members – in particular, women – to tasks designed to meet the internal needs of the household itself. On the level of the individual household, this meant that wives especially had strong incentives to allocate their time to these kinds of tasks rather than to income-generating work and that they consequently did not seek to buffer their households against the risks of the urban market by enhancing or diversifying their household's incomes as aggressively as they otherwise might have. Furthermore, I suggest that this behavior also had significant consequences for the overall performance of the Roman economy: because women in antiquity did not allocate as much of their time to work that enhanced the purchasing power of their households as did women in Europe during the long eighteenth century, demand in urban product markets remained highly seasonal and uncertain, and opportunities for sustained productivity growth in the economy as a whole remained limited.

#### *Household consumption goals in the Roman world*

Due to the paucity of our evidence, the consumption goals of Roman households are difficult to elucidate. Ancient historians do not possess anything comparable to the probate records that generate insight into changes in consumption habits in Europe's long eighteenth century.<sup>117</sup> Any approach to Roman consumption goals must therefore be indirect and must contend with sources that are colored by idealized and prescriptive representations of women and their roles in the family economy. That said, a careful reading of these sources suggests that the consumption goals of sub-aristocratic households in antiquity were shaped more strongly than those of the early modern working and middle classes by the belief that a wife contributed best to her household's well-being when she allocated much of her time to household tasks rather than to work meant to generate extra income.

That belief is expressed consistently in the literary and legal sources of the late Republic and early Empire, which stress two aspects of a wife's ideal role in the household. First, she was to act as the household's *custos* – its guardian or steward. In this capacity, she was expected to manage the

<sup>117</sup> On what probate inventories can tell us, see de Vries 2008: 125–6, who cites the relevant bibliography for France, England, and New England in the early modern period.

household's material and human assets by monitoring its stores and supervising its slaves.<sup>118</sup> Second, she was to produce essential goods such as clothing for the household's own consumption. Augustus famously boasted that he wore only clothing produced by the women of his household,<sup>119</sup> and while we might be tempted to dismiss the idea that this boast accurately reflected general aristocratic *mores*, to some extent it did align with wider social attitudes. Some scholars have argued that women in wealthy households continued to maintain looms in public areas of the house, and even if these looms served mostly symbolic purposes, they nevertheless reflect the ongoing cultural relevance of the Roman matronly ideal.<sup>120</sup> Nor should we necessarily assume that those looms were in fact mostly symbolic: even if we reject the view that women in wealthy households produced all (or even most) of the textiles required by their family members and domestic slaves, the jurist Pomponius took for granted the possibility that a wife might nevertheless supervise the production of some clothing within the home, whether it was intended for use by herself, by her husband, or by other members of the household.<sup>121</sup>

Although the literary and legal evidence reflects a predominantly elite perspective, comparable beliefs about a wife's role in the family economy are communicated by sculptural reliefs and funerary inscriptions that capture the views of a broader cross-section of Roman society. These sources emphasize the importance of the goods and services women produced for household consumption, while overlooking the potential value of their income-generating work. Natalie Kampen, for example, has stressed that visual depictions of working women in Roman art differ in a critical way from those of working men: while the latter offer realistic depictions of male subjects that are designed to highlight the social and economic value of their work, the former are instead allegorical and use work to evoke well-known myths. Kampen notes that there are some exceptions to this general pattern – most notably, the realistic depictions of female vendors and retailers on several reliefs – but argues that exceptions were rare precisely because a woman's income-generating work detracted from, rather than enhanced, her status, even in an artisanal and entrepreneurial social milieu.<sup>122</sup> Funerary

<sup>118</sup> On the role of the Roman wife as *custos* of her household, see Pearce 1974 and Saller 2003: 190. Among our Roman authors, Columella offers the most extensive commentary on gender roles in his discussion of the duties of the *vilicus*' wife: see *Rust.* 12.pr-3.

<sup>119</sup> Suet. *Aug.* 73.1.

<sup>120</sup> On the complex relationship of these ideologies to actual social practice, see Dixon 2001b, esp. 117–25. On wool-working as a symbol of idealized feminine behavior, see Lovén 1998 and 2007: 230–3.

<sup>121</sup> Pomponius, *Dig.* 24.1.31.pr. <sup>122</sup> Kampen 1982, esp. 72–3.

inscriptions likewise emphasize the work performed by women within the household. It is true that some women were given occupational titles in their funerary inscriptions, which indicate that they (or their commemorators) valued the various kinds of income-generating work they performed, but our evidence shows that they were commemorated more often in ways that emphasized their roles as wives and mothers. Undoubtedly, these modes of representation were conventional, especially when they stressed the matronly virtues of the deceased, such as their fidelity or devotion to their children.<sup>123</sup> It is nevertheless significant that our inscriptions emphasize the contributions women made to their domestic economies by producing goods and services for household consumption, both by spinning or weaving – tasks that are evoked visually on tombstones, albeit more frequently in the East than in the West – and by undertaking work that was associated with a wife's role as *custos*.<sup>124</sup> Each of these aspects of a wife's role is captured in the well-known epitaph of a woman known only as Claudia, which stresses that “she took care of the household and wove wool (*domum servavit lanam fecit*).”<sup>125</sup>

The critical question is whether or not the beliefs expressed in these sources corresponded in any way to actual consumption preferences and social practices. The evidence cannot support a definitive answer, but if typical social practice did diverge notably from the ideal expressed in these sources, then we might expect to find some trace of that fact in our evidence. The early modern material, for example, shows how consumption preferences that conflicted with traditional gender ideologies could affect practice in detectable ways. First, changing consumption preferences affected the way in which women from working- and middle-class families were represented in certain sources. In the Netherlands during the seventeenth century, visual artists began to depict women working outside of the home in realistic and unproblematic ways, even though moralizing literary texts continued to stress that a wife should devote herself to work within the household. This development reflected new valuations of work that stressed industriousness and diligence as virtues for men and women alike: although gender ideologies still encouraged wives to apply their industriousness and diligence within the household, individuals became more capable of appreciating women's ability to contribute directly to a household's income as they adopted consumption preferences assigning increased importance to the value of goods and services purchased on the

<sup>123</sup> Dixon 2001b: 115.

<sup>124</sup> On regional differences in visual depictions of women and spinning, see Cottica 2003.

<sup>125</sup> *CIL* 6.15346 (= *ILS* 8.403).



market rather than produced within the home.<sup>126</sup> Second, these changing preferences also enhanced opportunities for women to acquire craft and business skills within their own households, even though their access to formal apprenticeships remained limited. By drawing on records produced by the London livery companies, Amy Louise Erickson has recently estimated that, at a bare minimum, at least 15 percent of the members of most London livery companies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries worked alongside their wives. Crucially, most of the wives in these partnerships had sufficient training that they could not only maintain an enterprise after the death of their husbands but also train apprentices.<sup>127</sup> As a result, “there was a wide band of couples in the middle [of the socio-economic spectrum] who were not only more likely to work in the same business but whose prosperity was probably built on the very fact of their running a joint establishment.”<sup>128</sup> In Erickson’s view, most of these women acquired their skills in enterprises belonging to their spouses or parents: as changing consumption goals motivated households to allocate more resources to income-generating work, individuals came to realize that women could better help their families meet their new goals if they could acquire training that enhanced their ability to contribute directly to a household business.<sup>129</sup>

In stark contrast, however, the meager and indirect evidence for social practices among sub-aristocratic families in antiquity reveals little interest in women’s potential to enhance the purchasing power of their households. Instead, it suggests strongly that consumption goals at this level of society conformed to the idealized view that women were to spend their time providing key goods and services to other members of their households. Artemidorus’ dream interpretations are a case in point. Given Artemidorus’ belief that he could provide a correct interpretation only by accounting for the dreamer’s personal characteristics – things like age, sex, wealth, and occupation<sup>130</sup> – his interpretations that touch upon women’s roles within the domestic economy ought to reflect preferences and social practices of individuals from a broad cross-section of society. For that reason, it is significant that these interpretations focus instead on themes that evoke only the literary image of women, and thus seem incompatible with a model in which consumption preferences

<sup>126</sup> Schmidt 2011. <sup>127</sup> Erickson 2008: 286–92. <sup>128</sup> Erickson 2008: 278–86 and esp. 285.

<sup>129</sup> A point strongly implied by Erickson 2008: 269, even if she does not articulate it in quite these terms.

<sup>130</sup> See Harris-McCoy 2012: 15–18 on Artemidorus’ belief that dreams could only be properly interpreted if the diviner took the individual’s personal circumstances into account.

prompted women in antiquity to allocate large amounts of time to income-generating work.<sup>131</sup>

First, several of Artemidorus' interpretations imply that wives and daughters were not expected to contribute directly to their households' incomes in the same way as sons. Artemidorus refers to a son's ability to generate income in his analyses of dreams in which a client ate his or her child, in whole or in part. A dream in which the client ate only the body part from which the child earned a livelihood meant that the dreamer would profit from his or her child's professional success. The examples Artemidorus uses to illustrate the point all seem to feature sons: one concerns a parent who eats the feet of a child who runs races; another, a parent who eats the hands of a child who works as an artisan; a third, a parent who eats the shoulders of a child who wrestles.<sup>132</sup> Conversely, when he offers interpretations predicting that women will bring material benefits to their households, Artemidorus assumes that they will do so by providing access to property rather than by generating income: a daughter by becoming rich in her own right, possibly because of an advantageous marriage;<sup>133</sup> a wife by bringing her husband a large dowry or by using her personal wealth to pay off his debts.<sup>134</sup> Only in one interpretation does Artemidorus describe a wife generating income for the household through her own labor – and that is in the context of a problematic case in which a client had been selling the sexual services of his spouse.<sup>135</sup> More common are interpretations indicating that daughters in particular, because they required dowries, were conceptualized as drains on the household's resources: Artemidorus observes that money-lenders and daughters were interchangeable as symbols in dreams because, like a money-lender, "a daughter too necessarily makes demands, and after she has been raised (with much attention), she takes her portion and leaves."<sup>136</sup>

Second, several of Artemidorus' interpretations rest on the belief that a wife's most important function was to serve her household as a conscientious *oikouros* – the Greek equivalent of the Latin *custos* – by tending to the welfare

<sup>131</sup> For a comparable approach to the depiction of women in Artemidorus, see Knapp 2011: 53–96.

<sup>132</sup> Artem. 1.70.

<sup>133</sup> More specifically, Artemidorus 1.78 remarks that it is good for a poor man who has a rich daughter to dream of having sexual intercourse with her, "for, deriving benefits from her in many ways, he will rejoice in her."

<sup>134</sup> Examples of dreams portending that the dreamer would find a wealthy wife can be found at 2.31 and 2.32. See 1.79 for Artemidorus' interpretation of a dream in which the dreamer received oral sex from his wife or lover; in his view, if the dreamer had a wife who was wealthier than he was himself, the dream meant that she would "pay off many debts on behalf of her husband."

<sup>135</sup> Artem. 5.2. <sup>136</sup> Artem. 3.41; cf. 1.15 and 1.78.

of its members and the security of its stores and property. A dream in which a client was beheaded, for instance, could be interpreted as a sign that he was about to suffer the loss of the person who cared for his property. That person could be a slave or a friend, but Artemidorus also explicitly mentions the dreamer's wife.<sup>137</sup> Just as interesting are Artemidorus' interpretations of dreams that offered clients contemplating marriage insight into the character of prospective wives. Artemidorus framed many of these specifically in order to answer questions about whether or not a woman would prove to be a good *oikouros*. The most straightforward interpretations concern dreams portending a successful marriage, in which a client's wife would prove to be not just faithful or pious but also good at managing the household; these include dreams in which the client saw either the goddess Athena or other significant symbols, such as watchdogs, swallows, and keys.<sup>138</sup> More complicated are interpretations of dreams in which a client fought in the arena as a gladiator. Here, Artemidorus stresses that the nature of a man's prospective wife could be deduced either from the nature of his opponent or from the weapons that he himself carried in the dream. In most cases, this kind of dream portended that a man's wife would possess some notable flaw alongside any potential virtues: a man who dreamt of fighting a *secutor*, for instance, would marry a woman who, although attractive and rich, would prove to be materialistic, prone to insulting her husband, and "the source of many evils." From Artemidorus' perspective, only one variant of the gladiator dream portended an unambiguously positive marriage, and it is telling that his interpretation stresses his belief that the prospective wife would serve her husband well as his *oikouros*.<sup>139</sup>

Evidence concerning women's roles in household businesses likewise shows that consumption goals in Roman antiquity motivated individuals to prioritize the tasks women performed in the household more strongly than was the case in seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe, and to do so at the expense of women's ability to generate income. They do so primarily by implying that Roman women had fewer opportunities to acquire training in craft or business skills within their own households than their early modern counterparts. Greek and Latin literature of the Roman period assumes that wives and daughters did not participate directly in

<sup>137</sup> For household management as the typical work of a wife, see 1.78. Artemidorus' comments on what serving as an *oikouros* entailed can be found at 1.35 and 2.27.

<sup>138</sup> Artem. 2.11 (watchdogs, which signify good housekeeping on the part of both a man's wife and his slaves), 2.35 (Athena), 2.66 (in which the client sees a swallow, which also signifies that his wife will be both musically inclined and Greek), and 3.54 (keys).

<sup>139</sup> Artem. 2.32.

family businesses and thus did not acquire comprehensive training in the relevant skills. In his *Metamorphoses*, for instance, Apuleius imagines that the married daughter of a murdered miller might auction off the assets she inherited from her father after he died, including his slaves and animals; it is tempting to read this as an indication that, in Apuleius' view, a daughter who had grown up in the household of an artisan would not have had the skills necessary to exploit her father's business on her own.<sup>140</sup> Lucian's *Dialogues of the Courtesans* makes the same point concerning a wife. One of the episodes in this collection of stories revolves around the efforts of a woman named Crobyle and her daughter to cope with the death of Crobyle's husband, a prosperous blacksmith. Crobyle initially responds to her husband's death by selling his equipment to raise money to meet her household's expenses. Like Apuleius, Lucian thus implies that women belonging to artisan households would generally not have acquired the skills necessary to run such businesses themselves.<sup>141</sup> In that sense, these anecdotes seem to lend support to Keith Bradley's suggestion, founded on his analysis of the Egyptian apprenticeship documents, "that daughters in artisanal families, like their counterparts in upper-class society at Rome, may not normally have been trained for work other than that of a traditional, domestic sort, but were instead prepared only for marriage and childbearing in the seclusive manner typical of women's life in antiquity as a whole."<sup>142</sup>

Scaevola's discussion of a partially preserved Roman will shows that actual social practices did not conflict dramatically with the assumptions embedded within these anecdotes and that many women lacked access to the skills necessary to operate certain kinds of artisanal enterprises on their own. According to Scaevola, a female testator had specified in her will that ownership of her ironworking shop, along with its equipment, was to be granted jointly to her slave Pamphilus (who was to be freed) and to a man named Lucius Eutyclus, so that the two of these men together could carry on the business. Complications arose because Lucius Eutyclus predeceased the testator, who did not update the terms of her will. When an unnamed coheir took possession of the workshop, he attempted to exclude the newly manumitted Pamphilus from a share in its ownership, apparently on the grounds that Eutyclus' death would prevent Pamphilus from maintaining the business as the testator had desired. For our purposes, the most significant detail is the belief of all concerned that Eutyclus himself was vital to the ongoing health of the business. Given the importance accorded

<sup>140</sup> Apul. *Met.* 9.31.   <sup>141</sup> Luc. *D.Meretr.* 6.1.   <sup>142</sup> Bradley 1991: 108.

to him, both in the terms of the will and in the dispute that unfolded after the testator's death, it seems that Eutychus had been closely involved in operating the business while the testator was still alive. If so, then the will may reflect a case in which a woman who had acquired a workshop, its equipment, and its slaves from a male relative lacked the comprehensive training necessary to operate all aspects of the enterprise herself and was forced to enlist the help of someone possessing the requisite skills so that she could continue to exploit those assets.<sup>143</sup>

Finally, even evidence that reflects artisanal or entrepreneurial milieus more directly than do the literary and legal sources implies that women in Roman households were less likely to acquire comprehensive training in family businesses than those in early modern Europe. That evidence does show that some women, at least, could benefit from training within their own households. A well-known anecdote in the New Testament mentions a husband and wife, Aquila and Priscilla, who worked together as tent-makers in Corinth.<sup>144</sup> As we saw in Chapter 3, women in Rome sometimes claimed the same occupational titles that they assigned to men whom they commemorated in funerary inscriptions, thus implying that they too had benefitted from dedicated training.<sup>145</sup> Other inscriptions imply that a woman contributed to a household business in ways that permitted her to develop business or technical skills, even if they do not state so outright. When Pompeia Memphis commemorated her husband, a goldsmith, she did not claim an occupational title explicitly. Nevertheless, the fact that she manumitted a skilled slave in her own right shows that she herself possessed the skills necessary to carry on the business after her husband's death.<sup>146</sup>

Pompeia Memphis made this for herself and  
for her husband Cnaeus Pompeius Iucundus,  
the goldsmith, who lived for 35 years,  
and for her freedman Cnaeus Pompeius Fructus,  
the goldsmith, who lived for 40 years, and for her freedmen  
and freedwomen and their posterity.

That said, there are reasons to believe that these examples represent exceptions rather than the rule and that women in the Roman world were

<sup>143</sup> Scaevola, *Dig.* 31.1.88.3.      <sup>144</sup> Acts 18:2–3.

<sup>145</sup> In addition to the inscriptions of Veturia Flora and Cameria Iarine (both of which I discuss in Chapter 3), *CIL* 6.6939 and 6.9211 each name what seem to have been husbands and wives who worked as manufacturers of gold leaf (Treggiari 1979: 66–7; but cf. 76, where Treggiari suggests that such women may have specialized in the retail side of the business). On these and on similar inscriptions, some of which show groups of male and female *colliberti*, cf. Joshel 1992: 138–44.

<sup>146</sup> *CIL* 6.3778r.

on the whole less likely to enjoy access to training within the household than those in early modern Europe. The juridical status of women like Pompeia Memphis is one reason to doubt that freeborn women in particular generally acquired training within the household: the fact that Memphis shared a *nomen* (Pompeia / Pompeius) with her husband suggests that they were both former slaves who had been freed by the same master (Cn. Pompeius), or that Memphis had once belonged to her husband. Veturia Flora and Cameria Iarine, who (as we saw in Chapter 3) commissioned comparable inscriptions, were likewise both freedwomen, as were most of the other women given occupational titles in Roman funerary inscriptions.<sup>147</sup> While this detail could simply indicate that freeborn women were less likely to be represented as workers than freedwomen, for whom occupation perhaps functioned as a strong source of social identity,<sup>148</sup> it does raise the possibility that women with the skills to participate heavily in household enterprises owed those skills to their status as former slaves. As I have noted in passing, some slaveholders invested in the skills of slave women in their power to better exploit their labor, even though gender ideologies continued to affect beliefs concerning what kinds of work were appropriate for female slaves;<sup>149</sup> this is consistent with the fact that most women commemorated with reference to their occupation were not only former slaves but also worked in a narrow range of crafts (primarily in the textile industry).<sup>150</sup>

The scarcity in the funerary inscriptions of skilled slaves manumitted by women is a second reason to believe that women in the Roman world often lacked the comprehensive skills necessary to operate family enterprises as proprietors when their husbands or fathers died. Apart from the inscriptions commissioned by Veturia Flora, Cameria Iarine, and Pompeia Memphis, only a few were dedicated by or for skilled freed slaves whose nomenclature demonstrates that they had been freed by female owners. In a world in which women married for the first time at younger ages than men,<sup>151</sup> and in which fathers tended to establish their sons in careers of their own, the wives of artisans were likely to outlive

<sup>147</sup> Kampen 1981: 125–7; cf. Joshel, cited in n. 111 above.

<sup>148</sup> Dixon 2001b: 115. On the importance of occupation as a source of identity for freed slaves in particular, see Joshel 1992: 128–45, and esp. 144–5.

<sup>149</sup> For the impact of ideologies on slaveholders' exploitation of female labor, see Saller 2003, esp. 189–97 and 199–200.

<sup>150</sup> Joshel 1992: 141 n. 25 provides a breakdown of the statuses and occupations of the thirty-three female artisans.

<sup>151</sup> In addition to the secondary scholarship cited in n. 65, see also Bagnall and Frier 1994: 111–34 on marriage patterns and average ages at first marriage in Roman Egypt.

their husbands and inherit their husbands' businesses. Had those women who inherited their husbands' enterprises typically possessed the skills necessary to operate them personally, then we might expect to see evidence that they – like other artisans – manumitted skilled slaves regularly in an effort to adapt their workforces to the pressures generated by seasonal and uncertain product markets.<sup>152</sup> The fact that the skilled freedmen named in our inscriptions were only rarely manumitted by women thus suggests that women were not often able to assume control of family enterprises without help and that they either sold off the assets they inherited from male relatives (like Crobyle in Lucian's *Dialogues of the Courtesans*, or the miller's daughter in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*) or retained slaves in permanent bondage to control the skilled labor necessary to sustain a business (like the female testator mentioned above, who relied not just on the help of Eutychus to operate her ironworking shop but also on the help of her slave Pamphilus).

It is even possible to read some inscriptions that record the manumission of skilled slaves by women as evidence that those women lacked the full range of skills necessary to operate a given business and thus depended heavily on the assistance of male partners. The inscription commemorating the freed slaves of a woman named Babbia and a man named Quintus Plotius is a case in point:

Babbia Asia, freedwoman of Babbia (Living)  
 Gaius Babbius Regillus, freedman of Babbia (Living)  
 Quintus Plotius Nicephor, freedman of Quintus (Deceased)  
 Quintus Plotius Anteros, freedman of Quintus (Living)  
 Quintus Plotius Felix, freedman of Quintus (Living)  
 Jewelers on the Sacred Way.<sup>153</sup>

The inscription suggests that the owners of these slaves, Babbia and Quintus Plotius, were spouses or partners who had pooled their slaves together to exploit a shared business. Although it is possible that Babbia was fully trained as a jeweler, it is equally possible that she – like the female testator who enlisted the help of Eutychus – entered into a relationship with Quintus Plotius partly because she herself lacked the technical skills necessary to keep an inherited business afloat and needed the support of a new partner or husband to do so. An inscription commemorating a group of freed ironworkers (eight men and two women) lends itself to a comparable interpretation. The precise relationships articulated in this inscription

<sup>152</sup> See above, Chapter 3.    <sup>153</sup> *CIL* 6.9435.

are difficult to untangle, but most of the named individuals seem to have belonged at one point to one or both of two slaveholders, a woman named Fannia and a man named Titus Titius, each of whom had owned two of the ten former slaves personally and five in common with the other.<sup>154</sup> Like Babbia, Fannia was perhaps a spouse or partner in a business in which her male partner handled most of the technical aspects of craft production, while she devoted her time principally to household tasks or to the management of other aspects of the business. If so, then these inscriptions reinforce the impression that household consumption goals in the Roman world prompted individuals to assign more value to tasks that a wife performed as *custos* or *oikouros* than was the case in the early modern context, where preferences inclined more heavily toward a wife's ability to generate income.

### *Women, work, and the economy of the Roman world*

Two implications follow from the conclusion that household members at all levels of the socioeconomic spectrum in the ancient world held consumption goals emphasizing the value of tasks performed by women within the household. First, whenever possible women in the Roman world probably responded to those goals by allocating more of their time toward household tasks than did their early modern counterparts and less toward income-generating work. Second, to the extent that this was true, the ways women allocated their time affected the capacity of their households to purchase goods and services – and, by extension, the depth of the Roman world's market structure. In what follows, I develop this line of argumentation in more detail. I begin by suggesting that what little evidence we possess concerning household strategies in the Roman world is consistent with the view that women in artisanal and entrepreneurial families preferred to allocate their time to household tasks. Naturally, some women devoted more time than others to income-generating work, whether by working on their own account or by contributing their labor to the enterprises of their husbands. How much time they allocated to this work depended upon the household's overall financial well-being and a woman's own particular skills, but generally they did not engage in this kind of work as extensively as did women in the early modern context. Next, I tease out the significance of this conclusion for our understanding

<sup>154</sup> *CIL* 6.9398. A tenth member of the group, identified as Fannia Calliste, freedwoman of Gaius, may have been manumitted by one of the other nine freed slaves.



of the Roman economy more broadly. As we shall see, women's decisions about how to allocate their time inhibited the development of thicker and more stable product markets in those segments of the urban economy that were crucial to sustained economic growth in northwestern Europe during the long eighteenth century. In that sense, the strategies adopted by members of artisan households are entirely consonant with a view of Roman economic history in which growth in per capita output was already beginning to stagnate in the early Empire.

From a theoretical standpoint, the consumption goals that predominated in antiquity ought to have encouraged women to shift most of their time from income-generating work to household tasks whenever their households' overall incomes exceeded a basic threshold that permitted members to acquire those purchased goods and services deemed necessary for their collective well-being. At that point, women could deploy their time and labor more productively by allocating it to household tasks than by seeking to produce additional income, since the marginal utility of any income a wife could generate decreased as the household became more prosperous, while that of the work performed within the household grew. In part, this was because the limited avenues of training open to women meant that any income they could generate was often modest and was thus less useful to prosperous households than to poorer ones. At the same time, the household tasks performed by women in their roles as *custodes* or *oikouroi* complemented goods and services purchased on the market in the sense that improved access to the latter created more demand for the former. For that reason, as the collective income of a household's members increased, so too did their need for members to devote time to the kinds of household-focused tasks that were especially valued in antiquity – that is, not just tasks like preparing meals or producing clothing for the household's own consumption (although these undoubtedly remained important) but also tasks like managing the household's stores, revenues, and expenses, and supervising its slaves.<sup>155</sup>

In practical terms, this meant that wives were least likely to allocate their time to income-generating work when they belonged to households headed by prosperous artisans or entrepreneurs. As long as the tasks women typically performed within the home remained important to the consumption goals held by household members at this social level, a wife

<sup>155</sup> De Vries 2008: 199–201. Cf. Bourke 1994: 173–9, who examines some of these issues in a nineteenth-century context, in which working- and middle-class households had reoriented their goals away from an emphasis on purchased goods and services and toward an emphasis on time devoted to various kinds of household tasks.

could, in a very real sense, contribute more effectively to the overall well-being of her family by devoting most of her time to household tasks than she could by seeking paid work. Exceptions undoubtedly occurred, especially when a wife possessed skills or a well-capitalized business that increased the value of her labor on the market – as perhaps was true both in the case of Mecia Dynata's mother, Flora, who worked as a wool-comber even though she seems to have belonged to a relatively prosperous household, and in the case of the freedwoman Nostia Daphne, who pursued an independent career as a hairdresser after her manumission, even though she had probably married a former slave with valuable skills of his own, the goldsmith Marcus Nerius Quadratus.<sup>156</sup> Even so, one suspects that prosperous households in which wives devoted most of their time to household tasks were common features of the urban landscape during the late Republic and early Empire. Lucian's story about Crobyle begins from the assumption that a wife would not normally have engaged in income-generating work, possibly because she typically would have allocated much of her time to work within the household instead.<sup>157</sup> Apuleius likewise grounds several details in his story about the hard-working miller in *Metamorphoses* on the same assumption. Although he caricatures the miller's wife as an adulteress and murderer, he nevertheless implies that a successful artisan would have expected his wife to spend most of her time performing tasks that fell within the brief of a *custos* or *oikouros*: not only does the miller expect his wife to prepare meals,<sup>158</sup> he also relies upon her to manage the household's assets, including its animals and slaves.<sup>159</sup>

At the other end of the spectrum, women were most likely to allocate their time heavily to income-generating work when they belonged to households in which their husbands either earned most of their income from wage labor or ran enterprises that hovered on the margins of viability. The productivity of any time a wife in this position might choose to devote to household tasks would have been relatively low, since her household would not have been complex enough to generate extensive demand for time allocated to preparing meals and so on, let alone extensive demand for time allocated to supervising its material assets and slaves.<sup>160</sup> At the same time, because households of this type were much more vulnerable to financial hardship than those headed by successful artisans or businessmen, the extra income a wife could generate for her family at this social level had considerable utility,

<sup>156</sup> *CIL* 6.37469. <sup>157</sup> *Luc. D.Meretr.* 6.1. <sup>158</sup> *Apul. Met.* 9.26. <sup>159</sup> *Apul. Met.* 9.15.

<sup>160</sup> Or, to put it another way, the utility of cash income was higher in households with lower money earnings, since purchased goods and household labor are ultimately complements in the production of *Z*-commodities, and the former make the latter more productive (de Vries 2008: 200).

since it could tip the balance in many cases between deprivation and modest material comfort.<sup>161</sup> This was true despite the fact that most women in this position would have found it necessary to engage in work that was unlikely to generate appreciable levels of income in its own right. Because husbands at this socioeconomic level either did not operate enterprises of their own or operated enterprises that were not successful enough to require a wife's help, most of these women were compelled to find work elsewhere when they chose to allocate their time to generating income. Some would have worked for wages, perhaps in households seeking temporary domestic help of a sort that was not always easily supplied by resident slaves (such as wet-nursing).<sup>162</sup> Others turned to entrepreneurial occupations that demanded little capital or formal training: as street hawkers, for instance, they could market basic services like fortune-telling or sell inexpensive goods that they had purchased, scavenged, or manufactured themselves.<sup>163</sup> A majority, perhaps, undertook various kinds of work on contract. As we have seen, literary authors saw spinning as the prototypical work performed by women to generate income, and while some women engaged in spinning purely on speculation in the hope of selling the yarn at a later date, others clearly did so on commission.<sup>164</sup> Likewise, in a comment concerning some of the legal obligations created by a *peculium* arrangement, the jurist Gaius implies that married women in particular undertook tailoring jobs under contract. According to Gaius, a woman still under the legal authority of her father who engaged in paid work by sewing, mending clothes, or practicing some other "common craft" was liable to lawsuits directed against her *peculium* on the basis of the action on loan and deposit, whether her father knew of her business activities or not.<sup>165</sup> His emphasis on the action on loan and deposit suggests that he had in mind women who drew on skills acquired in the household to engage in basic entrepreneurial activities in their own right rather than women working for wages, since it evokes situations in which women temporarily took possession of property belonging to clients for the duration of a contract.<sup>166</sup> No less interesting is Gaius' belief that a father may

<sup>161</sup> Cf. Allen 2009: 339.

<sup>162</sup> Dio Chrys. *Or.* 7.114 refers to wet-nursing as an occupation that was appropriate for free women in need of work.

<sup>163</sup> Holleran 2012: 194–231 and 2013: 321–5.

<sup>164</sup> *P. Oxy.* XXXI 2593 presents a case in which Apollonia, the author of the letter, engaged the services of at least one other person on contract to help her spin wool. *Apul. Met.* 9.5 provides the prototypical example of a woman spinning wool to make ends meet; see below.

<sup>165</sup> Gaius, *Dig.* 15.1.27.pr.

<sup>166</sup> Du Plessis 2012: 55–67 provides a detailed discussion of the legal responsibilities of workers who accepted possession of a client's property for modification or repair.

not have known of his daughter's activities, since it raises the possibility that Gaius was thinking specifically of married women who worked to supplement the incomes of their marital households, even though they legally remained under the *potestas* of their fathers.

Decisions about how to allocate their time were more complex for women in households occupying intermediate positions in the economic spectrum, because households at this level often straddled the income threshold at which women began to reallocate time from income-generating to household work. Yet here too women probably allocated as much of their time as possible to household tasks (unless they possessed skills with which they could earn high incomes in the labor market), even though they undoubtedly made sensitive reallocations of their time in response to changes in their households' income flows. By way of comparison, during the Victorian period, when consumption goals emphasized the importance of household tasks more heavily than they had during the eighteenth century, working-class women in London often sought paid work only when seasonal or idiosyncratic fluctuations in the overall demand for labor created prolonged periods of underemployment for their husbands.<sup>167</sup> Otherwise, they devoted much of their time to tasks meant to manage and control household expenses, whether by hunting down and bargaining for cheaply priced foodstuffs or by producing basic goods like clothing to meet the household's immediate needs.<sup>168</sup> Given the value placed by individuals in antiquity on a woman's role as *custos* or *oikouros*, this behavior would have been entirely at home in the Roman world. It may, in fact, have been the kind of behavior that Apuleius had in mind when crafting his story in *Metamorphoses* about the poor carpenter and his wife. Here, Apuleius depicts a husband who seems to be employed irregularly, and wife who complains that she must therefore spin wool to ensure that the household can afford basic necessities like lamp oil; possibly, he believed that wives would not normally have engaged extensively in paid work even in relatively poor households had their husbands been able to generate stable incomes.<sup>169</sup>

Women belonging to households in the middle ranges of the spectrum did have an advantage over those belonging to households at either end, because many may have married men who operated their own enterprises and who owned or rented premises in which the boundary between residential and working space was rather porous. In these circumstances, the boundary between income-generating work and household tasks was likewise porous, and as a result women could combine the two kinds of

<sup>167</sup> Stedman Jones 1984: 84. <sup>168</sup> Bourke 1994: 178–9. <sup>169</sup> Apul. *Met.* 9.5.

work or reallocate time between them as necessary. In Pompeii, for example, commercial work was situated predominantly in *tabernae* that frequently served both as residential and productive spaces. Although *tabernae* often included small back rooms or mezzanines used as sleeping or cooking areas, these dedicated residential spaces were small. Instead, the main feature of most *tabernae* was a wide-fronted rectilinear room opening onto the street, in which most household members undoubtedly spent the bulk of their time during any given day. In practical terms, this meant that many of the tasks a woman might perform as the household's *custos* or *oikouros* – even tasks like fetching water or preparing food for her husband and the workshop's slaves or freedmen – contributed in a direct if immeasurable way to the productivity of those who devoted most of their time to income-generating work. Conditions may have been different in some of the larger workshops built into converted atrium houses in Pompeii, which permitted more differentiation between working and living space. They may likewise have been different in the dense urban environment of Rome, where many *tabernae* not only were small compared to those in Pompeii but also did not double as residential units – a fact which implies that artisans in Rome were more likely than those in Pompeii to rent separate working and living premises. At least in the case of workshops built into atrium-style houses, however, it remained possible for all members of the household to contribute to a family business as necessary.<sup>170</sup>

Yet because women in the Roman world had limited access to comprehensive training even within their own households, most who did combine income-generating work with household tasks in this way probably did so either by engaging in ancillary tasks – fetching water, preparing food, cleaning the work area – or by assuming responsibility for aspects of their husbands' businesses that were extensions of the household tasks normally thought to be the province of a *custos* or *oikouros*.<sup>171</sup> Elizabeth Musgrave provides a sense of the possibilities in her study of the building industries in eighteenth-century Brittany, in which she suggests that wives who worked alongside their husbands in this context often did so by purchasing raw materials, selling finished goods, and taking care of sundry administrative chores.<sup>172</sup> These were jobs that were wholly compatible with those typically assigned to a wife in her role as keeper of the household in the ancient world. The Roman jurists in fact recognized that women in

<sup>170</sup> On the commercial architecture of workshops in Pompeii and the ways in which they differed from those at Rome and Ostia, see Flohr 2013: 266–73 (who emphasizes fulleries).

<sup>171</sup> Saller 2003: 194 (following Treggiari 1979: 76 and Kampen 1981: 125–6).

<sup>172</sup> Musgrave 1993. For comparable patterns of women's work in early modern Rome, cf. Groppi 2002.

artisan households might handle tasks of this sort: Ulpian, in his wider discussion of the legal issues in play when individuals appointed others as agents (*institores*), stresses that women were (from the point of view of the law) fully capable of acting on behalf of someone else in this capacity,<sup>173</sup> and (more pointedly) the jurist Gaius notes that children, both boys and girls, were often left in charge of shopfronts – an observation which, even if it does not refer to wives specifically, nevertheless points explicitly to some division of labor within artisan families.<sup>174</sup> Some of our iconographic evidence is also perfectly compatible with this model, like the well-known relief from Rome, dating from the second century CE, depicting the interior of a butcher's shop (Figure 4.1). The butcher is shown hard at work on the right-hand side of the panel, while on the left is a seated woman, holding what appears to be a writing tablet. No other clues concerning her identity are offered. Natalie Kampen has suggested that she is a scribe, but she could just as easily represent the butcher's wife, balancing his accounts.<sup>175</sup> The paintings on the façade of the so-called shop of Verecundus in Pompeii may likewise reflect this division of labor. Beneath a complex tableau depicting the deity Venus Pompeiana on the right pier of the doorway, a smaller panel portrays felt-makers working under the supervision of Verecundus himself, who holds up a sample piece of finished cloth for display. On the left pier, dominated by an image of the god Mercury standing in front of a temple, another small panel depicts a woman sitting behind a table and displaying one of the several finished articles in the shop to a male customer. Although the panel does not identify the woman, most scholars believe that the image represents Verecundus' wife.<sup>176</sup> If this interpretation is correct, then it offers an important window into the dynamics of at least one artisanal household, in which husband and wife divided the production and sales aspects of the business between themselves.

While these assistive roles were far from unimportant – at the very least, women who assumed responsibility for managing sales or for overseeing a business' accounts freed their husbands to specialize more intensively in the technical aspects of production – the extent to which wives undertook them does establish a clear and important contrast between the kinds of work undertaken by wives in Roman antiquity and the kinds performed by women belonging to middle-class households in seventeenth- and

<sup>173</sup> Ulpian, *Dig.* 14.3.7.1. <sup>174</sup> Gaius, *Dig.* 14.3.8.

<sup>175</sup> Kampen 1981: 118. The relief itself is Inv. ZV 44, Skulpturensammlung, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden.

<sup>176</sup> Clarke 2003: 105–12 and esp. 109. Cf. Holleran 2013: 316.



Figure 4.1 Roman relief of butcher's shop (Photo: bpk Berlin/Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden/Elke Estel/Art Resource, NY)

eighteenth-century Europe. As we have seen, women in early modern London who worked alongside their husbands were more likely than those in the ancient world to acquire the training necessary to participate in all aspects of a given business. To that, one might add that women in London's middle-class households who did not work alongside their husbands nevertheless worked regularly for wages or operated businesses of their own.<sup>177</sup> Together, these observations all indicate that most women in early modern England allocated significant amounts of their time to work that was directed explicitly toward the market – so much so, in fact, that middle-class families in London appear to have hired servants specifically so that women belonging to households headed by artisans or by retailers could free themselves from the need to devote time to household tasks and could instead specialize in income-generating work.<sup>178</sup> Recent studies of women and work in the Dutch Republic during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries suggest that the same was true in continental Europe as well.<sup>179</sup> In that sense, women in the Roman world had less in

<sup>177</sup> So Erickson 2008, esp. 278–82 and 294, who builds on the earlier work of Earle 1989a by showing that women in middle-class households not only worked for wages but also frequently operated businesses of their own.

<sup>178</sup> Kent 1989: 119–20. <sup>179</sup> Van Nederveen Meerkerk 2012: 328–30 and 335–7.

common with women who belonged to working- or middle-class households in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries than they did with those who belonged to such households in the nineteenth century, when a new cluster of consumption goals encouraged women to withdraw their labor from the market to concentrate on domestic work.<sup>180</sup>

Precisely because the household consumption goals dominant in the Roman world encouraged women to allocate their time to household tasks whenever it was possible for them to do so, those goals (along with the behavior they provoked) profoundly affected economic life in antiquity, in at least two ways. First, because they encouraged women to shift time away from income-producing work once their households had achieved a level of income considered suitable to their needs, the purchasing power of individual households was not as high as otherwise may have been the case. By extension, members of artisan households possibly remained more vulnerable to the risks typical of ancient urban environments – namely, the risk that food prices would rise because of a poor harvest and that demand in product and labor markets would be low enough in any given year to erode the household's income – than they would have had women in such households allocated more of their time to income-generating work. Second, the apparent stability of these consumption preferences over time forestalled changes in consumer behavior of the kind that generated real and sustained growth in the long eighteenth century by thickening early modern product markets and provoking increasing returns to specialization.

The recent work on real wages in the Roman world makes it possible to be more precise about the ongoing vulnerability of most households to sudden shocks. As we have seen, unskilled workers generated incomes that were insufficient to permit them to support families at a bare-bones subsistence level, let alone maintain a more comfortable level of consumption.<sup>181</sup> Members of households headed by artisans fared better,

<sup>180</sup> On women's withdrawal of their labor from the market in the nineteenth century, see Bourke 1994 and de Vries 2008: 186–237.

<sup>181</sup> Scheidel 2010: 427–36; Allen 2009: 337–43. Scheidel's results suggest that unskilled workers in Roman Egypt probably earned about 40 percent of what they required to maintain a family at a "respectable" level of household consumption, and perhaps only about 70–80 percent of what they needed to support families at subsistence level. Allen's results indicate that unskilled workers may have been somewhat better off in the late third century, but not by much: based on the wages and prices recorded in Diocletian's edict on maximum prices, Allen suggests that unskilled workers earned enough to support a family at subsistence level with a little left over to spare, but still only half of what they would have needed to purchase a "respectable" consumption basket for a family. Cf. Rathbone 2009: 314 on the purchasing power of unskilled workers at Rome.



since skilled workers could earn perhaps twice as much in a given year as unskilled laborers;<sup>182</sup> at that level of income, the members of a typical artisan household were able to purchase a basket of consumption goods ranging in value from roughly 150 percent to 200 percent or more of the cost of basic subsistence.<sup>183</sup> Yet even at this level, skilled workers in the Roman world were worse off in real terms than unskilled laborers in the more economically advanced areas of northwestern Europe during the long eighteenth century. For that reason, members of Roman households headed by skilled workers could find themselves hard pressed if business proved to be slower than anticipated or if the price of wheat was unusually high, particularly since expenses on bread may have represented anywhere from 25 percent to 50 percent of the typical family budget even at this level of the social spectrum. Depending on her skills, a wife could generate additional protection against these dangers by earning perhaps as much as an unskilled male worker, provided that she devoted the bulk of her time to paid work.<sup>184</sup> In so doing, she would have raised the overall purchasing power enjoyed by the members of her household to something in the range of 200 percent to 300 percent of the costs of subsistence – a standard of living comparable to what a laborer in early modern London could provide for his family on the basis of his labor alone, if he had regular work. Given the nature of the consumption preferences revealed in our ancient sources, however, it seems unlikely that women belonging to artisan households contributed to the family income at this level, even if they allocated more time to income-generating work while their children were still too young to contribute to household income than they did during later stages of their lives.<sup>185</sup> The value individuals attached to the household tasks provided by women in their roles as *custos* or *oikouros* therefore came at the price of ongoing susceptibility to the vagaries of the urban market.

<sup>182</sup> See esp. Rathbone 2009: 312–17.

<sup>183</sup> As I suggested in Chapter 1, this is roughly the same standard of living that would have been enjoyed by members of the urban cohorts in Rome.

<sup>184</sup> It is important to note, however, that even this estimate may be too high. Van Nederveen Meerkerk 2008: 254–9 shows that women in Zwolle in the late seventeenth century (or, at least, those belonging to households that required some poor relief) tended to generate between 12 percent and 34 percent of the household's income. Cf. de Vries 2008: 107–10, who suggests that the combined contribution of women and children to household income in early modern Europe tended to range between 25 percent and 50 percent depending on the respective ages of the household head and any children.

<sup>185</sup> On the relationship between the labor of women and children, see Bourke 1994: 173–7. Cf. Groen-Vallinga 2013: 297 and Holleran 2013: 321 on women's work and the life cycle of Roman households.

More significantly, because the consumption preferences prompting women to allocate their time to household tasks do not appear to have undergone any notable changes during antiquity, they also curtailed the potential for ongoing per capita growth in the economy of the Roman world after the Augustan transition. Here, it is important to revisit the example of the long eighteenth century, which suggests that sustained growth in an advanced premodern economy like that of the Roman Empire required significant changes in the consumption preferences influencing how household members allocated their time between income-generating and household tasks. In de Vries' model of economic change, growth in the consumer market was driven by the incremental efforts of working- and middle-class families to allocate more time – especially the time of women – to income-generating work, so that they could purchase the goods and services that were increasingly important to their consumption goals. In turn, the expansion of the consumer market produced thick market externalities capable of stimulating more intensive specialization and, by extension, growth: by lowering overall transaction costs, thicker markets enhanced the potential rewards of specializing for market production in ways that motivated entrepreneurs to invest more heavily in such specialization; by specializing more intensively, entrepreneurs in turn became more dependent on the market in order to secure basic goods and services that they no longer produced personally, and hence thickened markets even further. For de Vries, the story of the European economy in the long eighteenth century is therefore a story about how women, in response to new household consumption goals, allocated their time in ways that enhanced household purchasing power, thickened markets, and stimulated a burst of specialization and growth, all in the absence of major technological innovations capable of reducing either the costs of production or the costs of transport.<sup>186</sup>

In the Roman world, where consumption goals consistently emphasized the value of the tasks performed by a wife in her role as *custos* or *oikouros*, household members had less incentive than those in the early modern period to reallocate women's time in ways designed to enhance their own purchasing power. As a consequence, there was little scope for the kind of thick market externalities generated by changes in consumption preferences that were so vital to the expansion of the early modern economy in its late stages. In that sense, the ongoing vitality of consumption preferences emphasizing the value of women's work within the

<sup>186</sup> For the most concise statement of this view, see de Vries 2008: 71–2.

household both supports those models of Roman economic history that postulate gradual stagnation in growth soon after the Augustan transition and also offers a partial explanation for that stagnation. Briefly put, while the work of George Grantham suggests that improvements in the technologies and infrastructure of trade offered the most straightforward path toward thick market externalities capable of generating growth in the preindustrial world, the two most decisive developments in these domains in the Roman world took place in the middle and late Republic. The first was the sustained series of conquests that permitted the Romans to weld the Mediterranean together into an increasingly coherent political and economic space; the second was the development and crystallization of the long-distance trade routes that bound Rome itself to grain-producing centers in North Africa and in Egypt and that enhanced the overall connectivity of intermediate points in the process. On this view, the basic processes capable of generating the kind of growth envisioned by Grantham had mostly played themselves out by the first century CE at the latest, and growth would have slowed or even stopped in the absence of some other factor that was capable of driving thick market externalities.<sup>187</sup> Significant changes in household consumption goals could have driven further growth by enhancing the desire of individuals to consume purchased goods and services while simultaneously giving them the purchasing power necessary to satisfy that desire. As I have argued here, however, such changes do not seem to have taken place.

Finally, I conclude this chapter by noting that the decisions household members made about how to allocate the time of women exacerbated the structural challenges confronting Roman artisans and entrepreneurs on the shop floor during the late Republic and early Empire. In the long eighteenth century, the segments of the market that changed most dramatically in response to new consumption habits and to women's efforts to reallocate their time were precisely those that catered to members of the working and middle classes. Here, however haltingly, the seasonality and uncertainties long characteristic of urban product markets began to yield to more stable mass demand. In the Roman world, in which households of comparable socioeconomic brackets did not place such a high value on the consumption of goods and services purchased on the market, comparable changes in the basic character of urban demand did not take place, and markets for a range of products targeted at consumers of modest income therefore

<sup>187</sup> This, essentially, is the scenario postulated by Scheidel 2009: 67–70.

remained vulnerable to seasonal and uncertain demand. When artisans and entrepreneurs turned to professional dream interpreters like Artemidorus to divine whether or not they would have work, they were thus expressing anxieties that remained widespread and persistent in the Roman world for much of its history.