

## Maintaining the City: Enslaved Labor and Trade in Roman Philippi

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*Fructosi despe(n)-  
satores vicario  
Venusto Maria-  
nus suo collib(erto) vi-  
vus fecit quisquis au-  
tem distribuerit  
litteras aut exci-  
serit dabet in fisco  
(denarios) (duo milia) et delato(ri) (denarios) (mille)*

Marianus made this for his *collibertus*, Venustus, *vicarius* of the *dispensator* Fructosus, during his lifetime. However, whoever will have apportioned or erased (these) letters, is to give two thousand denarii into the fiscus and one thousand to the informer.<sup>1</sup>



The people of Roman Philippi lived within a diverse epigraphic landscape that represented a broad spectrum of statuses. The inscriptions commemorated the living and the deceased populations of the city and included every rank from enslaved persons to merchants, to the emperor himself. This was not only a visible, tangible landscape of commemoration, but also a protected one. The fines mentioned in numerous inscriptions from the city were meant to discourage individuals from erasing or modifying inscriptions. They also encouraged

1 *AE* 2001, 1785=TM 121319 (101–300 CE); <https://www.trismegistos.org/text/121319>. Zannis 2001, 35–47; Pilhofer II, 460–462, no. 385b. Kruschwitz 2010, 213, notes that the phrase ‘*autem distribuerit litteras*’ is awkward and ambiguous, but was likely a warning against defacing the inscription or reusing it.

others to inform on those that desecrated them in some way.<sup>2</sup> In aggregate, these funerary, dedicatory, and honorific inscriptions also allow us to begin to access and reconstruct the various networks responsible for the financial and civic management of the city. These insights are available through epigraphic citations of an impressive number of occupations, voluntary associations, and honorific titles achieved by members of the *colonia* from the Roman period to the death of the emperor Justinian in the mid 6th century CE.

Like many inscriptions at Roman Philippi and elsewhere in the Mediterranean, the epitaph at the beginning of this chapter commemorating a *vicarius* (an enslaved person owned by another enslaved person) named Venustus, seems at first glance to be but a scrap of broken text among thousands. Such etchings, however, accentuate and illuminate the lives of people at the bottom of the social hierarchy, people who are regularly elided and unnamed within elite Greek and Roman literature. Study of provincial workers like Venustus also allows us to depart somewhat from the Italo-centric model that has long predominated within the field of ancient history, a bias due in large part to the preponderance of evidence from Rome and the Italic peninsula during the period of the Principate. Finally, when paired with comparative textual and epigraphic evidence from elsewhere in the Empire, many of the inscriptions from Philippi can contextualize the role of the *colonia* within a larger network of trade along the Via Egnatia and the Roman Empire writ large. Philippi was indeed a bustling and significant commercial city along a major trade thoroughfare, a status glimpsed within biblical texts such as Acts and Paul's letter to the Philippians.<sup>3</sup> This network was sustained in part by tradesmen and tradeswomen often referred to as *negotiatores* or artisans who practiced local handicrafts, but it was also made possible by enslaved labor like that provided by Venustus.<sup>4</sup>

This chapter endeavors to show that the study of networks of tradespeople can and should be considered alongside studies of the enslaved and freedpersons who worked within Roman Philippi. Such combined analyses can allow us to better trace the ways in which Philippi – and many other Roman cities – relied upon both free and servile traders, financial planners, and state-owned laborers in order to manage the day-to-day economic administration of the city. The contribution of civic enslaved persons to local and regional economies in the eastern Mediterranean is often overlooked in the study of labor

2 Brélaz, Frei-Stolba, Rizakis, and Zannis 2006, 544; e.g., Pilhofer II no. 38, 62, 85, 261, 289, 487, 523.

3 Acts 16:14; Meeks 2003, 16–22.

4 For *negotiatores* in the Greek East, see Eberle and Le Quéré 2017.

both at Philippi and elsewhere in the Roman world.<sup>5</sup> The epigraphic evidence for tradespeople, enslaved persons, and *liberti* (freedpersons) active within Philippi, considered collectively, however, indicates that the presence of these individuals was an integral but quotidian part of the economic and physical environment of Philippi.

## 1 The Trade Networks of Philippi and Macedonia

Philippi was but one small node within a larger commercial network of trade in the region.<sup>6</sup> The Roman *provincia* of Macedonia occupied a pivotal crossroads between East and West. When it was annexed by the Romans in 148 BCE, it retained a mix of Latin, Greek, and Thracian speakers and writers betwixt and between multiple worlds. Philippians regularly shifted between languages, a linguistic melding glimpsed even in epigraphic evidence such as an inscription written with Latin words in Greek letters by a husband named Aliupaibes for his wife, Tertia (fig. 7.1).<sup>7</sup> The province notably had numerous caravans, *mansiones* (hostels), and port cities that facilitated travel and a high frequency of exchange. This may explain the veneration of Fortuna and the Genius of the Market within Philippi. Although elite Greek and Roman philosophers like Aristotle and Cicero often demeaned tradesmen and artisans, Macedonia and the city of Philippi demonstrate the prized place held by commerce and craftworks within the community – and thus the disconnect between philosophical constructs of *negotium* (business) versus *otium* (leisure) and its experience in the lived reality of a merchant community.<sup>8</sup>

The Via Egnatia played a pivotal role in this. The building of the road and the creation of the province of Macedonia in the mid 2nd century BCE were a part of Rome's growing control of the region. This roadway was likely named after an early proconsular governor of Macedonia, Gnaeus Egnatius, and its 696 miles were clearly measured and marked by milestones that spanned from Dyrrhachium to Kypsela, from the Adriatic to the Aegean Seas (fig. 7.2). The road no doubt helped to relay soldiers and was, as Cicero remarked, viewed in his time as a Roman *via militaris*. But the road also allowed merchants and

5 Note their absence or the mere citation of existence (without analysis) in assessments of the Roman labor force and city administration; e.g., Temin 2004 and Stambaugh 1988. Weiss 2004, Lenski 2006, and Ismar 2019 have done much to address this void in scholarship on *servi publici*.

6 Concannon, Ch. 8 in this volume.

7 Pilhofer II 48= TM 120989 (<https://www.trismegistos.org/text/120989>).

8 Bond 2018.



FIGURE 7.1 An epitaph with Latin words carved in Greek letters (ca. 41 CE) commissioned by Aliupaibes for his wife, Tertia  
 PHOTO BY SARAH E. BOND



FIGURE 7.2 Map of Philippi region with Roads in Red  
MADE BY AUTHOR WITH THE ANCIENT WORLD MAPPING CENTER

traders to traverse Roman and Hellenistic worlds.<sup>9</sup> The road saw a high volume of state and non-state traffic from the 2nd century BCE on; however, the highway had a boom that saw an increase in traffic particularly during the course of the 2nd century CE, with the building up of the towns of Traianopolis and Topeiros.

Roman roads transported more than just goods. Lolos has noted that roads like the Via Egnatia and its tributaries, created interconnected systems: “Routes, whether terrestrial or maritime, are the actual means of communication, and physical expression of networking.”<sup>10</sup> Along these paths, amphorae of wine and oil travelled to consumers after being unloaded from ships, as did glassware, timber, metal, textiles and various precious dyes. But many of the cities alongside the Via Egnatia began to establish robust connections with Italian merchants who acted as intermediary *negotiatores*. Associations of Roman tradesmen called οἱ συνπραγματευόμενοι Ῥωμαῖοι (in Latin they were termed a *conventus civium Romanorum*) formed within Macedonia, as multiple inscriptions indicate.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to groups of Roman tradesmen making dedications, there is also direct evidence connecting the region to Rome. A 3rd century CE inscription

9 Fasolo 2003. In his work on the consular provinces, Cicero (*Prov.* 4) cites the Via Egnatia as “*ut via illa nostra quae per Macedoniam est usque ad Hellespontum militaris ...*” (“that great military road of ours that exists through Macedonia as far as the Hellespont ...”).

10 Lolos 2007, 273.

11 SEG I, 282 (Akanthos); IG X, 2 2, 330 (Styberra); CIG 1997d (Edessa).

from nearby Amphipolis notes a *negotiator* named Lucius Pompilius Eros, who was a freedman and businessman from Rome connected to the Cornifician granaries. He is called Adigillus by his *connegotiaores* (fellow businessmen). This associative terminology – which was also evident in the inscription to Venustus when he was called a *collibertus* – likely indicates that he was a member in a trade association connected to the *horrea* (grain warehouses).<sup>12</sup> Regarding this inscription, Nicolas Tran has pointed out that there was a tie between warehouses and the creation of networks of traders in antiquity, and inscriptions like that of Eros show us that businessmen were not usually solitary agents; they often worked in and through associations.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, the public epigraphic use of Latin business language spread across the Roman Empire. There was indeed a status-laden, formulaic language of *negotia* and trade used in the Latin inscriptions for *negotiatores* – within the area of Germania, Gaul, and Britain – that was used in Roman Macedonia as well. Businesspeople were not ashamed of their engagement in trade, and instead used dedications, epitaphs, and other epigraphic media in order to advertise their involvement with commerce. In contrast to Cicero's shaming of commerce, here we see these individuals proclaiming their connection to alternate – but still celebrated – ideals of Roman *negotium* through monuments, civic engagement, and other visible forms of writing. Most of the time these inscriptions were in Latin, but we also have a few from Macedonia in Greek that still emphasize the Roman identity and connections of the businessmen.

Within Macedonia, we see a concentration of these *negotiatores* at Amphipolis and Thessaloniki, but also at Akanthos, and it seems there was a large network of Romano-Greeks at ports and farther inland in order to act as intermediaries for wholesale items. An inscription from Amphipolis notes a certain Lucius Pompilius Eros who was a *negotiator ab Roma*, but who also belonged to a group of *connegotiatores*. The inscription is important for suggesting a network of businessmen active in Amphipolis, but I would also posit that it supports the continued existence of some level of trade during a period of the 3rd century CE that many portray as a time of unparalleled turmoil.<sup>14</sup> Politically it was a time of turmoil, but economically many parts of the empire continued to engage actively in monetized *negotium* during the so-called “3rd Century

12 ILGR 23: *L(ucius) Pompilius Eros negotiator / ab Roma ex horreis Cornific(ianis)/ qui vocitatus est ab suis conne-/gotiatoribus Adigillus s(ibi) e(t) s(uis) p(osuit)/ e(t) Pompilia L(uci)f(ilia) Tertulla an(norum)/ IV m(ensium) II.*

13 Tran 2018, 126.

14 Witschel 2004.

Crisis,” even though prices were hyper-inflated in the Eastern Mediterranean during this time.

Tradespersons from Philippi who memorialized their existence in stone did not usually operate in isolation but rather through their associations. As Pascal Arnaud has noted, these associations “probably played a major role as integrating structures that connected people of various origin whose main identity was where they were now active.”<sup>15</sup> Something similar was likely going on in Roman Philippi, where we see a focus on commerce as well as a tendency to create corporate bodies that could ally individuals from variant socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. Myriad associations constituted and strengthened the social fabric of ancient Mediterranean cities. Often termed *collegia*, *corpora*, or *societates* in the Latin West and frequently referred to as θιάσοι, κοινά, or σύνοδοι in the Greek East, some of these associations were voluntarily joined while others were involuntarily formulated for enslaved persons owned as chattel by an individual or by a body such as the *urbs* (city).

Although enslaved persons have often been labeled “socially dead” by sociologists like Orlando Patterson – in that they could not hold civic magistracies, were not citizens, and did not themselves have full legal agency over their bodies – there were both *servi* and also *liberti* that participated at numerous civic levels within Philippi and other Roman cities. Servile individuals often served private households, but could also serve as public agents, as we have already seen. Enslaved persons that served at the will and command of the city were grouped into involuntary associations typically called *familiae*, which was a term also applied to associations of gladiators. An inscription from Philippi even commemorates one such gladiatorial association (though not addressed as a *familia*) and dates to the 2nd or 3rd century CE.<sup>16</sup> It was found in the doorway of the western parodos of the Theater. As we will see, the language of confraternity and connection existed even in these associations. Moreover, they reveal that enslaved persons were likely in charge of some of the day-to-day needs of the city, such as the upkeep of aqueducts that brought fresh water to the Philippians.

## 2 The *Genius* of the Marketplace

The perception of trade in the city and the role of Philippi must be understood within the larger nexus of exchange in the province of Macedonia. First, we

<sup>15</sup> Arnaud 2016, 164.

<sup>16</sup> Pilhofer II 143=Kloppenborg and Ascough 2011, no. 70.

can look to religion: Greeks and Romans believed that deities presided over spaces both public and private. This included the areas reserved for trade, such as the market. In many Roman towns throughout the Mediterranean the area set aside for exchange of food and services was called the *macellum*, conceptualized as an entity in terms of both space and religion. Within the heart of the market at Philippi were two 2nd century votive dedications, one to the Genius of the Market and the other to Mercurius Augustus, a deity with an association with the Macellum.

The inscription that refers to the Genius of the Market reads as follows.

*Fortunae  
et Genio  
macelli  
C(aius) Mucius  
Mucianus  
d(e) s(uo) f(aciendum) c(uravit)*

Gaius Mucius Mucianus made this monument for Fortuna and the Genius of the Market from his own funds.<sup>17</sup>

References to the *genius* of the market do occur outside Macedonia, but predominantly in the western empire within the areas of Hispania Citerior and North Africa, along with one other found in Moesia.<sup>18</sup> In his analysis of *macella* in Roman Greece, Evangelidis notes, “This is consistent with similar evidence from North Africa, where axially placed apses like the ones in the *macella* of Thugga and Bulla Regia seem to have housed the cult of Mercury.”<sup>19</sup> This may point to the fact that Philippi’s distinct ties to the Latin West went well beyond just the use of Latin.

Cult and religion were an integral part of the lives of many Roman artisans both before and after the adoption of Christianity; church, state, and commerce were intertwined. At Philippi’s Macellum, there was an honorific dedication to a local town decurion and eirenarch from devotees to the Egyptian gods Serapis and Isis; later, tradespeople marked their Christian identity with apotropaic crosses.<sup>20</sup> As the Mucianus monument suggests, the *genius* (the

17 AE 1935, 51=Pilhofer II 251 (1–300 CE). The inscription was first published by Lemerle (1934, 463–464) and was found in Philippi’s Macellum.

18 ILAfrigue 548 (Dougga); CIL II.2413 (Braga); TM 193797 (Skopje; <https://www.trismegistos.org/text/193797>).

19 Evangelidis 2019, 305, 313.

20 AE 1939, 185=Pilhofer II 252 (100–300 CE). A large marble base found in the Macellum.

“family” spirit) of a market might be addressed physically with an inscription or simply invoked orally as a way of bringing good luck to one’s commercial endeavors. Just as one sacrificed to and courted the *genius* of a household, the *genius* of the market needed to be catered to as well.<sup>21</sup> Roman religion was, as ever, predicated in part on faith in the efficacy of *do ut des* (“I give that you might give”).

Philippi’s market – located between Basilica B and the Forum – would have been overseen by Roman magistrates called aediles who were in charge of keeping order.<sup>22</sup> As was the case in Rome, the aediles were empowered to inspect goods, to beat artisans, food purveyors, or unruly customers with sticks, and even to confiscate goods sold at exorbitant prices.<sup>23</sup> Epigraphic evidence from Philippi tells us about two such men in the mid 2nd century CE, brothers named Marcus Cornelius Voltinia Niger and Publius Valerius Voltinia Niger. These magistrates accentuated their own terms as aediles who oversaw the Macellum in the Imperial period by erecting a monument within Philippi’s market – and noting that they did so from their own funds.<sup>24</sup> The two brother aediles may even have given a nod to their role in regulating weights and standardizing measures with the monument by using a whopping 44 pounds of bronze to make it – perhaps cast from the confiscated weights they commandeered.<sup>25</sup>

The influence of the provincial aedile over the wares and weights of the market, as well as his use of enslaved assistants is memorably captured in Roman literature, especially in Apuleius’ 2nd century novel *Metamorphoses*. At the novel’s opening in the Thessalian city of Hypata (just over 200 miles from Philippi), an aedile by the name Pythias orders his enslaved assistant to overthrow the cart of a fishmonger who has sold Lucius, the novel’s narrator, an overpriced fish and then tells him to trample the fishmonger’s wares.<sup>26</sup> Aediles made sure tradespersons used correct weights and fair balances, but they also could police dice games and other games of chance played in public or taverns. When we reflect on the many game boards etched across the marble surfaces of Philippi (fig. 7.3) and hundreds of other cities within the Roman Empire, we should perhaps also think about those magistrates responsible for looking

21 For comparison, *ILS* 3025 from Aquincum has a dedication to Jupiter and the *genius* of the household.

22 Berrendonner 2009.

23 Call. *Dig.* 50.2.12.

24 *AE* 1935, 49=Pilhofer II 249/L373: ... *aed(iles) d(e) s(ua) p(ecunia) f(aciendum) c(uraverunt)* ...

25 Hellerman 2005, 94; Quigley 2021, 16–33.

26 Apul. *Met.* 1.24–5.



FIGURE 7.3 Gameboard on the stylobate on the southwest side of the forum  
PHOTO COURTESY OF KATHERINE A. SHANER

over the shoulders of the players and their use of enslaved workers to enforce the rules of the market. Into Roman Late Antiquity, players gathered to trade, listen to court cases, and play games in the marketplaces of Constantinople, Aphrodisias, Rome, and many other urban centers.<sup>27</sup>

Other inscriptions from the Macellum serve to illustrate the professionals and non-magistrates who also operated within this space. In the 4th or 5th century CE, a Christian butcher named John inscribed a hopscotch board and then claimed his handiwork in Greek: † Ἰωάννου / † μαγίρου.<sup>28</sup> The Macellum at Philippi is a prism through which to glimpse the micro-network of trade and commerce that converged and interacted with the macro-network at play along the Via Egnatia. Both networks of Roman, Italian, and Greek tradesmen included people who were unabashed about their occupation and engagement in making money. The *genius* dedication from the Macellum of Philippi honored the personified soul of commerce within the colony. It also allows us to begin to remap and reconstruct the unabashed focus placed on commerce among Philippians.

27 Kalas 2015, 111; Bell, Roueché 2007.

28 Pilhofer II 247. The inscription was found between the Forum and Basilica B, near Philippi's many shops in the Macellum. It was first published in 1946.

### 3 Public and Private Associations of Enslaved Persons

Any analysis of how Philippi was economically maintained through networks must also consider the day-to-day work by enslaved laborers on civic infrastructure and banking. These individuals were considered chattel in Roman law, whether owned by private citizens or owned by the city itself and called “public slaves” (*servi publici* in Latin or δημόσιοι in Greek). The use of servile labor was most pronounced within the Italic peninsula during the late Republic and early imperial period, but its use was not uncommon in other parts of the Roman Empire.<sup>29</sup>

We can split the types of employment for these enslaved individuals into two different categories: labor-intensive and care-intensive. Labor-intensive work would include the use of enslaved labor within state-owned mines or performing service on aqueducts, whereas care-intensive positions for servile workers could encompass record-keeping tasks and those doing labor related to the financial sector.

Development of care-intensive labor dependency is particularly applicable to the case of Roman Philippi. As historian Walter Scheidel argues, the use of care-intensive slave labor develops more strongly when there is a specified reward incentive structure developed within a culture, as Rome had.

Therefore, this type of [care-intensive] slave labor flourishes most in ‘open’ slave systems where institutional arrangements and cultural norms allow slaves to be granted autonomy, assume positions of trust, and to be freed and become socially integrated upon manumission.<sup>30</sup>

One way to uncover the social intricacies of these ‘open’ systems is through epigraphic remains. Inscriptions provide valuable insight into the micro-networks of patronage, friendship, and public office that underpinned many of the financial and civic transactions performed within Philippi.

Any passersby that had come across the dedication constructed for the 2nd or 3rd century CE *vicarius* named Venustus that began this chapter would have recognized the formulaic epigraphic documentation of a number of interpersonal networks and professional responsibilities within its text. The *dispensator* (a kind of household accountant who over-saw the money and dispersals in the *domus*) named Fructosus was likely enslaved and owned by the state, one

29 Figures for enslaved populations in Roman Italy range from 10 to 20 percent; see Fenoaltea 1984 for the model then used by Scheidel 1997, 156–69.

30 Scheidel 2012, 100.

of the band of δημόσιοι (“public slaves”) that many Greek states owned from at least the Classical period on but who remain an understudied social group.<sup>31</sup> Within the Roman context, these individuals were referred to as *servi publici* and were owned by many cities in the Roman Mediterranean, often in order to maintain public works and to carry out administrative tasks. Fructosus had previously been a *vicarius*, a term which could be shorthand for a *servus vicarius* (a slave of a slave) or simply applied to a kind of lieutenant. The term derived from martial vocabularies and the *servus vicarius* was synonymous to the much rarer citation of an individual as ‘*servus servi*.’

The use of the specific term *vicarius* in the dedication may articulate the type of connection and obligation that Venustus had to the *dispensator* Fructosus, who held a servile but somewhat respected position within the city as a financial assistant. Fructosus was likely the *dominus* (“lord, owner”) of Venustus but we also see hints of other connections. In the dedication, Marianus calls Venustus his *collibertus* – a term usually applied to a “fellow freedman” with the same former master, but it was also (as it appears to be here) a confraternal term that could denote kinship within the same servile *familia*. In this case, however, the term is something akin to ‘my brother.’<sup>32</sup> Just as in voluntary associations of *collegia*, *thiasoi*, or *sunodoi*, enslaved persons could form tight-knit bonds within the involuntary unit imposed upon them.

The social connections created by enslaved persons were not only horizontal – i.e., between other members of similar status in the same involuntary *familia* – but also extended vertically. For an example, we can look to a well-known inscription found near Philippi and dating to the 2nd or 3rd centuries CE commemorating a young enslaved man named Vitalis. Like the roughly contemporary Venustus inscription, however, it further reveals the normalized use of servile workers to handle vital money and business matters within the province of Macedonia.<sup>33</sup>

*Vitalis C(ai) Lavi Fausti  
ser(vus) idem f(ilius) verna domo  
natus hic situs est vixit  
annos XVI institor tabernas*

31 Ismard 2017.

32 See the funerary inscription dedicated to a gladiatorial *retarius* named Placentinus at Salona in coastal Dalmatia from a fellow familial *collibertus* and *retarius* (CIL III, 2127) or a certain Senecianus in Tricomia within Roman Phrygia who in ca. 176 CE viewed himself as the *collibertus* to the imperial freedman Marcus Aurelius. Presumably both had been in the *familia Caesaris* (CIL III, 348 = ILS 1477).

33 Destro and Pesce 2017, 41.

*Aprianas a populo acceptus  
idem ab dibus ereptus rogo  
vos viatores si quid minus  
dedi me<n>surā ut patri meo adicere  
ignoscatis rogo per superos  
et inferos ut patrem et matre(m)  
commendatos abeatīs  
et vale*

Here lies Vitalis, the homeborn enslaved man and the son of Gaius Lavius Faustus, who died at the age of 16 and was a business manager of the tavern of Apriana, well received by the public and snatched away by the gods. I ask, oh travelers, that if I gave (you) something less than the proper serving size so that it might benefit my father, I beg that you grant me forgiveness by the gods above and below so that my father and mother be kept safe. May you travel on and fare well!<sup>34</sup>

The teenager Vitalis appears to have been a *servus* who was also the son of his *dominus*, Gaius Lavius Faustus. It is a salient reminder that a *dominus* had sexual privileges over all enslaved persons and that this form of rape often produced children. He subsequently used his son as an *institor* (business manager) at a *taberna* (a workshop or tavern).<sup>35</sup> As Gardner points out about this inscription, there seems to have been a preference for using one's son or enslaved person as *institor* – or in this case, a servile son.<sup>36</sup>

In the early Roman Empire, workshops and small businesses referred to as *tabernae* often employed young servi as their business managers in order to provide a range of services, particularly hawking, moneylending, or buying goods.<sup>37</sup> According to Roman law, the role of an *institor* was a legally binding one, which made Faustus liable for the business actions of Vitalis.<sup>38</sup> Ancient historian Noel Lenski notes, “The reason for this is that Roman law (like many early law systems) had difficulty establishing legal relationships of agency; but using one's sons or slaves allowed it to work around this – both were extensions

34 *CIL* III, 14206, 21 = Pilhoffer II, no. 416.

35 Kirschenbaum 1987.

36 Gardner 1993, 58–59; 78.

37 Holleran 2012, 120.

38 Ulp. *Dig.* 14.3.5.10. The jurist Ulpian contrasts the legal character of an *institor* left in charge of a fullery while his master was gone, versus a *procurator*, who did not act as a legal proxy for the *fullo*; Aubert, 1994.

of the *dominus*.<sup>39</sup> In the Roman Mediterranean, a number of different artisans used such *institores* to keep accounts for their businesses, and muleteers, fullers, and tailors could rely on such proxies to conduct commercial transactions in their stead, bound by the *actio institoria*.<sup>40</sup> While not always servile, these *institores* often were enslaved, which consequently gave business owners power over everything they acquired as an extension or instrument of their own power.<sup>41</sup>

A rather romantic view of the Vitalis inscription is often taken within New Testament studies that cite it, focusing on Vitalis as an enslaved man who was obviously a beloved but adopted son, and even imagining that he was manumitted.<sup>42</sup> This can come dangerously close to playing into the narrative that condones slavery within the Roman Empire as an institution that could create loving relationships between master and slave. However, we must think of Vitalis's status as a possibly pragmatic and certainly prudent economic move on the part of his father to keep him subservient. Moreover, the father then uses the end of the inscription to absolve himself of any financial culpability in the actions of his deceased adopted son; appropriating the voice of his son within the inscription to expunge wrongdoing for which he may also be responsible. It is notable that according to Roman law, money acquired by any enslaved agents and all children held *in potestate* ("in the power of another") reverted directly back to the master.<sup>43</sup>

In addition to public and private enslaved labor being used within the financial world, another major sector for the employment of public enslaved persons was public works projects.<sup>44</sup> Philippi appears to have also used its public *servi* for the maintenance of civic infrastructure such as aqueducts, just as Frontinus notes Rome used their public *servi*. There remains today part of an aqueduct at Philippi that runs along the western walls and slope of the Acropolis to bring potable water into the city. These structures were necessary to provide fresh water for fountains, for commercial industry (e.g., mills, tanneries, fulleries, or textile workshops), and for public consumption. These spaces also illustrate the dependence of elite largesse on enslaved labor; inscriptions found underneath the later Roman bathhouse (an area that had previously been a sanctuary to Bacchus) refer to water provided through euergetism, both from private

39 Lenski in comments via email, May 20, 2021.

40 Ulp. *Dig.* 14.3.5.5.

41 Du Plessis 2012, 57.

42 See the rather romantic characterization of the language of the inscription in Destro and Pesce 2017, 246 and Dodd 1996, 97.

43 Verboven 2012, 99.

44 *Front. Aq.* 2.100, 116; Lenski 2006.

donors and from associations. A water system dedicated by a *thiasos* (voluntary association) of maenads was also dedicated to the gods Liber, Libera, and Hercules.<sup>45</sup> Thus the completion of civic benefactions required servile labor.

The Roman bathhouse and many other inscriptions within the colony made by female dedicators at Philippi also serve to remind us that women were involved in cultic activity and engaged in vital civic euergetism that could supplement the water conduits and infrastructure maintained by the city.<sup>46</sup> Just as enslaved persons were owned by both men and women, the city of Philippi depended on a mix of *patroni* and *patronae* to maintain its infrastructure through private endowment and through enslaved labor.

The upkeep of the aqueducts remained a high priority well into Late Antiquity, and the use of *servi publici* as aqueduct workers appears to have persisted well into this period.<sup>47</sup> Many cities had associations of specified *aquarii* (water caretakers). These were different from the military *aquator* or a civilian *aquatarius*, who seem to have been carriers or hawkers of water that could provide cold or hot beverages.<sup>48</sup> Enslaved workers had worked upon aqueducts at Rome since Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa. Beginning under the emperor Claudius in the mid-1st century CE, the city of Rome had 700 slaves working on its aqueducts, 240 of whom were designated as *servi publici*. The rest – all 460 of them – were connected to the emperor as part of the involuntary *familiae* that made up the *servi Caesaris*.<sup>49</sup>

Philippi likely only had a few *aquarii*, rather than the hundreds that were needed to maintain Rome's aqueducts. However, epigraphic evidence suggests that a designated *familia* may have been owned by the *colonia*. On the Acropolis at Philippi, a dedication was found to Jupiter Optimus Maximus from a *servus aquarius* named Secundus, who had fulfilled his vow to the deity with the erection of the inscription.<sup>50</sup> Although we know very little about the life of Secundus, it does seem as though he had the means to pay for the votive offering and was quite unabashed in his announcement of his status. This is akin to the ways in which the enslaved individuals within the *familia Caesaris* announced their elevated status as connected to the emperor. Like dozens of other enslaved persons, *liberti*, and citizens erecting inscriptions on

45 Pilhofer II 340.

46 Abrahamsen 1995, 13.

47 Lenski 2006, 348; Marano 2015, 153.

48 There is notably only one instance of an *aquatari(us)*; IPOstie-A, 169a.

49 Front. *Aq.* 2.116.

50 Pilhofer II 177=AE 1974, 588=Weiss 254: *I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) s(acrum) v(otum) i(ussu) de(i) f(ecit) s(ub) te(stimonio) / sac(erdotis) / Sec(undus) col(oniae) ser(vus) aqu(arius) ite(m) vot(um) s(olvit)*. The inscription is dated 1st–3rd centuries CE.

the Acropolis at Philippi, Secundus made a religious vow and put up a dedication that indicated he had fulfilled it. While we can only speculate about how the *aquarii* were organized as an association and what they did within Roman Philippi, it is clear that at least some of the financial and infrastructural tasks that maintained the city were performed by servile workers. This invisible labor involved in the day-to-day upkeep of a city could be ephemeral and it is now difficult to detect in the material record.

#### 4 Conclusion

In describing the city of Rome, the German philosopher Johann Wolfgang von Goethe famously noted that within the ancient city, there lived two populations: one mortal and the other made of marble: “As in Rome there was alongside the Romans a nation of statues, so alongside this real world there is also a world of delusion, almost more powerful, in which most live.”<sup>51</sup> Today, it is often this “other population” of statues and inscriptions that have allowed us to work backwards in order to revivify the world of the living not only in Rome, but also within provincial sites not as often remarked on in imperial literature, such as Roman Philippi.

Philippi’s variegated, trilingual epigraphic landscapes provide an often-monumental glimpse into the lives of elite patrons, magistrates, and imperial cults. The epigraphy is also valuable for its ability to take note of persons who were underrepresented or mocked in Greco-Roman literature: traders, artisans, financial mediators, enslaved persons, and freedmen. The evidence for these men and women helps us to visualize the macro- and micro-networks that sustained the economy of Roman Philippi while also providing depth for understanding – and perhaps questioning – New Testament texts.

This chapter is predicated upon the idea that both epigraphy and economic networks cannot be understood in a vacuum that isolates them from spatial, chronological, literary, or even legal contexts. As Carlo Ginzburg established in his groundbreaking book, *Il formaggio e i vermi* (*The Cheese and the Worms*), socio-economic microhistories performed through close readings of case examples can establish evidence for larger cultural norms.<sup>52</sup> When both close and distant readings of literary texts, epigraphic evidence, and archaeological

51 Goethe 1826, no. 293: “Wie in Rom außer den Römern noch ein Volk von Statuen war, so ist außer dieser realen Welt noch eine Welt des Wahns, viel mächtiger beinahe, in der die meisten leben.”

52 Ginzburg 1976.

remains are considered, the larger economic picture described by Concannon in this volume can, for instance, be better understood as it was lived day-to-day. The site of Roman Philippi was uniquely situated upon the busy road known as the Via Egnatia that connected the western empire to the east, shaping both its people and its language. While the *colonia* changed greatly from the Roman Republic to Late Antiquity, its reliance on trade and slavery persisted – albeit to varying degrees – over these centuries.

Moreover, voluntary and involuntary associations functioned to mediate trade and provide upkeep for the city. They may have also provided reliable amicitia networks that facilitated overland trade while mitigating risk.<sup>53</sup> As Nasrallah and Quigley demonstrate in this volume, Philippi depended upon numerous *collegia* with a visible mix of citizens, enslaved persons, and freedpersons. It is important that the broader networks of *negotiatores* within Macedonia and along the Via Egnatia be considered along with these studies of local individuals in order to describe more fully the constellations within the economic cosmos. Such combined analyses can also allow us to better trace the ways in which Philippi – and many other Roman cities – relied upon both free and servile merchants, business agents, financial planners, and state-owned enslaved persons in order to manage the day-to-day economic administration of the city. Recovering histories from below through epigraphy can perhaps help us to understand the context for the New Testament and the growth of early Christianity. At a broader level, it can also help us begin to reconstruct the many ancient lives that have been silenced by the disappearance of data and by the biases of historical investigation.

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53 Venticinque 2016 uses epigraphic evidence in order to explore how various degrees of economic uncertainty were mitigated by Egyptian artisans and merchants through the formation of voluntary associations.

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