

Traders and Craftsmen

High esteem of agriculture vs. other trades:

Xenophon, *Oeconomicus* 4.1-4: Socrates, why must you show me all the different trades? said Critobulus. It is not easy to get workmen skilled in all of them, nor is it easy to become expert at them oneself. But those trades which are reputed to be the noblest and which it would be most fitting for me to practise, show me what these are and who practises them, and do your best to help and instruct me.

Well said, Critobulus, he answered. For the trades known as the trades of artisans (*banausikai*) are decried and with good reason held in low esteem in the cities. They disfigure the body of those who practise and pursue them, by compelling them to remain seated and in the shade, and some even cause you to spend the whole day sitting by the fire. When the bodies get softened in this way the souls lose a great deal of their strength. And especially, artisans' trades leave one very little time for friends and for the city, and the result is that men like these seem very inadequate in their relations with friends and when it comes to defending the city. Hence in some cities, especially those which have a military reputation, no citizen may pursue an artisan's trade.

But, Socrates, what trade do you advise me to follow?

Must we be ashamed, said Socrates, of imitating the Persian king? It is said that among the noblest and most necessary obligations he reckons agriculture and the art of war, and he vigorously practises both of them.

Trade and 'banausic' occupations at the bottom of the scale:

Plutarch, *Pericles* 1.4-2.1: We take pleasure in perfumes and purple garments, but we regard dyers and perfumers as men unworthy to be free and as mean artisans. Antisthenes was therefore quite right in saying, when he was told that Ismenias was an excellent flute-player, 'He is good for nothing, for he would not otherwise be such a good flute-player'. Similarly, Philip, when his son was playing the cithara at a banquet with much charm and skill, asked him: 'Are you not ashamed to play so well?' The point of this is that it is enough for a king to listen in his leisure time to others playing the cithara and he does sufficient honour to the Muses if he attends as a spectator competitions which involve others.... No young man of good birth having seen the Zeus of Pisa or the Hera of Argos desired to become Pheidias or Polycleitus, nor Anacreon, Philemon or Archilochus for having been delighted with their poems. A work may delight us with its charm, but there is no need to regard its creator with admiration.

Retail trade

Ideal of self-sufficiency

Retail trade (*kapelikon*), was decried, because by definition it means you seek to sell goods for a higher price than their real value:

Aristotle, *Politics* 1.1257a41-1257b: When, in this way, a currency had once been instituted, there next arose, from the necessary process of exchange, the other form of the art of acquisition (*chrematistike*), which consists in retail trade (*kapelikon*). At first, we may allow, it was perhaps practised in a simple way: but in process of time, and as the result of experience, it was practised with a more studied technique (*technikoteron*), which sought to discover the sources from which, and the methods by which, the greatest profit could be made. The result has been the emergence of the view that the art of acquisition is specially concerned with currency, and that its function consists in an ability to discover the sources from which a fund of money can be derived. In support of this view it is urged that that the art is one which produces wealth and money; indeed, those who hold the view often assume that wealth is simply a fund of currency, on the ground that the art of acquisition and retail trade are concerned with currency. In opposition to this view there is another which is sometimes held. On this view currency is regarded as a sham and entirely a convention (*nomos*). Naturally and inherently (the supporters of the view argue) a currency is a nonentity; for if those who use a currency give it up in favour of another, that currency is worthless, and useless for any of the necessary purposes of life. A man rich in currency will often be at a loss to procure the necessities of subsistence; and surely it is absurd that a thing should be counted as wealth which a man may possess in abundance and yet nonetheless die of starvation – like Midas in the fable, when everything set before him was turned at once into gold through the granting of his own avaricious prayer.

Ideas even more extreme at Sparta, which rejected all economic activity by the Peers:

Herodotus 2.166-67: (The Egyptian warriors) are forbidden to pursue any trade (*techne*), and devote themselves entirely to warlike exercises, the son following the father's calling. Whether the Greeks borrowed from the Egyptians this custom, among others, I cannot say for certain. I note that the Thracians, the Scythians, the Persians, the Lydians, and almost all other barbarians, hold their fellow citizens who practise trades, and their children, in less repute than the rest, while they esteem as noble those who keep aloof from handicrafts, and especially honour such as are given wholly to war. Be that as it may, the Greeks have learnt this custom, especially the Lacedaimonians, while it is the Corinthians who despise artisans least.

Ideas generally the case: in fourth-century inscription from Cyrene civic rights restricted to those with a minimum property qualification of 20 minae and various political disabilities are imposed on those practising certain trades (doctors, teachers, instructors of archery, horse riding and fencing, heralds, merchants)

Homeric World

Evidence from Homer of the *demiourgoi*
(artisans, prophets, doctors, bards and heralds),
travelling experts who offered their services to
the community

Special status

Archaic period

Pottery workshops in the seventh and sixth centuries in Corinth

Pottery reflects the growth of an urban demos based on manufacture

Development of architecture, imports from the East

Key position of Corinth:

Strabo 8.6.20: Corinth is said to be 'wealthy' because of its port of trade. It lies on the Isthmus and controls two harbours, one of which faces towards Asia, the other towards Italy. The exchange of cargoes sailing in both directions is thus made easy for those who live at such a distance from each other. And just as in former times the straits of Sicily used to be dangerous for sailors, so were the high seas, especially beyond Cape Malea because of contrary winds. Hence the proverb: 'When you double Cape Malea, forget about the way home'. It was therefore welcome to traders both from Italy and from Asia to be able to avoid the sea journey round Malea and unload their cargoes on the spot. Similarly the tolls on goods exported by land from the Peloponnese and imported to it were in the hands of those who held the keys of the Isthmus. This state of affairs has persisted ever since, but the advantages derived by the Corinthians in later times increased even further. For the Isthmic competition celebrated there attracted large crowds, and the Bacchiads, having established their tyranny, and being wealthy, numerous and of illustrious birth, remained in power for nearly 200 years, and exploited the port of trade without stint.

Athens: reforms of Solon and tyranny: Athenian pottery production expanded and tyrants' building projects

Classical Athens

Free men in Athens undertook most activities despite social stigma, but working for themselves

Solonian law against idleness and instructing citizens to teach their sons a trade

Solonian law forbidding anyone to reproach anyone else with his poverty or trade

Workmen of the Erechtheum (408-7):

IG i².374: ... the man holding the spear: 60 drachmae. Phyromachos of the deme of Kephisia – the youth beside the breast-plate: 60 drachmae. Praxias who lives in the deme of Melite – the horse and the man appearing behind it and striking it in the flank: 120 drachmae. Antiphanes of the deme of Kerameis – the chariot and the youth and the two horses being harnessed: 240 drachmae. Phyromachos of the deme of Kephisia – the man leading the horse: 60 drachmae.

Classical Athens 2

Artisans did not lose political rights, but looked down on

Economic activity the concern more of the metic than the citizen – see Archinos' decree re. citizenship for metics after the defeat of the Thirty:

Tod, *Greek Historical Inscriptions* 2.100: (Archinos moved: so that adequate recompense should be given to the metics) who took part in the return from Phyle or (who joined in the march down to Peiraieus), let the Athenians decree (concerning them) that they and their descendants (shall enjoy the rights of citizens ...).

Back

Chairedemos, a farmer; Leptines, a cook; Demetrios, a carpenter; Euphorion, a muleteer; Kephisodoros, a builder; Hegesias, a gardener; Epameinon, an ass driver; (...)opos, an oil merchant ...

Classical Athens 3

Import policy to ensure supply of necessary goods

No 'national' industry or commerce (cf. role of metics)

Small scale, local consumption of produce

Athenian pottery: exports mainly decorated pottery and not necessarily organised by the potters; small proportion of the total exports

Slave-workers

Main source of labour was slaves

Stagnation of techniques

Inequality of mankind

Hellenistic period

Industry developed in the east, especially in metalwork, textiles and construction

Progress in mechanics and the application of technology (by 300 the lever and pulley were known; Archimedes' screw was added in the third century)

Technological advances in warfare (siege-engines)

Overseas trade: Homeric period

Some commerce in *Odyssey*

But no term for a trader in Homer, only vague *prekteres* or 'agents' (*Od.* 8.162)

emporos means passenger on a ship

Specialised traders were foreigners, especially the Phoenicians, whose reputation is always bad

Phaeacians rejected commerce in favour of the land.

Overseas trade: archaic period

Emporos used in sense of 'maritime trader'. Some successful traders made fortunes:

Herodotus 4.151-52: A few persons then sailed from Thera to reconnoitre (c. 638). Guided by Korobios to the island I have mentioned, namely Plataea, they left him there with provisions for several months, and returned home with all speed to give the Theraeans an account of the island. During their absence, which was prolonged beyond the time that had been agreed upon, Korobios' provisions failed him completely. Thereupon a Samian vessel, under the command of a man named Kolaïos, was diverted to Plataea while on its journey to Egypt. The Samians, informed by Korobios of all the circumstances, left him sufficient food for a year. They themselves left the island; and, anxious to reach Egypt, made sail in that direction, but were carried out of their course by a gale of wind from the east. The storm not abating, they were driven past the Pillars of Heracles, and at last, by some guiding providence, reached Tartessos. This trading town (*emporion*) was in those days a virgin port, and so the Samians, when they returned home, made from their cargo the greatest profit ever realised by any Greek known to us.... From the tenth part of their gains, amounting to six talents, the Samians made a brazen vessel, in shape like an Argive krater, adorned all around with the heads of griffins standing out in high relief. This bowl, supported by three kneeling figures (*kolossoi*) in bronze, was dedicated by them in the sanctuary of Hera at Samos.

Archaic period 2

Corinth built a towpath, the *diolkos*, across the Isthmus in seventh century to facilitate trade and obtain wealth

Oligarchy of the Bacchiads exploited Corinth's vital position on the Isthmus:

Thucydides 1.13.2-5: It is said that the Corinthians were the first to approach the modern style of naval architecture, and that Corinth was the first place in Greece where triremes were built; and it seems that it was for the Samians that the Corinthian shipwright Ameinocles built four ships. Dating from the end of this war (421 or 404), it is nearly 300 years ago that Ameinocles went to Samos. Again, the earliest sea-fight that we know of was between the Corinthians and Corcyraeans; this was about 260 years ago, dating from the same time. Planted on an isthmus, Corinth had from time immemorial been a commercial emporium; as formerly almost all communication between Greeks within and without the Peloponnese was carried on overland rather than by sea, and the Corinthian territory was the highway through which it travelled, Corinth had consequently great money resources, as is shown by the epithet 'wealthy' bestowed by the old poets on the place. When traffic by sea became more common among the Greeks, the Corinthians procured a navy and put down piracy, and opening a mart on both sides of the isthmus, they acquired for their city all the power which a large revenue affords.

Naukratis

Colonising movement: *apoikiai* and commercial settlement (*emporion*)

Al Mina in Syria at about the end of the ninth century

Naukratis in the Nile Delta from about the end of the seventh century:

Herodotus 2.178-79: Amasis (570-526) was friendly to the Greeks, and granted favours to some of them. Among other favours, he gave to those who came to settle in Egypt the city of Naukratis for their residence. But to those who did not wish to settle there but only sailed to Egypt (for trade) he granted certain lands where they might set up altars and sanctuaries to their gods. Of these temples the grandest and most famous, which is also the most frequented, is that called the Hellenion, which was founded jointly by the following cities: among the Ionians, Chios, Teos, Phocaea and Clazomenae, among the Dorians Rhodes, Cnidos, Halicarnassus and Phaselis, and among the Aeolians only Mytilene. The sanctuary belongs to these cities, and they provide the governors (*prostatai*) of the commercial port (*emporion*). All the other cities which lay claim to these prerogatives have no right to do so. But independently of these the Aeginetans have founded on their own a sanctuary of Zeus, and similarly the Samians for Hera and the Milesians for Apollo. In former times, Naukratis alone was a port of trade and there was no other in Egypt apart from it. If anyone entered one of the other mouths of the Nile, he was obliged to swear that he had not come there of his own free will. Having sworn, he had to sail in his ship to the Canopic mouth, or if he was unable to sail against contrary winds, he had to convey his cargo on barges all round the Delta until he reached Naukratis.

Naukratis a private initiative by traders who obtained right from the Pharaoh to build sanctuaries to their gods. Greeks and Egyptians lived separately and mixed marriages were forbidden

Phocaeans (Massilia and Emporion in Catalonia)

Development of import trade in *corn*: Egypt one of principal granaries of the ancient world

Black Sea area

At the same time the Greeks colonised northern shore of the Black Sea:

Herodotus 7.147: Xerxes was at Abydos when he saw some corn ships, which were passing through the Hellespont from the Euxine on their way to Aegina and the Peloponnese. His attendants, hearing that they were the enemy's, were ready to capture them, and looked to see when Xerxes would give the signal. Xerxes asked whither the ships were bound. They answered: 'To your enemies, Master, with corn on board'. He rejoined: 'We too are bound thither, laden, among other things, with corn. What harm is it, if they carry our provisions for us?'

During sixth century Athens developed imports of food, with Solon's ban on agricultural exports except oil. Under Solon or Peisistratus Athens sought to secure the straits leading to the Black Sea (cf. settlements at Sigeum and in the Thracian Chersonese)

Classical Athens: import trades

Special position of grain trade, dependence on imports of foreign corn

Foreign policy concerned with control of the corn-supply: attempt to control straits of Black Sea after Persian Wars; guard on Hellespont during Peloponnesian War; unsuccessful attempts to end Persian domination of Cyprus (copper and corn); support for Egyptian revolt; interest in Sicily; control of Euboea, Lemnos, Imbros and Skyros

Fourth-century legislation on grain trade. Any citizen or metic in Athens or Attica was forbidden by law to lend money on a ship importing corn to any place other than Athens:

Ps.-Demosthenes, *Against Lakritos* 51: *The Law* It shall be unlawful for any Athenian, or any of the metics residing in Athens, or any person under their control, to lend out money on a ship which is not commissioned to bring corn to Athens or any other goods mentioned above. And if anyone lends out money contrary to this enactment, the prosecution will be introduced and the confiscation of the money carried out before the inspectors of the commercial port (*epimeletai emporiou*) in the same way as is laid down for the ship and the corn. There shall be no right of action for the money lent out to any other place than Athens, and no magistrate shall bring any suit thereupon to trial.

Classical Athens: import trades 2

Law against transporting corn to any harbour except Piraeus and two-thirds of the cargo had to be disposed of in Athens

Metic corn retailers (*sitopolai*) could only purchase up to fifty measures of corn from importers at a time, to prevent fraudulent speculation

Officials:

Ps.-Aristotle, *Constitution of Athens* 51: They appoint by lot ten inspectors of the markets (*agoranomoi*), five for Peiraieus and five for the city. Their duty, as prescribed by law, is to make sure that all goods for sale are pure and unadulterated. They also appoint by lot ten inspectors of measures (*metronomoi*), five for the city and five for Peiraieus. They inspect all weights and measures to make sure that sellers use just ones. There used to be ten commissioners of the corn trade (*sitophylakes*), appointed by lot, five for Peiraieus and five for the city, but now there are twenty for the city and fifteen for Peiraieus. Their task is first to ensure that the unground corn is sold in the market at a just price, and second that the millers sell barley meal at a price related to that of barley and bakers sell the loaves at a price related to that of wheat and of a weight determined by them; for the law instructs them to fix the weight. They also appoint by lot ten inspectors of the commercial port (*epimeletai emporiou*), whose function it is to supervise the markets (*emporia*) and to compel the merchants to bring to the city two-thirds of the corn which is imported by sea to the corn market.

Classical Athens: import trades 3

Corn-supply was as important an item on the agenda of the assembly as defence:

Ps.-Aristotle, *Constitution of the Athenians* 43.4: Likewise they prescribe the meetings of the assembly. One in each prytany is the Principal Assembly, at which there is a vote of confidence to decide whether the officials are going their duty satisfactorily, and the food supply and the defence of the country are discussed.

After the fall of the empire Athens had to seek to conciliate rulers of foreign states, e.g. Greek rulers of the Crimean Bosphorus:

Demosthenes, *Against Leptines* 31-33: You are of course aware that we consume more foreign corn than any people in the world. Now the corn which comes in from the Black Sea equals the whole quantity which comes in from other markets. And no wonder; not only because that district has an abundance of corn, but because Leukon, who rules there, has granted exemption from duty to those who export to Athens, and his heralds proclaim that merchants bound for our port shall load their ships first. Although he enjoys exemption for himself and his children only, he has given exemption to everyone of you. Now see what this amounts to. He levies a tax of one-thirtieth on those who export corn from his country. Now about 400,000 medimni of corn are imported from the Bosphorus, as one can see from the records of the commissioners of the corn trade (*sitophylakes*). Therefore, for the 300,000 medimni he gives us a rebate of 10,000, and for the 100,000 about 3000. And so far is he from depriving our city of this gift, that when he opened a new place of trade (*emporion*) at Theodosia, which sailors say is in no way inferior to that at Bosphorus, he gave us exemption from there too. I could recall many benefits which you have received from him or from his ancestors, but I will mention only one: two years ago, when there was a shortage of corn in the whole world, he not only sent you enough corn for your needs, but you were even left with a surplus worth 15 talents, the management of which was placed in the hands of Kallisthenes.

(1 medimnus = 51.84 litres)

Classical Athens: import trades 4

Athens sought to control the supply of strategic materials for weapons and ships

Hence interest in Thrace and Macedonia was maintained until Philip, through colonies (as Amphipolis 437-6, also Brea), military intervention, or understandings with the kings of Macedon

Indirect taxation

Athens sought to increase revenue by indirect taxation on economic activities of citizens and non-citizens (metec tax)

In 413 Athens abolished Delian League tribute and replaced it by a 5% tax on all the trade in harbours of the empire (Thuc. 7.28.4).

This fiscal exploitation was aided by the position of the Peiraeus as greatest economic centre in the eastern Mediterranean:

Isocrates, *Panegyricus* 42: As each people does not possess a country that is self-sufficing, but has sometimes less and sometimes more than it needs, and as there was much uncertainty as to where one should dispose of some goods and whence one should import others, once again Athens remedied these problems. For she set up Peiraeus as a market in the middle of Greece, where there is such an abundance of goods that things which one finds elsewhere only with difficulty and one at a time are all easy to procure here.

Tax of 2% on all goods (exports and imports):

Andocides, *On the Mysteries* 133-34: Agyrrhios, that honest man you know well, had been for two years the chief contractor of the tax of one-fiftieth. He had farmed it for 30 talents and had as his associates all those men who meet under the white poplar. You know the kind of people they are. Why did they meet there? I believe they had two aims in mind, to get paid for not raising the bidding, and to have a share in taxes bought cheap. Having made a profit of six talents and seeing what a profitable business they were on to, they formed a syndicate, bought off rivals by giving them a share in the profits and again offered 30 talents for the taxes. As no one was putting in a rival bid I came forward before the council and topped their offer, and purchased the rights for 36 talents. Having thus ousted those men and provided you with sureties, I collected the money and paid it back to the city, without making any loss – my associates and I even made a small profit. Thus thanks to me these men were prevented from sharing out among themselves six talents of your own money.

Coinage

Spread of coinage reflected civic more than economic growth. Coinage was a symbol of political independence, as when Athens tried to impose her coinage on her empire:

Meiggs and Lewis 45.9-14: Let the people choose heralds (to bring to the notice of the cities what has been voted); let one herald be sent to the Islands, (one to Ionia, one to the Hellespont), and one to Thrace; (let the generals) help in the sending of the heralds (by providing transport to each of them); (if they fail to do this let them each be) fined 10,000 (drachmae); let the magistrates in the cities (transcribe) this decree on a stone stele and place it in the agora of (each) city, and let the masters of the mint set up the decree (in front of) the mint; let the (Athenians) carry out these instructions, if the magistrates refuse to; let the herald sent on the spot require them to carry out the orders of the Athenians; let the secretary of the (council) add to the oath of the council the following words (for all future time): 'If anyone strikes silver coinage in the cities and does not use the coins, weights or measures of the Athenians, but uses (foreign) coins, weights and measures, (I will punish and penalise him according to the) former decree proposed by Klearchos; (let anyone who wishes be free to hand) over any foreign silver (he has and exchange it) whenever he wishes (on these same terms); let the city (give him in exchange Athenian coins); let everyone (bring to Athens) in person (and deposit at the) mint any silver he holds; let the mint masters draw up a list (of all the silver deposited by each person with them) and set up (a stone stele in front of the) mint for anyone who wishes to inspect it; (let them list on one side all the) foreign (currency) keeping (the silver and gold separate, and on the other side all the) Athenian silver ...

Bottomry (maritime) Loans

Ps.-Demosthenes, *Against Lakritos* 10-13: Androcles of the deme of Sphettus and Nausikrates of Carystus have lent to Artemon and Apollodorus, both of Phaselis, 3000 drachmae for a voyage from Athens to Mende or Skione, and thence to Bosphorus, or if they wish, on the left coast as far as Borysthenes, and back to Athens. The interest is at the rate of 225 for 1000, and if they set sail from Pontus to Hieron after the rise of Arcturus, 300 for 1000. The loan is made on the security of 3000 jars of wine from Mende, to be uplifted at Mende or Skione in the 20-oared ship commanded by Hyblesios, the security to be free from all loans present or future. The goods purchased in Pontus in exchange for this cargo shall be brought back to Athens in the same ship. Once they have been brought safely back to Athens, the borrowers shall repay to the lenders the capital and the interest within 20 days according to the agreement, in full except for jettison carried out by a common decision of the passengers or ransom paid to the enemy, and no reduction to be granted for any other loss. The security shall be made available to the creditors, to remain under their full control until the payment of the capital and the interest in accordance with the agreement. If payment is not made within the stipulated period, the creditors shall be allowed to pledge the security or sell it at current prices. And if the sum raised falls short of the sum owed to the creditors according to the agreement, the creditors shall have the right, whether singly or jointly, to levy the amount by execution against Artemon and Apollodorus and all their property, whether on land or sea, wherever they happen to be, as if judgment had been given against them and they were in default of payment. If they do not complete their voyage, they should remain in the Hellespont for ten days after the rising of the dog star and unload their goods in a port where no reprisals may be exercised against the Athenians, and then sail back to Athens and pay the interest written into the agreement the year before. And if the ship in which the goods are conveyed should meet with any irretrievable disaster, and if any of the goods serving as security are saved, what is saved shall belong jointly to the creditors. On all these matters the present agreement is to have final authority. Witnesses: Phormio of the deme of Peiraieus, Cephisodotus of Boeotia, Heliodorus of the deme of Pithos.