

‘L’État intervint peu à peu’: State Intervention in the Ephesian ‘Bakers’ Strike’

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A comprehensive reconsideration or even a recasting of the interactions among State authorities—standing in for ‘the public’—and the non-public associations would seem a desirable goal for scholarly endeavours at present.¹ My own recent book touched on the connexions between associations and conceptualisations of Statism, particularly in Fascist Italy,² but I have expanded on these themes in a piece that has now appeared within an *Oxford Handbook of Social Relations in the Roman World*, on the *collegia* in their wider contexts.³ When I was introducing ‘*collegia*’ to a general readership, it occurred to me that the famous story of striking bakers in Ephesus should be incorporated, but I found it difficult to do so—beyond noting J.-P. Waltzing’s mention of the story and his all-too-predictable reaction to the notion of restive *collegiati*. In Waltzing’s time and place, fin-de-siècle, industrialised Liège, it was natural for someone of essentially bourgeois sensibilities to downplay the notion of strikes, with their latent or overt tendency toward violence, at least when negotiation alone does not lead to the optimal result.

The inadvisability of strikes was subsumed within Waltzing’s larger argument concerning the consequences of State intervention

1. I wish to express my sincerest thanks to Professor Gabrielsen for the honour of an invitation to speak in Copenhagen and for the opportunity to address certain points at greater length in this forum. Many thanks are also owed to the anonymous reviewer of this piece, for careful analysis and provocative questions, as well as to those who have heard versions of this paper in Copenhagen and Calgary, *inter alios*, Jesper Carlsen, Kasper Evers, Matthew Gibbs, Brent D. Shaw, Dorothy J. Thompson and Christian A. Thomsen.

2. Perry 2006, especially for the discussion of Fascist ‘Corporativismo’ in Chapter 3.

3. Perry 2011, 499–515.

in workers' assemblies and even, from time to time, their grumbling about such interventions. Drawing inspiration from industrial Belgium (which I investigated for my book's second chapter) Waltzing argued that it was in the best interests of both the power élite and the wider membership of trade unions to cooperate. In both Roman and modern cities it was preferable, he claimed, to expend energy in cooperation rather than conflict, with the classes trusting each other and bowing mutually to a higher purpose. In short, *collegia* were, in Waltzing's frequently—even repetitiously—expressed opinion, useful to the State, but only if they were encouraged to continue managing their financial houses as they saw fit, with very little or no interference from political authorities. In its turn, the State, at least until the third century CE, benefited from allowing the *collegia* to preserve their traditional freedoms; loyalty was engendered, and a rising tide lifted all boats. Wise emperors refrained from either micromanaging or overregulating the *collegia*, and workers, for their part, had little interest in protesting working conditions or behaving contumaciously to secure their basically reasonable advantages. By contrast, state intervention in Late Antiquity would leave in its wake the destruction of both the associations' liberties and their efficacy. Waltzing's vision, and especially the unwillingness of workers to strike, formed the standard lens through which organised labour was examined throughout much of the 20th century. For one example, Rostovtzeff commented, 'If strikes were infrequent, that was due to the low standard of industry and not to the docile mood of the workmen and to the employment of slaves.'⁴ In 1963, MacMullen noted the paradox that, despite their 'extremely rare' presence in ancient sources, strikes are 'quite often mentioned in modern works'. Here, though, the reluctance to strike was explicable 'due to the existence of servile labor and due more especially to the highly organized and eventually compulsory form into which the state dragooned the labor force.'⁵

These themes of licence and suppression can, in their essential

4. Rostovtzeff 1957, I:350. Rostovtzeff was skeptical of the evidence collected by Buckler 1923 concerning strikes in the Empire; see extended note at II:621-622.

5. MacMullen 1963, 269.

formulation, be traced back to Waltzing's *Étude historique*. The section in which the so-called 'Bakers' Strike' text appears develops the 'Economic or Professional Purpose' which drew a collegium together. Waltzing essentially answers the question with a negative. Strikes are one example, to his thinking, of the general lack of attention paid to the practical details of the profession which had furnished the group's name. Waltzing notes that unions do not express, at least in extant sources, concerns about apprenticeship or quality control of the craft. 'La vie familiale' is all that motivated and sustained organisations of this sort, and a Princeps stood to gain loyal subjects by encouraging and not browbeating (or foot-tattooing) them. This conclusion rendered it difficult for Waltzing to explain the significant correspondence between Trajan and Pliny on the authorisation of collegia in Bithynia. For Waltzing, Trajan was, despite appearances, an emperor who wished to authorise collegia, especially those that were useful to the state and 'sans danger'.⁶ In short, local conditions in Bithynia forced him to resist his natural and more generous impulses. Another text, first published in 1899 and incorporated into the later volumes of the *Étude historique*, seemed to imply that local conditions were not always favourable to Roman officials and that the placid surface of government could be disrupted by, at least, the hanging threat of collective action. This inscription, a copy of a letter written by the praefectus annonae around 200 CE to a provincial subordinate at Arles, notes that the 'navicularii marini' of the area have given indications that they will cease operations if their grievances are not addressed. Waltzing laid stress on the 'cessaturi' in the inscription, which in his estimation signaled that the threat had merely been posed and not yet put into effect.⁷

Given this line of argument, Waltzing was obliged to address a text that seemed to concern actual striking workers as more than a

6. Waltzing 1895-1900, I:123-128.

7. For the text and extensive commentary see Waltzing 1895-1900: III:526 and IV:616-623. The key phrase reads, *cum quadam denuntiatione cessaturi propediem obsequi[i], si permaneat iniuria*. Many thanks to Kasper Evers for drawing my attention to this document.

‘curious example’—and its recent publication, only a decade earlier, would probably have made its contents familiar to Waltzing’s readers. ‘Il serait intéressant,’ he observed, ‘de savoir si les travailleurs n’avaient jamais recours aux moyens violents et si les grèves, par exemple, étaient connues dans le monde romain. Les auteurs n’en parlent pas, mais l’épigraphie fournit un exemple curieux.... Cet édit prouve que les boulangers de Magnésie étaient associés et que l’association les avait mis en état d’affamer la ville et de troubler l’ordre.’⁸ This stern reprimand addressed to ‘the bakers of Magnesia’ was first discovered in Magnesia on the Maeander and then published in *BCH* in 1883.⁹ Until the 1910s, it was generally believed that the bakers were based at Magnesia, but the inscription was subsequently securely identified with Ephesus and has been interpreted in that civic context ever since. Fontrier also introduced in his *BCH* commentary the concept of ‘une grève des boulangers’.¹⁰ As such, it has been adduced as an instance of resistance among workingmen, at least for some time and sufficiently to terrify the State into clamping down—or more accurately into threatening to do so in the future. The text has been published in many venues (though not always perfectly) and translated for many more. American students often encounter it when learning about collegia, since the text is included in the Lewis/Reinhold primary source reader used in ancient Roman history classrooms throughout the country.¹¹ In its original form (with some modifications) the text may be rendered thus:¹²

[...]δὲ καὶ κατὰ συνθήκην πα[ταγησ]άντων [.....]
 λικ[.....]
 [βαί]νειν ἐνίοτε τὸν δῆμον ἰς ταραχὴν καὶ θορύβους ἐνπίπτειν διὰ τὴν
 σ[μικρο-?]

8. Waltzing 1895-1900, I:191-192.

9. Fontrier 1883.

10. *Ibid.*, 506: ‘Fin de l’édit d’un gouverneur romain adressé aux habitants de Magnésie à l’occasion d’une grève des boulangers de cette ville.’

11. Lewis and Reinhold 1990, II:250-251.

12. The text is adapted from Merkelbach 1978. Other publications include *SEG* 4.512 and *I.Eph* 215, as well as Buckler 1923.

- λογον καὶ ἀθρασίαν τῶν ἀρτοκόπων ἐπὶ τῇ ἀγορᾷ· στάσεων ἐφ’ οἷς ἐχρῆν
[αὐ-]
τοὺς μεταπεμφθέντας ἤδη δίκην ὑποσχεῖν· ἐπεὶ δὲ τὸ τῇ πόλει συμφέ[ρον
χρή]
- 5 τῆς τούτων τιμωρίας μᾶλλον προτιμᾶν, ἀναγκαῖον ἡγησάμην διατάγ[ματι]
αὐτοὺς σωφρονίσαι· ὄθεν ἀπαγορεύω μῆτε συνέρχεσθαι τοὺς ἀρτοκ[ό-]
πους κατ’ ἐταιρίαν μῆτε προεσθηκότας θρασύνεσθαι, πειθαρχεῖν δὲ π[άν-]
τως τοῖς ὑπὲρ τοῦ κοινῆ συμφέροντος ἐπιταττομένοις καὶ τὴν ἀ[ναγ-]
καίαν τοῦ ἄρτου ἐργασίαν ἀνευδεῖ παρεῖχειν τῇ πόλει· ὡς ἂν ἄλλῃ τις αὐ-]
10 τῶν τὸ ἀπὸ τοῦδε ἢ συνιών παρὰ τὰ διηγορευμένα ἢ θορύβου τινὸς [καί
στά-]
σεως ἐξάρχων, μεταπεμφθεὶς τῇ προσηκούσῃ τιμωρία κολασθῆ[σεται]
ἂν δὲ τις τολμήσῃ τὴν πόλιν ἐνεδρεῦων ἀποκρύψαι αὐτόν, δεκνειφ[ίας
ἐπὶ πο-]
δὸς προσσημωθήσεται· καὶ ὁ τὸν τοιοῦτον δὲ ὑποδεξάμενος [τῆ]
αὐτῇ τιμωρία ὑπεύθυνος γενήσεται....

[Thus it happens] at times that the people are plunged into trouble and tumults by the [petty?]

speaking and recklessness of the bakers in the agora, for which disturbances they ought already to have been hauled into court and subjected to judgement. Since, however, it is necessary to put the benefit to the city ahead of the punishment of these individuals, I deemed it a pressing matter to bring them to their senses with an edict. Wherefore I forbid the bakers to assemble in a faction or to be emboldened by their leaders, but rather to obey in every detail the measures that have been set in place for the common good and that it is their job to ensure that the city is sufficiently supplied with bread and not in need of it. From this time forward, if any of them should be caught in the act of assembling contrary to the regulations or heading up any tumult and disorder, he shall be hauled into court and punished with the appropriate penalty. Should anyone undertake to conceal himself and set upon the city unawares, he shall be branded on the [foot?] with the word “Decuria”. And the person who shelters such a man will be liable to the same penalty.

Nevertheless, it must be admitted from the start that this is a rather problematic text. It is fragmentary, with a missing right edge that

obscures crucial phrases at the end of each line, and various readings have been proposed and challenged throughout the century. Merkelbach gives a sense of the complexity involved, in his brief analysis of the text for *ZPE*, suggesting that it was originally composed in Latin and then translated into Greek.¹³ Merkelbach complains of the needlessly convoluted grammar in the Greek, but one should note that there is also a small mistake in his edition: ‘κρύψαι’ should be ἀποκρύψαι’. Such a reading conforms with all the other versions and the original transcription of the text given in its 1883 publication.

In the remainder of this paper, I shall explore two points regarding this text and the wider ‘interests’ we may share with these Bakers. First, I shall examine the conclusions of the leading scholars who have written on the theme of strikes and the non-public associations, especially in light of the questions addressed elsewhere in this volume. Second, I wish to propose my own interpretation of the text based on some of its wording and the larger phenomenon of collegia-State interaction. In this portion of the paper, I shall also knead in commentary on Labour-State relations in the early decades of the twentieth century, seeing what new food for thought may arise.

From the outset, though, we should comment on some peculiarities of the text itself. Most striking is that the magistrate passing the edict is not named and that the governor seems simply to be protesting his unwillingness actually to inflict these penalties. In fact, he insists, he has been forced into drastic measures by the recklessness and stupidity of the bakers themselves.¹⁴ ἀρτοκόποι also seems an odd choice, rather than ἀρτοποιοί, but bakers’ associations

13. Merkelbach 1978, 165: ‘Dieser Erlass des Statthalters ist offenbar zunächst lateinisch abgefasst und dann ins Griechische übersetzt, und solche Texte sind bekanntlich oft der Schrecken des Schreckens für den griechischen Epigraphiker (jedenfalls für mich), weil die Regeln der griechischen Grammatik nur noch eingeschränkt gelten und man oft den Sinn erst erkennen kann, wenn man den auf dem Stein erhaltenen griechischen Text probeweise ins Lateinische zurückübersetzt.’

14. On the – for the most part and officially – cordial and quiescent interactions between Roman authorities and local government in Ephesus, see Dmitriev 2005, 265-286.

were not uncommon in Asia Minor. There is an epigraphic reference to a ‘collegium pistorum’ in Thyatira,¹⁵ as well as a dedicatory inscription made to a prominent local élite by ‘οι ἀρτοκόποι’ in that city.¹⁶ The recipient (together with his extended family) of this lengthy honour dating to the second half of the third century is recorded as C. Julius Julianus Tatianus, and among his various listed offices is agoranomos. Perhaps his service in this office had brought him into contact with bakers in the agora, a factor that also seems to appear in the Ephesian document? Dittmann-Schöne includes one other reference to bakers in her collection of professional associations in the cities of imperial Asia Minor, specifically a simple marker ἀρτοκόπων Μιλησίων preserved in Didyma.¹⁷ She interprets this as indicating ‘einen größeren reservierten Verkaufsbereich in der Markthalle von Didyma’ for the bakers in neighbouring Miletus. Accordingly, references to other bakers’ organisations in the surrounding cities would suggest cooperation—at least in official terms—with civic authorities.

In a related concern, it is also unclear from the text whether the bakers in question are actual workers in the trade or perhaps the owners of baking establishments in the city. One thinks particularly of Eurysaces, the freedman baker who had come up in the world sufficiently to celebrate his accomplishments with an impressive monument near the Porta Maggiore.¹⁸ However, there is certainly room here to accommodate bakers at a lower end of the industry within Ephesus. A similar difficulty is posed by those identified in a series of inscriptions from Roman Italy by the seemingly simple term ‘lanarius/lanarii’. While one might conclude with Waltzing that they were ‘ouvriers en laine’, at what stage of production should we place them? H. von Petrikovits has observed that, because Latin terms do not always distinguish ‘producers’ and ‘salesmen’ in a particular industry, the lanarii could have played either role,¹⁹ and Su-

15. Among others, *CIG* 3495.

16. The text has been published as *TAM* V.2, 966, and it has been tabulated as ‘III.1.18’ in Dittmann-Schöne 2001, 185.

17. *I. Didyma* 522; Dittmann-Schöne’s II.6.1, p. 172.

18. A systematic illustrated study of the monument may be found in Petersen 2003.

19. von Petrikovits 1981, 69 and 100.

zanne Dixon explains more succinctly, ‘The word tells us only that they did something with wool’.²⁰ While the textile industry may have been, in Dennis Kehoe’s valuation, ‘a basic component of the economic life of many ancient cities’, the fundamental unit of production in the industry was small-scale and within the reach of many civic entrepreneurs. ‘The major capital outlay for this industry, the purchase of a loom, was relatively modest, and it seems likely that many weaving establishments consisted of little more than a space within a private house’.²¹ In his analysis of professional textile-production and textile-sales associations in imperial Asia Minor, Pleket found it similarly frustrating to determine whether they were primarily designed for ‘Geselligkeit oder Zünfte’, given the impossibility of knowing which groups, specifically, are represented in the documents. Unlike guild documents from the Middle Ages, the details of the production, maintenance of standards of production, expectations of salespeople, etc. simply do not appear in texts from this period.²²

Moreover, the severity of the penalty also leaps out at one, but observe that the details are based on a restoration of the text. As it stands, the precise word or formula to be branded on the foot (which is also restored) is obscure. Analysing the phenomenon of branding and tattooing, C.P. Jones concluded that the evidence for branding in the Roman period was ‘ambiguous’, although he did not address this document. Cicero had joked that a ‘K’ for ‘kalumniator’, a false accuser, might be ‘attached’ to the heads of his enemies, making them unlikely to forget the ‘Kalends’ in future. Nevertheless, this penalty—another one threatened but not carried out?—‘could be tattooed as well as branded’.²³ Even if the full word were to be incised into the violator’s flesh, there seems to have been confusion concerning how to spell ‘decuria’.²⁴ And must it be the foot? This seems in-

20. Dixon 2000-2001, 9.

21. Kehoe 2007, 564-565.

22. Pleket 2008, 537-538.

23. Jones 1987, 153.

24. Buckler 1923 comments on the peculiarity of the language here, suggesting that this is a clumsy transliteration from the Latin that might have been placed on a branding-iron. He also speculates, comparing a line of Herodas, that the ‘branding’

dicated by the delta that opens the next line of text, but perhaps another word would fill the space as effectively? As I reconstruct it, it should be the speakers' mouths that have offended, but, given the state of the document, this is difficult to prove.

Nevertheless, the most curious item of all is the absence of any indication of the specific grievance that has initiated this shadowy 'grève'. W.H. Buckler, in his 1923 analysis of 'Labour Disputes in the Province of Asia', drew attention to this odd fact in his commentary on the inscription, one of (merely) four he could muster for the purpose.²⁵ Beginning the piece with a comment that we know too little about the lives of artisans in Greco-Roman towns, and that evidence 'as to their conflicts with employers [is] surprisingly meagre,' he proceeds to detail the tiny number of inscriptions, scattered between the second and fifth centuries, that give any indication of workers' collective action. Choosing to leave aside Egypt, 'owing to the peculiarity of its labour conditions',²⁶ Buckler could find only four instances of actual labour unrest, codified in four inscriptions from Asia province. Our text is the first of these, and the final one is a declaration of contract by a Sardinian builders' union from 459 CE.²⁷ The article is organised as an examination of each text and then a summary of general conclusions. He begins by noting the modern parallels, while also cautioning against the temptation of pursuing these too closely: 'For convenience "union" will here denote an association of artisans, and "strike" a deliberate abandonment of work by any group of workers, but these terms are not meant to imply that a union or a strike was in the 2nd or 5th century what is connoted in the 20th by the same word.' In short, he argues,

might actually have been a tattoo applied with needles and ink. In any event, 'Here it was doubtless an official device for identifying a dangerous character.' (p. 46).

25. Buckler 1923.

26. On the large number of associations in Egypt and evidence of their activities, see especially Arnaoutoglou 2005.

27. Buckler's analysis of this document has been superseded by Garnsey 1998. Garnsey questions Buckler's assertion of an actual union reflected in the text and the 'pay scale' for builders Buckler detected in it, and he goes on to mine the document for information concerning how 'good' business was for builders, even at this late date.

‘we shall do well to approach our texts with scepticism, and to refrain from reading into them modern ideas.’²⁸ Buckler also makes the important observation (p. 29) that ‘as a rule only things of good report were commemorated in stone’. Because labour disputes were likely to have been regarded as ‘discreditable’, their absence in the inscriptional record may be explained in simple terms. In my article for the *Oxford Handbook* I also drew attention to this point: a lacuna of inscriptional commentary on disputes and economic resolutions by an association’s membership may be nothing more than a reasonable attempt to avoid the prying eyes of the élite.²⁹ Why, after all, should they have advertised their internal deliberations on stone?

Buckler then provides a text, with translation, coupled with a series of pointed questions, including, ‘Were the workmen, as in modern cases, opposed to the master-bakers, or had all bakery workers been protesting against some grievance affecting their trade as a whole? Was it Employees vs. Employers, or Bakers vs. The Authorities? Was the friction purely industrial?’³⁰ Note here that Buckler has underscored the problem of identifying which class was represented by the bald category ‘Bakers’, at least in the authority’s understanding of the term. Furthermore, he adds: ‘Three points are noteworthy: (1) the offenders were not punished, but merely warned what punishment to expect in case of any future disobedience; (2) no penalty was threatened in the event of another strike; (3) while the bakers’ union was forbidden to hold seditious meetings (ll. 7-8, 11), there was no ban upon its ordinary business and no threat of its dissolution.’ This final point is quite significant and has often been ignored. The governor presumably had it in his power to disband the association since, as Buckler observes, all industrial unions except three (regarded as ‘vitaly necessary to the city’s well-being’) would be dissolved for disorderly conduct at Alexandria in 215 (p. 33, n.1).

28. Buckler 1923, 27-28.

29. Perry 2011, 503.

30. Buckler 1923, 32.

Nevertheless, on this occasion, the authority merely chose to warn the group and perhaps, specifically, its leadership. Why did he restrain his hand? Buckler does not answer this question directly, but his summary of the findings from all four inscriptions reveals his general reaction. According to his analysis, labour strikes 'occurred from time to time' and, while '[t]heir causes and their objects remain obscure', they 'proceeded unchecked by the authorities' provided, naturally, that they were 'not disorderly.'³¹ But at what point does a work stoppage constitute a threat to the general welfare? Bakers are, of course, in a position to cause real suffering among the populace rather quickly. But the precise means by which they would 'suspend work' would also be a function of their standing in the profession. Does it necessarily mean they would stop baking bread? Or would they simply disrupt the food supply by other means, perhaps by choking off transportation from outside the city, raising prices summarily, or—most likely of all—creating scarcity by hoarding their product and driving prices up?

Dio Chrysostom reacted to threats from his neighbours in Prusa by protesting that he had not hoarded grain and thereby contributed to a food shortage.³² Imogen Dittmann-Schöne quotes this document and suggests that the so-called 'Bakers' Strike' here might better be described as 'eine Arbeitsverweigerung' ('a refusal to work/suspension of work') or an 'Arbeitsunterbrechung' ('interruption of work') rather than a 'Streikaktion', strictly speaking.³³ Regardless of the precise means of disrupting the chain of bread, at the milling, baking, or distribution phases, it is not difficult to imagine a riot ensuing in short order. In his study of the food supply in the Roman Empire, Garnsey notes that this unnamed official 'could hardly ignore' the riots 'into which Ephesus was plunged as a result of a bakers' strike.' (Notice that he has presumed a riot has actually taken place, which the text does not explicitly state.) Under such circumstances, 'state intervention' would clearly be warranted in or-

31. *Ibid.*, 45.

32. Compare Erdkamp 2008, on other interventions by state authorities in Asia Minor in the event of grain shortages, pp. 116-118.

33. Dittmann-Schöne 2001, 71 and 143.

der to prevent further disruption to the supply of a critical resource.³⁴ One can see here the temptation that lay before a government official—‘nationalising’ the group in the interest of ‘public utility’ would squelch private initiative, but it would also ensure the continuation of one of the city’s most important supply lines.

This is the theme to which Ramsay MacMullen turned in the 1960s, first in an article and then in his *Enemies of the Roman Order*. In his ‘Note’ on Roman strikes, MacMullen broadens the definition of ‘strike’ considerably, to include rural work stoppages, work abandonment and other instances of labour unrest, for which there is a great deal of evidence beyond the four inscriptions Buckler had plucked out. One thinks here of a parallel development in the history of slavery, as scholars of antebellum American slavery and K. R. Bradley were steadily expanding the notion of ‘resistance’ in the period.³⁵ A work slow-down, theft, willful destruction of property, running away, etc. all constituted options of resistance, and a slave revolt, or a workers’ riot, may not have been the only—or even the preferred—means of expressing dissatisfaction with working conditions.

MacMullen stresses the importance of the chronological framework in evaluating the text. It was precisely in the second century (our text seems to date from late in the second century) that the state was taking the first tentative steps toward intervening in collegia—a move that would culminate in the tying of workers to their associations under direct state control in Late Antiquity. This is, of course, basically Waltzing’s argument, but MacMullen puts it colourfully here: ‘The state, in trying to make the fullest use of these resources, had to apply both the stick and the garrote, compulsion and concession, and of these, both (strangely) strengthened the condition of labor so far as economic factors permitted. Compulsion produced organization, which in turn could be used to extract

34. Garnsey 1988, 259.

35. Bradley 1994, especially Chapter 6: ‘Resisting Slavery’. For an assessment of the ‘goldenage’ of American scholarship on antebellum slavery and its impact on his own thinking, see Bradley 2008.

further concessions.’³⁶ These findings are reinforced in his book on social unrest in the Empire generally. Here, he avers:³⁷

The rarity of this recourse shows how wide a gulf separates ancient “trade associations” or “unions” from their modern equivalents.... If anything can be said on the basis of the evidence—a dozen strikes scattered over four centuries—it is only this: that their potential as a weapon of aggression was never realized, in drawn-out campaigns, and that their defensive use, such as it was, appeared more clearly in the period when, by the government’s own policy, the internal organization of societies had been more firmly articulated.

Thus, MacMullen stresses internal organisation as a precondition for coordinated labour action. Furthermore, ‘Precisely these groups of workers came handiest to the ambition of a demagogue, presumably because they were the best regimented and most responsible to their own leaders; while, in descending order of notoriety, weavers or builders or the poor peasants likewise compacted by law into hereditary professions to serve the public interest used their sense of solidarity to go out on strike.’³⁸ Accordingly, the State had only itself to blame: workers had been ineffective in resisting their betters until they possessed a rigid internal hierarchy that could coordinate their activities vis-à-vis an aggressively interventionist State.

Dittmann-Schöne drew a similar conclusion in her analysis of the invariably symbiotic relationship between professional associations and government authorities in Asia Minor, while also underscoring the inadvisability of appropriating comparative evidence from more recent times. Unable to coordinate their activity across great distances due to difficulties of communication, it is impossible to imagine, in her estimation, a concentrated strike action, such as one might see today or even in the late nineteenth or twentieth centuries. We should not envision representatives from local unions sent to some central steering committee elsewhere, as members of

36. MacMullen 1963, 270.

37. MacMullen 1966, 176.

38. *Ibid.*, 178.

city associations were instead ‘selbständig’ units incapable of inter-city, regional or provincial coordination.³⁹

The same concepts of State and association interaction emerge, further developed, in the most recent study of this text, by Ilias Arnaoutoglou, in an important 2002 article composed of two parts.⁴⁰ The first stresses the proliferation of *collegia* in the East, making a significant complement to most work (like my own) that centres upon Rome and the Western provinces. This portion is a chronological survey of the evidence for *collegia* in the East, demonstrating the relative freedom of action accorded to these associations, without interference from Roman authorities. He then turns to the implementation of Roman law in regard to *collegia* in the East. The Trajan-Pliny correspondence is convincingly explained here as a reaction to ‘the recent, violent past of the *provincia* Bithynia-Pontus’. In other words, local conditions and Trajan’s prejudice against this particular province influenced his decision and only in this specific respect. I would add something more: perhaps Trajan’s exasperation with yet another letter from Pliny has prompted him to take a firmer line?

Nevertheless, Trajan’s complaint about how all associations, regardless of their stated purpose, ultimately devolve into ‘*hetairiae*’ is a significant one. Arnaoutoglou’s article argues that the Ephesian text is not a blanket ban on associations but rather, as in Bithynia, a reaction to a local problem with merely short-term application. Also it is clear that the governor is targeting the leadership of the organisation and commenting on the ‘embryonic internal organisation’ within it. The baker strike inscription remains a crucial piece of evidence, as it remains, in this analysis, ‘Our sole testimony for a Roman intervention in associative life’.⁴¹ Focusing new attention on

39. Dittmann-Schöne 2001, 71-72.

40. In a recent piece, Arnaoutoglou 2011 has also dealt with the issue of ‘sociability’ vs. ‘guild’ concerns by suggesting that associations might have pursued both social and professional interests simultaneously. Their interests may not be precisely what we, or even medieval guild-members, would consider strictly ‘economic’, in the sense of preserving their crafts. However, they may have been economically driven, as they attempted to enmesh themselves in the economic life of their cities.

41. Arnaoutoglou 2002, 39.

the inscription and comparing the riots accompanying Paul's visit to Ephesus, Arnaoutoglou posits that the unnamed Roman administrator reacted so strongly to the 'unrest' occasioned by the bakers because of the group's 'embryonic, if not non-existent, internal organisation'. In this sense, and building upon the findings of van Nijf concerning the willingness of collegial leaders to imbibe existing notions of social hierarchy, the bakers' associations were being 'used to exercise disciplinary power over their misbehaving members' (p. 43). Thus, the official lost nothing in his action—since he hoped to reduce 'the threat of social unrest due to the activity of associations, without any immediate cost to the Roman administration.' (43)

I have made a similar argument concerning the co-opting of collegial élites by state élites in my *Oxford Handbook* chapter. The classic works on Roman social relations (especially those by MacMullen and Alföldy) reinforced the social aspects of a complex dance between collegium members and their social betters. As suggested by the pioneering works in this field, there would seem to be two especially productive and illuminating avenues to pursue, specifically in respect to the collegia. First, we might ask how the members of these associations created their own 'mini-societies', forming new networks of social interaction among these generally lower-stratum individuals. And second, we might explore how these societies interacted with other similar groupings in their cities, and particularly with political elites, who also possessed most of the social goods to which the urban poor aspired. If we concede that the collegia were organised for broad social advancement, rather than for narrow financial gain, how did they set out to accomplish this and, more importantly, what concessions were made by both parties to the exchange? The best approaches to the available evidence have sought to combine two basic methods, evaluating on the one hand the interior and on the other hand the exterior dynamics relating to collegium members. Work by John Patterson, Onno van Nijf (especially), and Koen Verboven emphasises the legitimacy of this approach.⁴² Accordingly, collegial rituals and meetings reinforced existing pat-

42. Patterson 2006, 262f; van Nijf 1997 and van Nijf 2003; Verboven 2007.

terns of organisation, and, by mimicking the epigraphic habits of their social betters and of State officials, the leaders of collegia ‘internalised and reproduced’ the hierarchy of their cities.

I would suggest, however, that there is another, far less optimistic, but perhaps more realistic, way to evaluate the interaction of collegia and socio-political élites. If the members of a collegium went out of their way to imitate the élite, might this not be perceived as an instance of their subjection to the local hierarchy, and an attempt by that hierarchy to reinforce the lower status of the group? Consider, for example, an intriguing historical parallel that van Nijf has introduced (in a 2002 Festschrift article in honour of H.W. Pleket)⁴³ illuminating the possible connexions between private associations and civic hierarchies. Comparing the Dutch civic guards (the ‘schutters’) of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, he concluded that membership in groups of this sort provided an outlet for self-expression and ‘a focus for their sociability’ for men of middle rank, who were effectively forbidden access to the higher reaches of the civic aristocracy. However, by shifting our focus and evaluating this interaction from the top down, one might conclude that the political élite had other motives in mind while allowing this sociable group a wide berth. Seen from this angle, it is particularly telling that city authorities offered the schutters subsidies for clothes, sashes and drink, on the occasions of their parades (p. 321). One might wonder whether these concessions were designed deliberately to stress their subordinate relation to the State, in case their sociability made them think too much of themselves. Pleket himself offered a pleasing image of the status of collegial aspirations and their limits in his 2008 article on this sort of ‘sociability’. While the associations were keen to be considered an element of a staid, quiescent political structure, they were actually operating ‘in der “grauen Zone”’ between the civic élite and the upper reaches of ‘the people’.⁴⁴

To illuminate this grey zone somewhat, I would point out an alternative path to the bakers’ edict. The tone of the magistrate’s decision, and the specific punishments he threatens to mete out, indi-

43. van Nijf 2002.

44. Pleket 2008, 540.

cate that he has detected a complex internal organisation in the bakers' associations, and that he is as a result deliberately targeting the groups' officers. He contrasts those who would assemble the restive bakers and stir them up with insidious speeches with those who, like himself, are charged with seeing to the 'common' good of the city, appealing to the rank-and-file membership to distance themselves from their leaders. Protesting that he is personally reluctant to antagonise the bakers, the administrator claims he is only attempting to render them wiser with his actions. Thus, the opposite of wisdom would be to listen to any speeches proposing a work stoppage, which would never be in the community's, or even the bakers', best interests, especially over the long term.

By my reading, the text of the inscription deals deliberately with the notion of political *speech*, rather than with any economic or even social actions that might be taken by the membership. The image that has risen to the fore of the governor's mind is that of the speaker haranguing an audience of workers, whipping them up into a frenzy that could be ungovernable—even by the collegial leadership. Along these lines, note that the word *σύλλογον* has been restored, but there have been other plausible candidates. Wilhelm had suggested *σικρολόγον*, thus 'recklessness in complaints about trifling matters'.⁴⁵ Buckler agreed with Calder's proposal of *σκαϊολόγον*, citing a parallel case in the *Book of the Prefect*, rendering it something like 'recklessness in evil speaking'.⁴⁶ Regardless of the precise restoration, one should pay close attention to the notion of political speech here. Notice the tone of the words used throughout the text, like *ταραχή* and *θόρυβος* (used twice). The Liddell and Scott compares the Latin 'tumultus', and cites examples of both words in political contexts: Plutarch's *Life of Caesar* for *ταραχή* and Thucydides for *θόρυβος*.⁴⁷ The sound of the word is the rumble of the crowd, inflamed by the speaker, and preparing for action as a result of what they have heard. It is probably important, in this context, to remember that the government official is specifically anxious to avoid un-

45. Merkelbach 1978, 165.

46. Buckler 1923, 46.

47. Liddell, Scott and Jones 1976, s.v. 'ταραχή' and 'θόρυβος'.

rest 'in the agora'. Perhaps he fears disruptive speech in a part of the city accustomed to forensic exercises of a flammable type? If this were the case, then threatening the speaker who roused the more docile members of his group into action, especially in the public square, would seem a logical approach. Accordingly, then, it was in the governor's interest to detach the average collegiatus from the organisational élite. In spite of his stated reluctance, he really is targeting these dangerous speakers, and he wants to make sure that the other bakers recognise that he is on their side.

Thus, collegial association may have been a tool, not created but ultimately wielded by the State, in order to organise and control a potentially restive urban population, engendering loyalty, of a sort, in the process. These lessons were not lost on the government of Fascist Italy: throughout the country, 'Dopolavoro' organisations were instituted, to provide relaxation, moral uplift and, of course, ideological indoctrination 'after work'.⁴⁸ One might compare the 'clubs' of employees that are sometimes formed by a modern corporation, perhaps in order to divert attention from a dwindling pot of resources and to improve—or to monitor?—staff morale. One wonders how much consolation such associations can provide as the Domitianic thunderbolts of lay-offs assault a present-day corporation.

As is my wont, I think a further detour into modern historiography is in order, specifically to the early decades of the twentieth century. In his famous *The Ancient Lowly*, published in 1900, C. Osborne Ward commented that the second-century bakers were not 'lawless and dangerous', promoting no 'bread riot', but merely 'a strike, such as frequently occur among the trade unions now.'⁴⁹ Waltzing seemed, in his estimation, 'to think this strike of the bakers an inimical onslaught against good order because it was the plea of the governor to suppress it with a violent hand, in order that the inhabitants might be furnished their bread with regularity. We are inclined to think that the supply of bread for this city might have

48. On the Dopolavoro and other institutions of 'leisure' in Fascist Italy, see especially DeGrazia 1981.

49. Ward 1900: II:85, with n. 4.

been a public function for there was no other source whereby to supply them.' Several writers in the early part of the last century thought that labour and government had complementary interests, yet both needed to preserve their freedom of action in order to realise them most effectively.

This leads one to Father T.A. Finlay, a Jesuit priest and 'economist' who commented on this incident in a 1911 speech. Finlay was born in Dublin in 1848, in the midst of the Famine, joined the Jesuit order and eventually became Chair of Political Economy at the National University of Ireland and President of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland, between 1911 and 1913. He retired in 1930 and lived on another decade, during which he was fêted by an annual lecture. His obituary insists that Father Finlay rigorously applied economic principles, but always within a Christian framework. As a committed Christian (and not as a Marxist, presumably) his approach to 'political economy' inevitably hinged on ethical concerns. The Society he addressed had been founded in 1847, to study, especially, the effects of the Famine and to make recommendations to the government to ameliorate living conditions for Ireland's poor. As the organisation's President, he addressed the Society on 28 November 1911, incorporating the striking bakers into his analysis. Strikes were rare in the Empire, he conceded, but that fact should not obscure the legitimate aspirations of working people, since the securing of patronage was also, in its way, a means of obtaining leverage: 'To protect their interests the unions adopted, as a rule, a more effectual and less dangerous policy: they placed themselves under the patronage of some man of high rank and potent influence; they paid him honour during his life by erecting statues and other memorials to perpetuate his fame, and in return they enjoyed his protection while he lived, and often benefited by substantial bequests after his death.'⁵⁰ This yields a solution that sounds a great deal like Corporatism, organising labour and employers into a seamless mechanism striving for the benefit of all: 'To fulfil its beneficent functions adequately it [the Labour Association] must

50. Finlay 1911/12: 513. Further on the Reverend Finlay, see G. O'Brien's obituary, *The Economic Journal* 50.197 (1940): 157-159.

be free. But free with an ordered freedom, with a liberty which cannot be abused to the prejudice of the general well-being.' (p. 522).

Nevertheless, the 1910s witnessed another conceptualisation of 'the general well-being', and an utterly novel approach to the 'old relations of human sympathy and Christian kindness between master and man.' This rebellion, perhaps as in second-century Asia Minor, hinged on an isolated speaker upon whom an agitated group could fixate. Let us compare a scene from the Smolny Institute for Girls in St. Petersburg, which had become the headquarters of the Bolsheviks in 1917 and would serve for the planning of the October coup. (It is now the office of the city's mayor.) A remarkable moment in Lenin's—and Trotsky's—life occurred in 1917 when Lenin came to address the assembly, which was described as being in a 'tumultuous' mood. Trotsky's rendering of the scene stresses the spellbinding quality of Lenin's performance and his uncanny ability to connect with a crowd:⁵¹

Lenin, whom the Congress has not yet seen, is given the floor for a report on peace. His appearance in the tribune evokes a tumultuous greeting. The trench delegates gaze with all their eyes at this mysterious being whom they had been taught to hate and whom they have learned without seeing him to love. Now Lenin, gripping the edges of the reading stand, let little winking eyes travel over the crowd as he stood there waiting, apparently oblivious to the long-rolling ovation, which lasted several minutes. When it finished, he said simply, 'We shall now proceed to construct the socialist order.'

And in this respect, at least, there is a fortuitous København connexion. The Workers' Museum in central Copenhagen was once guarded by a statue of Lenin, but, succumbing to the protests of the past national government, it has been moved to the back of the museum. Could it be the case that Lenin, like a tumultuous baker, still possesses such power nearly a century later?

51. Trotsky 2008, 853-854.

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