

# The Trade Associations of Ptolemaic Egypt: Definition, Organization and their Relationship with the State

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## 1. Introduction

This chapter considers the trade associations of Ptolemaic Egypt, and will deal specifically with three issues.<sup>1</sup> First, the question of definition: What defined these groups as associations and as private, voluntary collectives? Second, the organization of these groups will be examined: Were they imitations of the state or were they based on another model? Finally, the relationship between these collectives and the Ptolemaic administration will be considered, with particular relevance to their legal status and their position in part of the economy of Hellenistic Egypt.

To start, trade associations themselves, in their most simple form, were collective bodies comprising individuals linked and identified by occupation or involvement in a trade, although they likely had a variety of interests that ranged broadly across economic, social, and religious spheres. The tradition was certainly long-lived too; the *fenomeno associativo* in Egypt has a significant history,

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particularly in the form of trade and socio-religious collectives. They appeared as early as the Saite period, continued through the Ptolemaic period and into the fourth and fifth centuries AD.<sup>2</sup> The associations in Egypt probably owed their origins not only to earlier Pharaonic precursors, but also to Greek antecedents, given the existence of trading links between Egypt and the Mediterranean world (to be discussed later).<sup>3</sup>

The primary form of evidence for Hellenistic Egypt, the papyri, offer a rather different view of the *fenomeno associativo* than is usually provided by the epigraphic evidence in the ancient Mediterranean, and although epigraphic texts concerning associations in Hellenistic Egypt do exist, the papyri are much more prevalent.<sup>4</sup> The epigraphy associated with associations was typically created, not through any obligation to the state, but for disseminating and recording what the issuing association deemed necessary and desirable to be known in broader circles of society.<sup>5</sup> Very few of the papyri represent an attempt to glorify or honour the associations themselves (although the regulations, or *nomoi*, could perhaps be seen in such a light). Much of the evidence concerning the associations in Hellenistic Egypt consists largely of *nomoi*, letters, a variety of transactions, and state administrative documents that can be broadly divided into ‘private’ and ‘public’ spheres of interest: ‘private’ in the sense of internal documentation that would rarely have been disseminated to non-members (so, for instance, the *nomoi* of these associations); and ‘public’, with regard to the papyri that illustrate the relationship between the associations and Graeco-Egyptian society as a whole (for example, contracts between the administration and associations). Moreover, on occasion, the division between these spheres can be blurred, and ‘private’ documentation can appear in the ‘public’ context (as in the case of legal proceedings).

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2. See de Cenival 1972; 1986; Muszynski 1977; Donker Van Heel 1996; Pestman 1993; Monson 2006; 2007a; 2007b; Monson and Arlt 2010; Gibbs 2008; Venticinque 2009. See further the chapter by Venticinque in this volume.

3. On Egypt’s external trade: Manning 2010, 23; 2007, 442; Austin 1970, 35-40.

4. E.g. *I.Fayoum* I 6 (104 BC); II 119 = *SB* I 5022 (second-first century BC).

5. Gabrielsen 2001, 219.

Consequently, the very difference in the nature of the evidence can lead to some difficulty in establishing firm criteria for defining associations in Hellenistic Egypt. Perhaps most the significant problem is one of terminology: How are trade associations identified, and how did they identify themselves?

## 2. Definitions

The evidence reveals an almost bewildering array of terms for, and in connection with, associations generally: for instance, *synodos*, *koinon*, *thiasos*, and *ethnos*.<sup>6</sup> As a result, the terminology of these groups can be incredibly confusing, especially when attempting to distinguish and examine a single feature in the activities and interests of a particular group or groups;<sup>7</sup> in fact, most of these collectives likely had several socio-economic and socio-religious interests.<sup>8</sup>

In some instances either this terminology was not used, suggesting that the association preferred the use of an occupational designation (or, of course, that the context required it), or was used in conjunction with an occupational designation: the *naukleroi Hippodromitai*;<sup>9</sup> the *pantes hoi ek tou ethnous nekrotaphoi*.<sup>10</sup> These difficulties are not only inherently linked to the way in which these groups portrayed themselves, but are also indelibly connected to the manner in which the state administration and other individuals in Ptolemaic society chose to deal with the associations themselves. As such, any line of distinction between trade and cultic association is difficult to draw; there were similarities between their organisation and

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6. E.g. *I.Fayoum* III 204 (68 BC); III 205 (51 BC); *SB* I 4224 (ca. 41 BC); *SB* V 7835 = *P.Lond.* VII 2193 (69-58 BC?); *P.Enteux.* 21 (218 BC); *O.Bodl.* I 312 (late third century BC); *P.Ryl.* II 65 (67 BC?). On issues of terminology, see further the Introduction to this volume.

7. A case in point: *I.Fayoum* II 134 (79 BC): *synodos georgon idion* (σύνοδος γεωργῶν ιδίων).

8. The problem is certainly not found in Egypt alone; see e.g. Gabrielsen 2001, 218 (and n.12) and the Introduction to this volume.

9. *BGU* VIII 1741 = *SB* IV 7405.6 (63 BC).

10. *P.Ryl.* II 65.3 (67 BC?): πάντες οἱ ἐκ τοῦ ἔθνους νεκροτάφοι; *P.Köln* VI 290 (213 BC), for ἔθνος in this context cf. Thompson 2001, 1262; 2008, 32; and in this volume.

dedications.<sup>11</sup> The problem lies, then, in the rather fluid identities of these collectives in their relationships to their own members, to the state administration, and to society generally.

What does appear to distinguish the trade associations considered here from simple loose groups of crafts- and tradespeople united for one-off events or transactions are specific forms of regular *collective* activity. Of course, not all forms of collective activity lead to the existence of trade associations.<sup>12</sup> Some instances likely point to loose groups of crafts- and tradespeople banding together for a singular purpose. For example, a group of individuals who were involved in the retail sale of papyrus, around the turn of the second and first century BC, designated themselves simply as ‘contractors of the retail sale of papyrus rolls’ when dealing with the *epistates*, the *archiphylakites*, and other officials in Tebtunis;<sup>13</sup> a text, from the third century BC, likely concerning the transport of grain seems to infer that four *naukleroi* collectively performed a singular contract for the state, that they were not connected through any links based on an association, and that the execution of the contract was likely a one-time affair.<sup>14</sup> The evidence does, however, reveal clear instances of concerted united action by trade associations: dedications,<sup>15</sup> the creation of *nomoi* or allusions to them in other documents,<sup>16</sup> the contracting of, and payments for, services rendered over periods of time.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the fact that on occasion (and often on more than one occasion) the state administration identified, recognized, and dealt with these groups as unified collectives is telling: even in situ-

11. Clarysse and Thompson 2006, vol. 2, 204 and n.458.

12. Adams, Adams 2007, 183-85.

13. *SB XII 11078* = *SB VI 9629.2-3* (ca. 100 BC): οἱ ἐξεληληφότες τὴν διάθεσιν τῶν χαρτῶν. Cf. Lewis 1973, 134-39.

14. *BGU X 1933* (ca. 230 BC), with *BL VI*, 18; cf. Hauben 1971, 272-75 (and *BGU VIII 1741* = *SB IV 7405*; *BGU VIII 1742* = *SB IV 7406*; *BGU VIII 1743* + *XIV 2368*). The inference is caused by the use of the first person plural ὁμολο[γ]οῦμεν (7). Then ‘they’ acted as a loose collective, and were not represented by officials.

15. Perhaps *I. Fayoum II 134* (79 BC).

16. E.g. *PSI VI 599* (mid third century BC), and *BL VIII*: 399; *P.Ryl. II 65* (67 BC?); *P.Entreux. 20* (221 BC); 21 (218 BC); *P.Stanford Green dem. 21.7* (Monson and Arlt 2010, 115); *P.Berl.Spieg. 3115* = *P.Assoc. p.103-07* (110-107 BC).

17. E.g. *P.Hib. I 67* (228 BC); *I 68* (ca. 228 BC).

ations where associations generally were to be dissolved, the state administration still acknowledged their presence.<sup>18</sup>

Given the differences in the forms of evidence between Egypt and the Mediterranean at large, and in the data that they provide, the trade associations of Ptolemaic Egypt should be defined by the following criteria: first, self-identification (including identification by the state administration) illustrating a level of longevity. Second, specific defined collective actions and activities: for instance, the composition and application of association *nomoi* governing a wide-range of members' behaviour, agreed to by the members themselves; continued contracts between associations, or their representatives, and other parties (including the state administration); and other socio-religious activities, often noted in the *nomoi*, that all appear under the auspices of an 'association' designated by occupation.

The trade associations of Hellenistic Egypt were voluntary, or private, associations. The terms 'voluntary' or 'private' have been typically used to distinguish these forms of associations from those sponsored by the *polis* or state, or from other institutions where membership was automatic.<sup>19</sup> In fact, one of the general characteristics of the private, or voluntary, associations of the Mediterranean was that, typically, they had no formal affiliation to the *polis* or state in which they operated, despite the fact that they remained subject to the laws of these *poleis* or states.<sup>20</sup> This is certainly the case in Egypt, although there are examples of trade associations dealing with the officials of the Ptolemaic administration, most notably, the *naukleroi Hippodromitai* of Memphis, and the state farmers.<sup>21</sup> In these cases, however, it is unclear whether the affiliation was anything beyond the completion of a contract between the association and the state administration.

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18. E.g. P.Tebt. III 700 = C.Ord.Ptol. 50 = C.Ptol.Sklav. I 11 (124 BC).

19. Wilson 1996, 1.

20. Gabrielsen 2009, 179 and San Nicolò 1972, vol. 2, 6-7. A second characteristic - that the members of these associations distanced themselves from the prevailing juridical distinctions between categories of status (cf. Gabrielsen 2009, 179) - is unfortunately difficult to see in Hellenistic Egypt.

21. See pp. 251-54 and pp. 260-61.

In Egypt, at least, participation in a trade association does not appear to have been a formal prerequisite for practicing crafts- or trades-people at any level under the Ptolemies. The foundation of an association appears to have been set in motion by either the *voluntary* action of several individuals who shared a common notion or set of ideals, or perhaps under the guidance of a single person who could influence the collective membership with their own personal principles.<sup>22</sup> The voluntary act can be seen in the agreeing to, if not the signing of, the *nomoi* that governed the behaviour of the members of these collectives generally.<sup>23</sup> The extant Graeco-Egyptian *nomoi* of trade associations (and associations generally) reveal a startling array of collective activities, ranging from commensality, funerary activity, through to socio-economic interests. They also bear a startling resemblance not only to one another, but also to those regulations that governed associations in other areas of the Mediterranean. More interesting is that, although the member's initial endorsement was voluntary, once these regulations were agreed upon and signed, they seem to have become legally binding and authoritative.<sup>24</sup>

Given the nature of an association based primarily on occupational links, the only necessary requisite for membership was likely active participation in the profession with which the association itself was concerned. Consequently exclusivity, as an inherent aspect of a trade association's membership, would probably have been a dominant factor in admission. Yet evidence for this aspect in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, and in particular the latter is rather insignificant. Nonetheless, the available data often seem to illustrate a single profession amongst the members: for example, there is little in the ordinance concerning the association of *choachytai* at Thebes to suggest it was made up of more than a single profession.<sup>25</sup>

In some instances, however, there does seem to have been infor-

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22. San Nicolò 1972, vol. 2, 6-7; cf. *IG III 1*, 23, 29 (first century AD).

23. *P.Ryl.* II 65 (67 BC?); *P.Enteux.* 20 (221 BC); 21 (218 BC); *P.Stanford Green dem.* 21.7 (Monson and Arlt 2010, 115); de Cenival 1972, 166.

24. *P.Enteux.* 21 (218 BC); *P.Siut* 10591 rt VI (170 BC); *P.Ryl.* II 65 (67 BC?).

25. *P.Berl.Spieg.* 3115 = *P.Assoc.* p.103-07 (110-107 BC)

mal pressure on non-members by particular trade associations, and there are examples of the implementation of regulations that attempted to enforce mandatory participation.<sup>26</sup> The demotic statutes of the association of *choachytai* at Thebes noted that all those who had turned sixteen years of age or had practised for ten years should join the collective, otherwise they were to be pointedly excluded from practising the trade.<sup>27</sup> Whether membership in a trade association was hereditary (like the practice of a specific trade may have been) is another aspect that remains unclear, but is certainly one that is related to this discussion; in these cases familial links could be entwined with occupational connections. The most interesting and most damaging consequence of hereditary collective membership is that it effectively restricted admission to those individuals belonging to particular families. The suggestions that members of the same family belonged to the same association at the same time, and that membership could only be passed through familial links are by no means new. This is particularly true in light of the hereditary tendency of occupations not simply in Hellenistic Egypt, but in ancient societies generally.<sup>28</sup> There are certainly several examples of associations and trade collectives that treated membership as transferable through and between families.<sup>29</sup> An example, dating to the early first century BC, in the form of a professional oath illustrates that two families of ‘god’s sealers’, possibly equivalent to either the Greek *nekrotaphoi* or *entaphiastai*, had joined together to become a sin-

26. MacMullen 1974, 70ff.; Pavis d’Ecurac 1990, 117-18.

27. *P.Berl. Spieg.* 3115 = *P.Assoc.* p.103-07 (110-107 BC); Pestman 1993, 196-201; Thompson 1988, 156, n.8; Muhs 2001, 15-16, n.31. Cf. perhaps *P.Ryl.* II 65 (67 BC?): The νεκροτάφοι ask that the accused pay the fines specified in the Demotic ordinance and that they ‘receive the proper penalty’; was the penalty exclusion? See lines 10-13: ἡξίουσαν συντάξει καταστήται τοὺς ἐγκαλούμενους καὶ ἐπαναγκάσαι αὐτοὺς συνεχομένους ἀποδοῦναι αὐτοῖς τὰ διορισμένα ἐπίτιμα καὶ τᾶλλα τὰ εἰς τὸ βασιλικόν, τυχεῖν δ’ αὐτοὺς ὄν προσήκει. On the *choachytai* (χοαχόται), the *pastophoroi Amenophios tou en tois Memnoneiois* (παστοφόροι Ἀμενώφιος τοῦ ἐν τοῖς Μεμνονεῖοις) (*UPZ* II 191 [111 BC]; 192 [110 BC]; 193 [110 BC]; Pestman 1993, 193-95); Derda 1991, 26.

28. Clarysse and Thompson, 2006, vol. 2, 203-4.

29. *W.Chr.* 110A 12-15 (110 BC); San Nicolò 1972, vol. 2, 28; Roberts, Skeat and Nock 1936, 54; *P.Berl. Spieg.* 3115 = *P.Assoc.* p.103-07 (110-107 BC); *OGIS* 51 = *SB V* 8855 (ca. 246 BC); *Syll.*<sup>3</sup> 1109 (AD 178); *Syll.*<sup>3</sup> 1112 (AD 212); *IGR* IV 353d, 17-18.

gle trade association.<sup>30</sup> A clause in a text concerning an association of weavers, from the late first century BC, notes ‘the principal lady together with the women of the elders and the women of all the weavers of Coptos, who are confirmed/recorded together with their children and the children of their children’; this likely refers to the wife of the president, the wives of the elders, as well as the wives of all members, alongside their children.<sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless, even in spite of such attempts at the informal monopolisation of particular areas of trade by associations, independent crafts- and trades-people continued to flourish under the Ptolemies, as did the voluntary and private trade associations. Their regulation does not appear to have interested the state, perhaps because they had been incorporated into administrative tax structure with, one assumes, very little trouble; they offered the state an effective means of using a social institution that was already established, and this seems to have reflected Ptolemaic practice generally.<sup>32</sup>

### 3. Forms of Organization

It is generally considered that the associations of the ancient Mediterranean imitated the state in their organization and their dealings with their members and with others. Poland, in his seminal study of associations, proposed that private collectives typically emulated the organization of the *polis*; in fact, he noted that both the polis itself and these private ‘imitations’ paralleled one another in terms of development.<sup>33</sup> It is a statement that certainly holds true in several circumstances. Even so, the approach has recently been reconsidered and developed, bearing in mind that there were alternatives to the *polis* and its organization in the Hellenistic Mediterranean.<sup>34</sup> The resulting view is that the founders of these early private (or volun-

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30. *PAsh. dem.* I 18 (70-60 BC); Reymond 1973, 130-31; Thompson 1988, 156.

31. *Stud. Demotica* V 158 = *PBM dem.* 1325.8-9 (31-30 BC); Farid 1995, 32ff.; cf. Allam 2002.

32. Clarysse and Thompson, 2006, vol. 2, 204.

33. Poland 1909, 337-38.

34. Gabrielsen 2009, 181.



tary) associations had a clearly imagined and agreed upon organizational structure that was preferred above all others.<sup>35</sup>

This structure is perhaps, at least in part, reflected in the extant *nomoi* of the associations. Do these *nomoi* reflect the laws of the Greek *poleis* of Egypt or the laws of the state administration? It is difficult to say, but it is worth noting that the origin of associations based on occupation in Egypt is considered to have been Greek in nature, while the comparable Egyptian socio-religious collectives grew from an independent tradition.<sup>36</sup> Despite this, the similarities between the Demotic and Greek regulations may suggest a common institution that, in all likelihood, was derived from Greek precedents, since these collectives appear to reflect the widespread distribution and mobility of Greeks, as well as Greek culture and influence, during the period immediately before – and throughout – the Hellenistic era.<sup>37</sup>

Whether or not this secular Greek model was brought to Egypt with the influx of Hellenic society and culture, the crux is that the examples from Egypt were adapted for use in this Hellenistic-Egyptian context;<sup>38</sup> this model, or aspects of it, could be grafted onto the existing traditional indigenous institutions. The Hellenic influence of the Ptolemaic period instilled the natural characteristics of traditional Greek institutions in the Egyptian collectives, and caused the apparent cultural shift in associations that stemmed from an indigenous custom.<sup>39</sup>

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35. *Ibid.*, 181 and n.34 therein.

36. Muhs 2001, 4-5; cf. Roberts, Skeat and Nock 1936, 84-87; de Cenival 1972, 139-41; Muszynsky 1977, 145-46, 160-61. For socio-religious associations, see de Cenival 1986; 1988; Bomann 1991, 69-75.

37. Muhs 2001, 5.

38. Bowman 1996, 111; Monson 2007a, 196; Muhs 2001, 5-6.

39. Rostovtzeff 1941, vol. 3, 1590, n.25; Bowman 1996, 111; Muhs 2001, 5; e.g. the associations of mortuary priests, crocodile- and falcon-mummy bearers: *P.Lille dem.* I 29 = *P.Assoc.* p.3-10 (223 BC); *P.Mil.Vogl. dem.* inv. 77-78 (178 BC), in Bresciani 1994, 49-68; *P.Cair.* II 30606 = *P.Assoc.* p.45-51 (157 BC); *P.Hamb. dem.* 1 = *P.Assoc.* p.59-61 (151 BC); *P.Cair.* II 31179 = *P.Assoc.* p.63-68 (147 BC); 30605 = *SB* I 4458 = *P.Assoc.* p.73-78 (145 BC); 30619 = *P.Bürgsch.* 20 = *P.Assoc.* p.93-97 (137 BC); *P.Berl.Spieg.* 3115 = *P.Assoc.* p.103-07 (110-107 BC); On the links between Roman and Hellenistic associations, and the earlier Pharaonic Egyptian and Greek collectives: Boak 1937, 219-20; Roberts, Skeat and

It was not the *polis* that was at the forefront of Hellenistic Egypt administration, but the administrative district, or the nome. It was an organizational unit that had existed prior to Alexander the Great, and formed the foundation for both the Ptolemaic and later, the Roman administrative state and bureaucracy.<sup>40</sup> There were three branches of administration within this organizational unit, at least in the third century BC: that of the *nomarch* (with the *toparch* and *komarch* at local levels),<sup>41</sup> who was responsible for agricultural production; the *oikonomos*, and subordinate *antigraphais*, who supervised finances; and the *basilikos grammateus*, assisted by the *topogrammateis* and *komogrammateis* at the local levels, who were responsible for records. The official in Alexandria to whom all of these nome officials were subordinate, was the *dioiketes*, the chief financial officer for the Ptolemaic kingdom. Furthermore, the Ptolemies developed a military administration, headed by the *strategos*. The position itself developed out of necessity from the king's maintenance of a mercenary army, and the distribution of land to them to provide an income in times when they were not required. Control of these military cleruchs fell to the *strategoï*, and over time the authority of the traditional bureaucracy diminished as these soldiers relied on their commanders and officers rather than the civil authority.<sup>42</sup> At the village level, in the Fayum at least, all but the smallest villages had a village headman (the *komarch*) and most had a *komogrammateus*, who represented the state administration.<sup>43</sup> These officials were supported, in part, by the village *presbyteroi* who were likely integrated into the administrative bureaucracy by the second century BC; they were relied upon for the system of rents and tax collection,<sup>44</sup> and were probably responsible to higher administrative officials.<sup>45</sup>

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Nock 1936, 85-97; de Cenival 1972, 139-42; Muszynski 1977, 146-74.

40. Manning 2010, 147.

41. For the confusion surrounding the title of *nomarch*, see Rowlandson 2010, 241.

42. Bagnall 1976, 3-4.

43. Clarysse and Thompson, 2006, vol. 2, 112.

44. *P.Tebt.* I 40 (117 BC); Tomsin 1952, 95-130; 467-527; Allam 2002, 12-15; Thompson, 2001, 1261-62; Manning 2003, 50.

45. Crawford 1971, 105; Monson 2007c, 370; Verhoogt 1998, 70-105; Bonneau 1993, 154-74.

In point of fact, with regard to the state administration, there certainly seems to have been a considerable overlap between the terminology used to refer to officials of the Ptolemaic bureaucracy and the trade associations: these collectives had their *presbyteroi*, their own leading men, and their own *grammateis*.

Committees of *presbyteroi*, or elders, can be found in several instances.<sup>46</sup> Notable among them are the *presbyteroi* in the associations of royal, or state, farmers,<sup>47</sup> as is their appearance in an association of 'carriers' and in a collective of 'administrators';<sup>48</sup> the latter are often connected to the transportation of grain.<sup>49</sup> There were also six *presbyteroi* and one *hiereus* who represented a collective of millers in Alexandria in the late third century BC.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, a group of elders can be found in an association of weavers at Coptos,<sup>51</sup> and in a corporation of *choachytai* at Thebes, and although perhaps not at the top of the hierarchy, were clearly entrusted with certain responsibilities.<sup>52</sup>

As to the identities of these *presbyteroi*, we can only speculate; we are occasionally given their names, but more often than not, we are given little else. If the extant evidence is anything to go by, then these councils of elders were not present in all trade associations. We can perhaps assume that they were generally members of the associations that they represented, as is clear in some cases;<sup>53</sup> they may have been senior, or at least more experienced. Where they ap-

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46. Tomsin 1952, 95-130; 467-527.

47. For the suggestion that these farmers constituted trade associations, cf. San Nicolò 1972, vo. 1, 157-78, and Monson 2007c, 370. See e.g. *P.Tébt.* I 43 (118 BC); I 40 (117 BC); I 48 = *W.Chr.* 409 (ca. 118-112 BC); *P.Tébt.* III 788 (143 BC); *P.Grenf.* II 37 (second/first century BC).

48. *P.Erasm.* I 12 (152 BC); I 13 (152 BC?).

49. Rostovtzeff 1922, 125, n.94; Préaux 1939, 146, n.1.

50. *OGIS* 729 (221-205 BC). The *presbyteroi* here are preceded by Amenneus, apparently the priest of the collective. It is possible that Amenneus was a member of the *presbyteroi* as well as the *hiereus*; however, the position of his name within the inscription may suggest otherwise.

51. *Stud.Demotica* V 158 = *P.BM dem.* 1325 (31-30 BC).

52. *P.Berl.Spieg.* 3115 = *P.Assoc.* p.103-07 (110-107 BC); de Cenival notes that one of the elders was in charge of wine (1972, 167-68).

53. *Stud.Demotica* V 158 = *P.BM dem.* 1325 (31-30 BC); Allam 2002, 18.

pear in relation to trade associations, they seem to have played a central role in the guidance and running of the collective. That a committee of the more experienced and older members existed should be no surprise; these individuals had most likely been active participants in both the association itself and the profession for some time. As such, their experience may have been invaluable to the association as a whole.

The terminology associated with the leading men of the trade collectives appears to have varied. The extant evidence suggests that only one chief official served at any given time, although the length of tenure may well have varied.<sup>54</sup> According to the Demotic evidence, a single president, assisted by four elders, administered the affairs of a collective of weavers in Coptos,<sup>55</sup> and a chief official (although supported by a second-in-command and a small number of elders) governed a collective of *choachytai* at Thebes.<sup>56</sup> On some occasions, in the Greek texts, they were called *prostatai*,<sup>57</sup> with perhaps the most notable appearing as leading officers of the *naukleroi Hippodromitai* of the first century BC, who provided declarations of shipments that were carried for the state.<sup>58</sup> The title can be found frequently in the comparable evidence,<sup>59</sup> while it also appears to denote minor police officials (such as the *prostates phylakiton*),<sup>60</sup> and ad-

54. Gibbs 2008, 90-93.

55. *Stud. Demotica* V 158 = *P.BM dem.* 1325 (31-30 BC).

56. *P.Berl. Spieg.* 3115 = *P.Assoc.* p.103-07 (110-107 BC).

57. In fact, *προστάτης* and the related *προστώς*, cf. San Nicolò 1972, vol. 2, 60. For further examples (including comparable evidence), see *OGIS* 130 (second century BC); *SB* I 3939 (date unknown); Cf. for the repayment of an *eranos* loan and the appearance of a *prostates* in such a context, e.g. *BGU* IV 1134 (10 BC); IV 1135 (10 BC?); IV 1136 (11/10 BC?); IV 1165 (20/19 BC?).

58. *BGU* VIII 1741 = *SB* IV 7405 (64/63 BC); *BGU* VIII 1742 = *SB* IV 7406 (64/63 BC); *BGU* VIII 1743 + XIV 2368 (63 BC); cf. Vélissaropoulos 1980, 113-15; Thompson 1988, 60-61; Fraser 1972, 187-88.

59. *P.Ryl.* IV 580.7 (78/49/27 BC?): on dating, see Richter 1991, 252. Here, the officials of the association are mentioned (a *προστάτης* and a *γραμματεὺς*), presumably in support of Heracleides' decision to reassign his burial benefit (*ταφικόν*); *I.Fayoum* II 119 = *SB* I 5022 (second/first century BC). Cf. *P.Ryl.* IV 590 (51-30 BC?): here the chief official was assisted by a *γραμματεὺς*.

60. *SB* I 4309.25 (third century BC); Bauschatz 2013, 94.

ministrators of a specific type of land, the revenue from which, although paid to the state, was set aside for the maintenance of the king's children.<sup>61</sup> On other occasions, the term *hegoumenos* can be found: Petcharmotes is identified as the *hegoumenos* of the *notophoroi* at Kaine in a text concerning the transport of grain.<sup>62</sup> The use of this term (and the related *hegemon*) seems to be common in socio-religious associations and by branches of the administration in Ptolemaic Egypt,<sup>63</sup> but it is important that the military aspects of this title not be overlooked.<sup>64</sup>

The most common overlap came in the form of the secretary or *grammateus*.<sup>65</sup> Various types of secretaries worked in the state administration, assisting officials at almost all bureaucratic levels. But outside the governmental organization, there are several examples where they can be found acting as subordinate officers in trade associations,<sup>66</sup> and in comparable socio-religious collectives.<sup>67</sup> In the mid-first century BC, both Eudemos and Onnophris can be

61. *P.Tébt.* I 81 v 19 (second century BC): οἱ προστάται τῆς κερχωρισμένης προσόδου. It is unclear whether the land represented a permanent endowment for the king's children, or whether they retained it when they came to the throne (cf. *P.Tébt.* I App. i, no. 7).

62. *P.Erasm.* I 13 (152 BC?).

63. See, for example *SB* V 7835 = *P.Lond.* VII 2193.6, 14 (69-58 BC?) and Roberts, Skeat and Nock 1936, 39-88; *P.Tébt.* II 573 v (first century BC-first century AD); III 731 (153-152 BC/142-141 BC). The use of this term seems far more common in the Roman period: e.g. *P.Mich.* V 245.43 (AD 47); II 1241 ii 19 (AD 46-49); II 1231 xxi 31 (AD 45-46); *P.Carlsb.* 53 = *SB* XX 15023.12-13 (AD 92); cf. Daniel 1979, 41-46; Llewelyn and Nobbs 1997, 624-25 on *P.Grenf.* II 73 = *C.Pap.Hengstl.* 63 = *W.Chr.* 127 (late third century AD).

64. *P.Yale* I 33 = *P.Hib.* I 44 (253 BC); *OGIS* 731 = *SB* V 8925 (205-193 BC); Fischer-Bovet 2014, 155-56.

65. The ὑπηρετής also appears in the state administration (ὑπηρετής στρατηγού, cf. Strassi 1997, 25-71), but rarely in the context of trade associations (a ὑπηρετής γεωργῶν in *P.Tébt.* I 45 = *M.Chr.* 40 [113 BC]). There are, however, comparable Ptolemaic examples, e.g. *SB* V 7835 = *P.Lond.* VII 2193 11 (69-58 BC?); cf. Roberts, Skeat and Nock 1936, 50, 80.

66. For *grammateis* working for collectives of royal, or state, farmers cf. *P.Tébt.* III 848 (early second century BC); III 927 (ca. 140 BC); III 1067 (204-180 BC?); IV 1129 (123 BC); *P.Erasm.* I 6 (second century BC); *P.Fay.* 18A (first century BC).

67. *P.Ryl.* IV 580 (first century BC).

found acting as *grammateis* of the *naukleroi Hippodromitai* and the *ktenotrophoi* (cattle-breeders) of Bacchias, respectively.<sup>68</sup>

The most common form of leadership model appears to have been based on a single president, although the terminology that was used in conjunction with this official's position was varied. Often this individual was supported by a subordinate, typically a *grammateus* (or at least an assistant of sorts). Further, occasionally a council of *presbyteroi* was also used; these individuals would fulfil a variety of roles, from the guidance of the association itself, through to responsibilities for particular areas of collective life.

That there was a degree of correspondence between the terminology used for officials in the state bureaucracy and those in trade associations is certainly true, but to posit any more than that is difficult. It could perhaps be argued that the officials in these collectives were reflections of those that worked for the state administration, but to argue this definitively would perhaps push the evidence too far. The fluid nature of the terminology itself in the context of trade associations, however, may echo the changeable nature of the organization of the state civic and military administration itself; there certainly were changes made during the three centuries of Ptolemaic rule, and conceivably this may be reflected in the rather fluid nature of the officials of these associations.

#### 4. Forms of Interaction

In considering the forms of interaction between these trade associations and the state, it would perhaps be best to start with the evidence that may illustrate the view of associations held by the Ptolemaic administration. Most significant is *P.Tebt.* III 700, which contains an official receipt for the payment of, and the appropriate taxes on, two purchases of land by Ammonios, son of Taurinos, that had been put up for auction by the government.<sup>69</sup> More importantly, the manuscript also contains copies of official documentation, including a royal decree of Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II concerning

68. See p. 245 and p. 21, and *P.Fay.* 18B (first century BC).

69. *P.Tebt.* III 700 = *C.Ord.Ptol.* 50 = *C.Ptol.Sklav.* I II (124 BC).

the property of various associations in Alexandria; at least part (perhaps even all) of the land that was purchased by Ammonios had belonged to an association, hence the relevance of the decree. By the order of the administration, all gymnasia, *politeumata* (?), and other associations (in this case, *synodoi*) of Alexandria, were ordered to declare all of their landed property in the *chora*. Furthermore, the decree ordered the sale, through auction, of this property, apparently for the profit of the *Idios Logos* and the crown, in consequence of the dissolution of these associations.<sup>70</sup>

The reasons for this *prostagma* and the precise nature of the provisions of the text are unfortunately lost; the text is severely mutilated.<sup>71</sup> Yet there are a few observations that we can make. The first is one of terminology: What *exactly* is meant by *synodos*? The term is typically used as a general term to indicate any sort of association, ranging from socio-religious groups to trade collectives, and this is perhaps the point here.<sup>72</sup> Second, given that the *prostagma* ordered that associations had to make a declaration of land and property owned, and that they were to be dissolved following the promulgation of this decree, then it stands to reason that in this period associations were acknowledged and permitted, at least in Alexandria, by the state prior to implementation of this decree. Third, these associations had been allowed to own land and property both in the capital itself, and in the *chora*.

What concerns us here though is the state's actions towards these associations, and the possible reasons that underpinned them. At the time when this document was written, civil *stasis* had already engulfed parts of Egypt,<sup>73</sup> and by the close of the 120s, the kingdom was in tatters; a fact undeniably demonstrated by the amnesty de-

70. Otto and Bengston 1938, 67ff.; Rostovtzeff 1941, vol. 3, 1541-42; Taubenschlag 1955, 647.

71. Lenger 1980, 120.

72. Roberts, Skeat and Nock 1936, 72.

73. See Hölbl 2001, 194-204; Huß 2001, 596-625; Thompson 1992, 311-14. Disturbances at Alexandria were almost certainly caused by the action of Euergetes II: *SB V 7803* = *SEG 8.370* (second century BC); Diod. Sic. 33.28c; Just. 38.8.13-15; Val. Max. 9.2.ext.5. See also *P.Tebt.* I 5 = *C.Ord.Ptol.* 53 (118 BC); Huß 2001, 621-22, n.219; 180-81.

cree of 118 BC, that marked the reconciliation of the royal family.<sup>74</sup> The complaint of the priests of Souchos to a local official, that the land was unsown, and that both their temple (and more significantly for the administration) that royal interest was suffering, was perhaps typical of the problems that occurred, at least in the south of the kingdom.<sup>75</sup>

Concerning the clauses in *P.Tebt.* III 700 relating to the *synodoi*, we are left with an interesting historical context, but little direct evidence. Despite the damage to the text, it seems relatively clear that the ownership of the property by the associations concerned had given rise to difficulties or abuses that needed correcting, and this was not the first time that these problems had arisen; the document also contains a reference to a previous decree bearing on the same subject, implying that this decree was unlikely to refer to a permanent ban. It is possible to infer that these *synodoi* were dissolved on account of some sort of collective strike or activity that was deemed unacceptable in the eyes of the Ptolemaic administration that likely affected the productivity of the land, or at least the proceeds that would have gone to the administration in the form of taxation. It seems entirely plausible that due to the civil unrest in Alexandria and Egypt at this time, Euergetes II's 'firm hand' may have been a result of a considered decision not only to bring a cessation to the *stasis*, but also perhaps, as Lenger has suggested, to curb the financial strength of associations in Alexandria and perhaps even beyond.<sup>76</sup>

Occasionally, the control of particular groups in Egypt does seem to have interested the Ptolemaic administration. At some point perhaps between 215-205 BC (although the king and the dating of the document have been recently questioned),<sup>77</sup> Ptolemy IV Philopator (?) decreed that those individuals who performed the rites of Dionysos in the *chora* of Egypt were to travel to Alexandria, within a defined time limit, and were required to register them-

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74. *P.Tebt.* I 5 = *C.Ord.Ptol.* 53; McGing 1997, 296.

75. Thompson 1992, 313; *W.Chr.* II (after 123 BC).

76. Lenger 1980, 120.

77. Capponi 2010, 115.



selves.<sup>78</sup> They were to register the individuals (from three generations before) who had introduced them to the cult,<sup>79</sup> and to hand in their copies of the books concerning the mysteries, after having inscribed their names on them. The reasons behind the edict are difficult to establish, and several suggestions have been mooted: that the king wanted to unify the countless mystery cults in Egypt by establishing an official cult of Dionysos; that he aimed to register those who participated in the *chora* with the intention to limit, maintain control, or simply to get rid of them; that the king, whoever it was, was in financial need and hoped to introduce a tax on priests, and this edict represented an attempt to assess those liable, in order that the cult of Dionysos might be promoted; or that the edict simply represents ‘the desire to exercise control over the activities of this group of performers’.<sup>80</sup> Whatever the king’s motive, and one suspects that any definitive answer is impossible, what seems clear is that any of these reasons suggest a measure of control.

That state control and the suppression of associations (or loose collectives of tradespeople) – at least when warranted – was likely at the heart of some of these measures is perhaps illustrated by the difficulties for the local and state administration caused by groups of workers: at Philadelphia in the third century BC, Zenon received a threat from the *chomatophylakes*, who were owed wages for the previous two months and had not received their grain allowance for the past month;<sup>81</sup> they threatened to run off if they were not paid what they were owed, adding that the canal had already filled up. In another example, dating to the mid-third century BC, Panakestor sent

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78. *SB* III 7266 = *BGU* VI 1211 = *Sel.Pap.* II 208 = *C.Ord.Ptol.* 29 (215-205 BC).

79. Cf. *Liv.* 39. 8-19; *CIL* XIV 2112, I, 10-13 = *ILS* 7212; *FIRA* III 35. The parallel is also drawn by Schubert (2000, 163, no. 55), while Burnet stresses the affiliation between Dionysos and Osiris (2003, 50-51, no. 4).

80. Bagnall and Derow 2004, 261, no. 160; de Ligt 2000, 242; and *contra* Roberts, Skeat and Nock 1936, 43, n.10; Harland 2003, 163; but cf. Lenger 1980, 68-70. On Ptolemy IV’s use of Dionysos for royal self-representation, see *FGrHist* 631 Satyros F1 and Ma 2008, 376. On the Bacchanalia and Rome’s difficulties, see Bispham 2007, 91-95.

81. *PSI* IV 421 = *C.Pap.Hengstl* 3 (mid-late third century BC). Zenon was a private secretary to Apollonios, the *dioiketes* to Ptolemy II, and acted as overseer for the Apollonios’ estates at Philadelphia; cf. Orrieux 1983.

a letter to Zenon, which referred to recent difficulties involving groups of workers.<sup>82</sup> The problem lay with the valuation of land following a survey, and a resulting strike by the farmers, who apparently refused to agree to any valuation set by Apollonios or his men (including Panakestor), whether fair or unfair, and claimed that they would rather renounce their rights to the crops; they alleged that Apollonios had made an agreement with them about the payment of one-third of the harvest.<sup>83</sup> Eventually, after four days, when Panakestor returned to Philadelphia, accompanied by Damis, in an attempt to convince the farmers to return to the land, Apollonios' men offered them the chance to present their own lower valuation; an opportunity the farmers accepted. Also from the mid-second century BC, a letter from Antiochos to Dorion notes that the *latomoi* from a quarry at Kephalaë had deserted; Antiochos ordered Dorion to find the offenders and then send them to him under guard.<sup>84</sup> At the turn of the second century BC, a group of royal farmers, in protest at the conduct of Marres, the *topogrammateus*, who was trying to extort money from their wives, chose to go on strike and took refuge in the neighbouring villages.<sup>85</sup>

In this light, the relationship between the laws of the state and the regulations of these associations proves intriguing. From the *nomoi* themselves, one can assume that the notion of internal jurisdiction was very important. Disputing members would presumably seek redress through the *nomoi* that all of the members had agreed upon, before going to the state to resolve the issues.<sup>86</sup> In a famous

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82. *PSI V* 502 = White 1986, no. 18 = Burnet 2003, no. 50. Cf. Rostovtzeff 1922, 75-77; Orrioux 1983, 85, 119-20; and for dating, *BL IX*, 315 (cf. *P.Cairo.Zen.* III 59327 = *C.Ptol. Sklav.* II 138 III [249 BC]).

83. See *PTébt.* I 26 (114 BC) for a similar example.

84. *P.Hib.* I 71 = *C.Ptol.Sklav.* II 219 (245 BC).

85. *PTébt.* I 41 (105-90 BC). See also *PSI V* 490 (257 BC) (and Messeri Savorelli and Pintaudi 1995, 115); *PTébt.* I 24 (117 BC); perhaps *PTébt.* III 731 (153-152/142-141 BC). For possible implications and resolutions of labour action, see *PTébt.* I 18 (115-114 BC); I 61b.194-98 (117 BC); Cuvigny 1985, 55-60; Verhoogt 1998, 144, 189. See also Monson 2012, 148-151.

86. There are examples of associations adjudicating small disputes outside Egypt, cf. *SEG* 52.1197.

example, at Siut in 170 BC, two brothers were trying to sue one another.<sup>87</sup> The conflict was brought before the *laokritai* – a panel of three Egyptian judges taken from the priestly class before whom the Egyptians could resolve civil law disputes according to hereditary law and in Demotic – who decided the case; but the interesting point is that the younger brother’s argument may have referred to a ‘statute of the elders’ and to an association to which both he and his elder brother belonged.<sup>88</sup> The decision of the *laokritai* did not take this into account.

There are two other significant cases involving association *nomoi* in similar legal contexts. The first, a comparable example from the late third century BC illustrating the attempts of two individuals, Therous and Teos, to receive redress following the failure of an association’s promised funeral expenses, proves interesting. They pleaded with the king to order Diophanes, the *strategos*, to contact Ptolemaios, the *epistates*, so that they could receive the *taphikon* apparently promised to Therous’ sister and Teos’ wife, Soeris, who was the priestess of an association of women from Kerkethoeris for four years.<sup>89</sup> The association had apparently refused to pay. Diophanes seems to have dealt with the complaint, and ordered Ptolemaios, the *epistates*, to deal with the issue. If Ptolemaios was not able to do this, he was to send the case to Diophanes who presumably would see that the case was tried in the correct manner.<sup>90</sup>

The second concerns the judicial sentence pronounced by the *chrematistai* – a judicial court consisting of three members (delegated by the king to try civil and fiscal cases) and a clerk, with jurisdiction over one or several nomes in combination – involving an association of *nekrotaphoi*.<sup>91</sup> What is clear from the text is that all of the members agreed to ‘an Egyptian contract’ (a set of Demotic

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87. *P.Siut* 10591 rt VI 3-4.

88. Seidl 1962, 155; but see Allam 2002, 19 and Capponi 2010, 115 for the uncertainty over the phrase itself.

89. *P.Enteux.* 21 (218 BC).

90. Cf. *P.Enteux.* 20.9 (221 BC). Here the *strategos* orders the local official to verify the contents of the collective’s *nomos* (τὸν θιαστικὸν νόμον, cf. 20.5), so that the latter might follow it.

91. *P.Ryl.* II 65 (67 BC?).

regulations?),<sup>92</sup> that this contract contained fines to be paid to the association itself and to the treasury in the event that this agreement was contravened, and finally that the pact was indeed broken. The petitioning members ask that the accused, a certain Petosiris and others with him, be subject to the fines applicable in the Demotic contract. The appeal was likely unsuccessful, but how the case came before the *chrematistai* (due to the lack of details) is a mystery, particularly given that suits of this kind were to be brought before the *laokritai*; in 118 BC, Ptolemy VII Euergetes II had not only defined the competencies of these two courts according to the language of the documents that were at the root of the case, but also prohibited the *chrematistai* from taking cases between Egyptians.<sup>93</sup>

In all three instances, the cases were passed to courts or to senior members of the state administration (although clearly dealt with finally by local officials). The supposition then is that an association's ordinance, regulations, and agreements, signed collectively by the members, took the form of private contracts and were enforceable as such. Whether these associations had a clearly defined legal and juristic identity cannot be assured, but they certainly could complain to the state concerning infringements of their regulations to seek and acquire redress.

Outside the legal sphere, these associations found a place in the economy of the kingdom. In this context, there were several ways in which trade associations could be useful to the state. One was transport, and in particular the transport of grain from the localities of Egypt to Alexandria in the north of the kingdom. Here, we find the *naukleroi Hippodromitai* operating out of Memphis, engaged in the transport of grain alongside the state administration.<sup>94</sup> A second was supply and collection, particularly of grain, where the government seems to have relied not only on individuals, but also on

92. *P.Ryl.* II 65.3.

93. *PTébt.* I 5 = *Sel.Pap.* II 210 = *Jur.Pap.* 75.207-20 (118 BC); Monson 2012, 123-24.

94. *BGU* VIII 1741 = *SB* IV 7405 (64/63 BC); *BGU* VIII 1742 = *SB* IV 7406 (64/63 BC); *BGU* VIII 1743 + XIV 2368 (63 BC), and also perhaps *P.Erasm.* I 12 (152 BC); I 13 (152 BC?). It has been argued that this collective of *naukleroi* was not a private group of traders employed by the state but an organization created by it for the transport of grain (Rostovtzeff 1922, 125, n.94).

groups to supply and collect both revenues and extraordinary levies. For instance, a petition by the *komarch* and the *presbyteroi* of farmers notes that 1,500 artabas of wheat were to be delivered to the treasury, and for 80 artabas of wheat that were ‘imposed in connection with the king’s visit’.<sup>95</sup>

The most obvious use of these associations would have been in the system of carefully monitored monopolies. These typically involved productive industries, such as papyrus, certain fabrics, salt, and oil, and included the manufacture, import, export, and sale of these products.<sup>96</sup> The monopolies themselves were likely an attempt to secure a maximum return from the land and the products manufactured, with minimum investment.<sup>97</sup> This strict regulation of production and an exorbitant charge set against private imports enabled the administration to fix an artificially high level; this led to an increase in the amount of government revenue. These monopolies were apparently put up for auction in the villages of the *chora*,<sup>98</sup> and presumably the method for the distribution of these concessions was similar in the cities.<sup>99</sup> Typically, the contractors agreed to produce a fixed amount of product within a specified period of time for a fixed price; raw materials and tools were provided in several cases.<sup>100</sup>

Although there are problems of precise definition here, and we cannot be sure that the groups here are in fact trade associations, there are tantalising hints at a deeper form of organization behind the scenes in several interesting examples. In the third century BC,

95. *P.Tébt.* I 48 = *W.Chr.* 409.5-9 (ca. 118-112 BC), cf. *P.Tébt.* I 5.59 (118 BC).

96. Wallace 1938, 181; von Reden 2007, 95; Manning 2007, 445. For Ptolemaic interest, see *P.Rev.Laws* (259 BC); *P.Tébt.* III 703 = *Sel.Pap.* II 204 (ca. 210 BC); Bingen 1978; 2007, 157-88.

97. Manning 2007, 445; von Reden 2007, 150.

98. *P.Cair.Zen.* II 59247 = *SB* III 6747 (252 BC).

99. Caution is to be advised; the procedures concerning the tender of concessions in the Ptolemaic *dorea* may have been rather different. Contracts here could be farmed out, but the underlying system is still unclear, cf. *P.Cair.Zen.* II 59220 = *SB* III 6816 (254 BC); II 59241 = *SB* III 6991 = *C.Pap.Jud.* I 9a (253 BC); von Reden 2007, 145, n.74.

100. *P.Mich.* I 36 (254 BC); *P.Cair.Zen.* II 59199 (254 BC); see also *P.Cair.Zen.* II 59202 (254 BC); *P.Col.Zen.* I 34 (254 BC); Manning 2007, 445; von Reden 2007, 146-47.

a group of weavers, with several assistants, proposed to produce a fixed amount of cloth in a specific time period, in this case, a piece of cloth (presumably a talent-weight) every six days; they asked for a specific payment per completed piece to cover their necessary costs (such as washing) and wages, but also offered an alternative: a daily wage, as well as an initial payment apparently to cover the costs of a *hyperetes*, which was to be deducted from their wages.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, in two documents from the Heracleopolite nome, payment was authorised by Asclepiades (probably the local *oikonomos* or his *antigraphheus*) for groups of weavers at both Ancyronpolis and Choibnotmis for a variety of fabrics manufactured for the government;<sup>102</sup> interestingly here, the prices paid can be compared with those fixed in *P.Rev.Laws.* 46.18-20.

## 5. Conclusion

Although problems remain with the range of terms used to describe these groups (particularly in the Greek papyri), there is enough evidence to suggest that the trade associations of Ptolemaic Egypt were private and voluntary associations. Their organization appears to have a fluidity that may have reflected the changeable nature of the state administration at the regional and local levels. There were ways in which these groups may have imitated civic life, for example, in their *nomoi* and their officials, and it is fair to say that there were certainly considerable similarities between the terminology used to refer to the latter and the titles of particular administrative offices, but to push the evidence further than that at this stage would be unwise.

With regard to their relationship with the state itself, we are more fortunate. Although control over particular associations may have interested the administration at specific times, there is little evidence

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101. *PSI* VI 599 (mid third century BC); *BL* VIII: 399; Orrieux 1983, 142; Clarysse and Vandorpe 1995, 64; Rowlandson 1998, no. 201b. Interestingly, von Reden (2007, 147) suggests that the *hyperetes* in this case was a supervisor. Cf. *SB* XII 11078 = *SB* VI 9629 (ca. 100 BC).

102. *P.Hib.* I 67 (228 BC); I 68 (ca. 228 BC).

for any sort of permanent regulation of these organizations. The reasons behind the decrees considered above may have more to do with their narrow historical context rather than any enduring control over associations generally, despite collectives of workers (associations presumably among them) clearly causing problems at the local and regional levels; the evidence for these groups that dates to the periods after these decrees were promulgated stands against any form of permanent ban. Moreover, the trade associations were useful to the administration, and the introduction of all-encompassing prohibitions would have certainly caused problems for the state. The *nomoi* of the trade associations (and collectives generally), in some cases, appear to have been taken as private contracts. But it is worth noting that the state or its legal institutions did not acknowledge these regulations artlessly: the administration, at least theoretically, could dispense justice in whichever way it saw fit. Furthermore, these groups could prove valuable to the economy, particularly in the areas of transport and supply, both of which were concerns for the state. Particular areas of the economy do appear to have been tailor-made for the state exploitation of trade associations, but despite inferences, there is little definitive evidence for their use in the system. In all, the relationship between the state and the trade associations in Ptolemaic Egypt was reciprocal, and although it seems to have varied between hostility, indifference, and support, it may well have aided some of the fiscal policies of the state, and also provided (at least, most of the time), an environment favourable for the survival and longevity of such associations.

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