

managers The ancient economy being mostly based on AGRICULTURE, farm managers are better known than those in charge of workshops, stores and other types of facilities. Managerial units were always limited in size, which did not exclude employment of up to several dozens of workers, thus requiring some degree of supervision and co-ordination. The rules of sound management were discussed in treatises on *oikonomia* (*oikos* designating the HOUSEHOLD) and *agricultura* or *res rusticae*, going back to a tradition represented in Greek by HESIOD, XENOPHON and Pseudo-Aristotle, and preserved in Latin in works of CATO, VARRO, COLUMELLA and Palladius. Owners were advised to take part personally in the management of their estates, while relying to some extent upon a trustworthy SLAVE (*oikonomos*, *epitropos*). Threats, combined with various kinds of economic and social incentives, were deemed instrumental in implementing the main lines of management policy: a quest for self-sufficiency, stability of income and safekeeping of the capital. Nevertheless, some managers happened to be creative. When PERIKLES inherited an estate in the mid-5th century BC, he entrusted it to a servant named Euangelos, who sold the produce in bulk and bought from the MARKET all commodities necessary for the household, to the dismay of Perikles' relatives (PLUTARCH, *Perikles* 16.3–6). In the same way, some unidentified managers of the estate belonging to the descendants of Laches in 2nd-century AD Tebtynis (FAYŪM) devised a highly successful system of crop rotation to increase production.

Because of the nature of the evidence, managers are much better known in the hellenistic and Roman periods. In the late Republic, the Roman PRAETOR developed through his edict a sophisticated legal system of indirect agency, with various levels of liability

for the principal and of independence for the agent (*Digest* 14 and 15). One important consequence was the enhancement of the position of slaves in business. As these are more readily identifiable in the capacity of agents in inscriptions than their freeborn counterparts, the social and economic profile of managers may be somewhat distorted. As slaves promoted to a privileged position, perhaps looking forward to eventual MANUMISSION, it is likely that they were able to secure social peace between manpower and employers. Free of the aristocratic prejudice against non-agricultural work, a show of dynamism, creativity and discipline was their best bet for social promotion. Masters and their slave managers had a shared interest in the latter's success, so that the legal and social distance between them was less significant. A lack of regulation opened the way to managerial positions for women and youngsters (*Digest* 14.3.7.1 and 14.3.8).

PAPYRI from Egypt reveal that from the 3rd century BC to late antiquity, large estates were managed by freeborn administrators organized in a many-tiered hierarchic structure, with managerial units at the village level and regional headquarters. By contrast with Italy and some western provinces, evidence for diversification (with a non-agricultural sector attached to a VILLA) is almost non-existent. Managers of urban facilities are even more elusive despite the large number of documents that have survived from midsize towns such as OXYRHYNCHOS. Non-agricultural production did not generate the kind of detailed accounts, inventories and contracts of hire and lease commonly found in connection with the management of large estates. JJA

See Aubert, J.-J. (1994) *Business Managers in Ancient Rome*; Finley, M. I. (1985) *The Ancient Economy*; Rathbone, D.W. (1991) *Economic Rationalism and Rural Society in Third-century AD Egypt*.