

On the lexical diversity of grain-supply systems in the Roman East

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Introduction and problems

Food supply was a constant issue for preindustrial economies, since they were highly sensitive to the effects of climatic conditions and to market failures. With the intense urbanization – by pre-industrial standards – of the eastern Mediterranean in the Roman period, feeding the urban crowd was an even greater challenge. In addition to what is already known of the institutional complexity of the Greek cities under the Roman Empire, both epigraphic documents and literary sources provide unquestionable proof of the existence of a specific administrative framework for food supply in many cities, especially but not exclusively in the East, through the titles of specialized officials and benefactors.

A striking characteristic of this civic structure for dealing with the grain supply is the impressive diversity of food-related terms one comes across in the inscriptions and literature, from late classical times to the edge of the late Roman period. Can this linguistic sophistication be explained by the very diverse specification of tasks related to the supply and distribution of grain? Despite their lexical distinction, different offices often appear to have overlapping tasks while similar functions are sometimes named differently, which prompts the question: why are they distinguished from one another in the first place?

To a modern observer, such complexity for an apparently clearly circumscribed sector of civic life may seem strange. The purpose of this paper is twofold: first, we will explore the numerous terms relating to aspects of the grain-supply, in order to identify the tasks associated with each official and with different supply systems. All the while, we will try to distinguish between formal-institutional terms (those referring to magistracies or liturgies) and honorific titles, as well as between regular and temporary offices. Second, we will try to account for the different meanings of grain-related terms in the inscriptions and literary sources. By doing so, we will attempt to provide an explanation for the apparently overcomplicated lexical situation regarding the grain supply and to understand what this complexity might tell us about the economic involvement of civic authorities in the post-classical Greek city.

Because of its abundant evidence, Roman Asia Minor is taken as a case study, but the overall question will be illuminated by an extensive use of comparative material coming from all over the Greek world, both in the

Hellenistic and Imperial period. Through the analysis of a body of about two hundred documents, by looking at the cities of the Roman East from a wider geographical perspective, and considering the linguistic continuity between Hellenistic and Roman periods, we hope to extend and clarify the existing and pioneering descriptions of the language of grain-related interventions made by Couilloud-Le Dinahet (1988), Frézouls (1991), Darmezin (1991) and more recently by Dmitriev (2005).⁽¹⁾ In this paper, I will argue that the lexical diversity noticed among grain-related officials is mainly due to a strong institutionalisation of the matters of grain supply as well as to the politics of honours, and fostered by regional idiosyncrasies.

The data: food-related terminology in the inscriptions and literature

In our epigraphic database and in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (TLG), no less than 12 different words can be found that relate to grain-related offices or supply systems. To establish this list, we deliberately dismissed the terms referring to a granary understood as the physical structure for storing grain and not as a related public charge. Similarly, our list does not include the terms *parapraxis* or *epeunismos*, referring to sales of grain below market price (but usually higher than ‘normal’ price) organized by civic benefactors and which has recently received a thorough analysis by Arjan Zuiderhoek.⁽²⁾ Finally, we do not take into account the term *tropheus*⁽³⁾ (foster father) which, like *sotèr* (saviour) or *ktistès* (builder) deserves a separate discussion focused on the rhetoric of honorific titles. Figures 1 and 2 below indicate the distribution of grain related terms according to their occurrences both in our corpus of inscriptions and in the TLG:

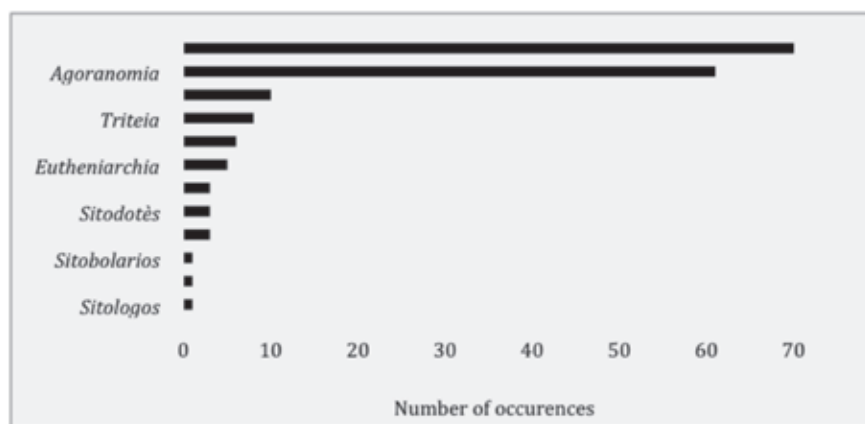


Figure 1 Grain-related terms according to their occurrence in the epigraphic database (n=205)

(1) COUILLLOUD-LE DINAHET, 1988, p. 321-332; FRÉZOULS, 1991, p. 1-18; DARMEZIN, 1991, p. 113-118; DMITRIEV, 2005, p. 16-21, 109-126.

(2) ZUIDERHOEK, 2014, p. 1-29.

(3) On which see ROBERT, 1948, p. 74-81.

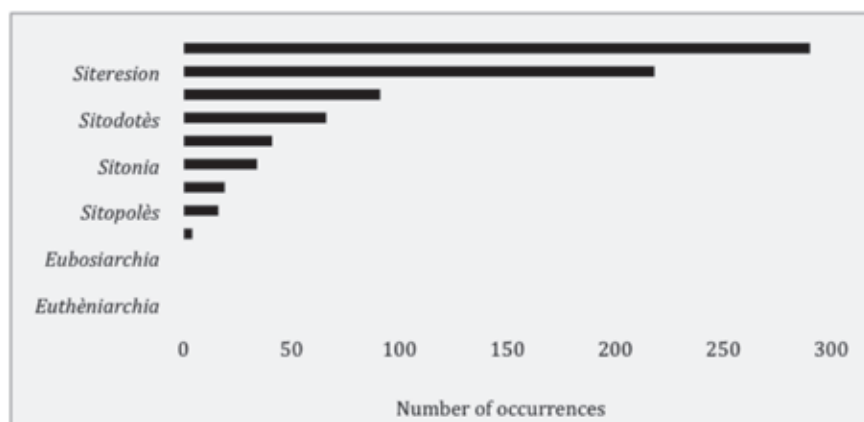


Figure 2 Grain-related terms according to their occurrence in the TLG database

As we can see, despite a similar ‘profile’ with two leading categories and the presence of the *agoranomia* and the *sitometria* among the three most frequently attested terms, the two distributions are quite different. The offices/ functions appear with significantly different frequencies in the two *corpora*: the *sitonia*, the leading category in the epigraphic database, is only a minor category in the literary sources, while the *sitodosia*, fairly rare in inscriptions, is the fourth most frequent grain-related term in the TLG. In the following sections, we shall try to identify the criteria on which the observed institutional differentiation is founded and to explain the discrepancies between literary and epigraphic sources.

Market officials and merchants: *agoranomoi*, *sitophylakes* and *sitopolai*

The magistrate most concerned with the urban grain supply is of course the *agoranomos*, whose first epigraphic attestation dates back to the fifth century BC in Kerkyra.⁽⁴⁾ The *agoranomos* acted as the ‘superintendent’ of the market.⁽⁵⁾ He was in charge of the logistical organization of the market, the control of weights and measures, the regularity of the supply – for the purpose of which he was managing a public fund – of price control, of the levying of taxes, and was also responsible for ensuring that transactions were done using the allowed currencies.⁽⁶⁾ In case of infringements in those matters, the *agoranomoi* had the judicial prerogatives to launch lawsuits.⁽⁷⁾ *Agoranomoi* also ensured the price and quality of the grain sold on the

(4) DESCAT, 2003, p. 591.

(5) The control exercised by the *agoranomos* was understood to be over the market as the *physical* location of commercial exchange, but through the regulation of prices, he also contributed to the regulation of the market in the abstract sense as we now understand it, i.e. the locus of the confrontation of supply and demand.

(6) CAPDETREY & HASSENOHR, 2012, p. 14-15. See also: DMITRIEV, 2005, p.29, 34.

(7) BRESSON, 2008, p. 30.

urban market, and often tried to exercise a downward pressure on prices by negotiating with merchants.⁽⁸⁾ As magistrates they managed a public fund for the expenses related to their charge, but they also often used their own resources for the import of grain or for purchasing grain and reselling it at a loss to keep prices low.⁽⁹⁾

Similar yet more specialized tasks concerning the control of grain prices were exercised by the *sitophylakes*, mentioned only once in the inscriptions of Roman Asia Minor⁽¹⁰⁾ but widely attested in fourth century BC Athens. According to the *Athenaion Politeia*, the role of the *sitophylakes* was to ensure that unground wheat and barley was for sale at the 'right' price and measured out with the approved weights,⁽¹¹⁾ and that the price of bread and flour were in reasonable proportion with the price of crops.⁽¹²⁾ They were also responsible for currency issues, registered the imported quantities of grain and ensured that grain dealers (*sitopolai*) would not buy more than the legally authorized quantity,⁽¹³⁾ in order to prevent stockpiling and speculation.

These merchants, the *sitopolai*, are best known through the famous discourse of Lysias *Against the grain dealers*, which sheds some light on the relationship between such traders and the city: grain was first imported into the harbour by the *emporoi* (wholesale dealers), and bought from them in legally restricted quantities by the *sitopolai*. The question arises of whether *sitophylakes* elsewhere in the Greek world had similar duties to the ones they had in Athens. As will be discussed below, the tasks of grain officials throughout the classical and post-classical Greek world display considerable chronological and geographical variation, but they also exhibit common traits. At least one inscription from Asia Minor mentions *sitophylakes* having a similar role to their Athenian counterparts.⁽¹⁴⁾

(8) MIGEOTTE, 2010, p. 346.

(9) Not in Classical Athens, but in various cities, especially from early Hellenistic times. See COUILLOU-LE DINAHET, 1988, p. 322-324; FRÉZOULS, 1991, p. 7; MIGEOTTE, 2010, p. 346. On *agoranomoi* intervening with their own money in Asia Minor: DMITRIEV, 2005, p.34, 144,148; BEKKER-NIELSEN, 2008, p. 75.

(10) *IMT Kyz. Kapu Dağ*, 1449 = DUMONT-HOMOLLE, 378, n° 64a.

(11) The word *dikaioi* in Greek can be translated by 'correct', 'just' or 'fair', 'even'. This ambiguity poses an important problem of interpretation: in the first sense, it might refer to the control exercised by market officials on merchants in order to ensure that they sold their products at a price close to the one they declared when entering the city; in the second, it might rather indicate a moral connotation close to the Roman rhetoric of *iustum pretium*. Yet, this linguistic difference matters little from a political point of view: whether reflecting the idea of an *a priori* defined 'fair price', or a legal procedure ensuring that merchants would apply the price resulting from the negotiation with civic authorities, this expression merely indicates the concern of city officials to exercise a downward pressure on grain prices.

(12) [Aristotle], *Ath. Pol.*, 51, 3-4; GARNSEY, 1988, p. 141; ERDKAMP, 2005, p. 295, 310. For the *sitophylakes* in Asia Minor see GARNSEY, 1988, p. 73.

(13) Demosthenes, *Against Leptinos*, 32; *Against Phormio*, 7; Lysias, *Against the grain dealers*, 5-6, 11-12; COUILLOU-LE DINAHET, 1988, p. 324-326; MIGEOTTE, 2014, p. 75.

(14) *IPriene* 81, l. 4-9. Cf. MIGEOTTE, 2010, p. 347.

Grain fund managers: the *sitonai*

Among the most frequently encountered terms associated with grain supply in our epigraphic sources are those relating to grain funds: the *sitōnia*,⁽¹⁵⁾ *sitonika*, or *sitonika chrēmata*. Its mechanism has been well described: the *sitōnia* consisted of a cash reserve,⁽¹⁶⁾ as attested by the expression *sitonika chrēmata* (translated by *frumentaria pecunia* in the Latin texts).⁽¹⁷⁾ The function of this fund was to cushion the rising of prices in times of dearth: the *sitonai* – sometimes helped by treasurers of the grain fund (*tamiai tōn sitonikōn chrēmatōn*) – were entitled to use the fund for purchasing grain when shortages occurred.⁽¹⁸⁾ This task must have implied strong negotiations with landowners who possessed stocks of grain in order to convince – or, with the help of governmental authorities, compel – them to sell their grain,⁽¹⁹⁾ and with merchants in order to obtain the lowest possible price. As suggested by documents from the Hellenistic period, grain was then resold on the urban market,⁽²⁰⁾ either at cost price or even at a loss⁽²¹⁾ (the gap being made up for by the personal resources of the *sitonai*), and the produce of the sale went back to the grain fund. The impact of this increased supply of affordable grain was to exercise a downward pressure on market prices.

The working of the cash fund required of course an initial input of money. This money could come either from the city itself, from a benefactor,⁽²²⁾ or from a public subscription or loan.⁽²³⁾ As clearly attested by epigraphic sources, the *sitōnia* was funded by both civic and private funds: in a first inscription from Attaleia, a certain Dionysios is honoured for having held the *sitōnia* (among other charges) ‘on his personal expenses’ (ἐξ οἰκειῶν δαπανημάτων),⁽²⁴⁾ while in a second inscription, from Erythrai, an official is honoured because he ‘has been *sitōnēs* many times on his own revenue’ (πολλάκι σειτώνης ἐκ προσόδων ιδίων).⁽²⁵⁾ Finally, a Phrygian inscription praises a benefactor for having undertaken the *sitōnia* ‘two times,

(15) One should not confuse the feminine noun *sitōnia*, which generically describes the institution as a whole, with the neuter plural noun *sitōnia* (sing.: *sitōnion*), describing the grain fund itself.

(16) ZUIDERHOEK, 2008, p. 163.

(17) *Dig.* L, 8, 2, 3.

(18) ERDKAMP, 2005, p. 269-270.

(19) An example of such forced sales to the *sitonai* is given in an inscription from Pisidian Antioch in 93 AD: *AE* 1925, 126.

(20) See DARMEZIN, 1991, p. 116; BRESSON, 2008, p. 129; MIGEOTTE, 2014, p. 176. For the documents, see *Syll*³, 344; *IErythrai*, 28; *ISE*, 64.

(21) BRESSON, 2008, p. 130.

(22) We should carefully distinguish liturgical payments from *sitonai* in office (cf. notes 20, 21 and 22 below) from spontaneous gifts of money to the grain funds by benefactors independent from the *sitōnia*: LBW, 648, 985 and 992; *IGR* IV, 1632; *IKStratonikeia*, 1028; *BCH*, 10, 1886, n°1, p. 500; *IDidyma*, II, 255, among other examples.

(23) For the different cases, see BRESSON, 2008, p. 128; MIGEOTTE, 2014, p. 177-186.

(24) *TAM* V, 829, l. 9-10.

(25) *IK-Erythrai*, 66.

without using the public money' (σειτωνήσαντα β' δίχα δημοσίων χρημάτων).⁽²⁶⁾ Beside the explicit mention of civic funds in the last document, the epigraphic emphasis on private contributions is in itself an indication that such payment were unconventional and that civic finances did not play a marginal role in the constitution and upkeep of the grain funds.⁽²⁷⁾

We do not wish to reopen the debate about whether the *sitionia* should be classified among the magistracies or liturgies, nor is this the place to discuss its financial sustainability.⁽²⁸⁾ What matters for the present argument is that the *sitionia* was an original, pervasive and long-lasting institution of the Greek cities: first attested in Attica in the fourth century BC,⁽²⁹⁾ the *sitionia* is documented until the late third century AD. Initially a temporary institution, some cities had already developed it into a regular mechanism in the Hellenistic period;⁽³⁰⁾ by the first century AD, the system had become permanent.⁽³¹⁾

In the literary sources, the *sitionia* appears as a minor category, while it is the second most frequently attested grain-related system in our body of inscriptions. Yet, the meaning of the word *sitionia* (and its derivatives) is the same in literary and epigraphic documents, as is the case for the *agoranomia*. The discrepancy in frequency attestations between epigraphic and literary sources is explained by the area of distribution of the *sitionia*: while the *agoranomia* is attested all over the Greek world, the *sitionia* is geographically concentrated in Greece, in the Aegean basin and Asia Minor. Since our epigraphic database focuses on Asia Minor, it is therefore a dominant category among the registered offices, but is only represented in a modest share of the whole of Greek literature. Similarly, since much of the Greek literary sources refer to a western context, the dominance of the *agoranomia* in the textual corpus might well partly be a consequence of the common utilization of the Greek word *agoranomos* as equivalent to the Latin word *aedilis*.⁽³²⁾

Evidence for eastern grain-doles? (1) – the *sitometria*

Contrary to the monetary nature of the *sitionia*, it appears from inscriptions that the σιτομετρία (*sitometria*) consisted of an allowance of grain in kind. The term is indeed connected to the word *sitomètrion*, which must be translated as 'grain reserve', and all the inscriptions mentioning contributions to a *sitometrion* (or referring to the *sitometria* as an action) are expressed in

(26) *MAMA* VII, 11, l. 10-12.

(27) For a complementary discussion on the *sitionia*, see also QUASS, 1993, p. 238-248 (Hellenistic), 267-268 (Roman).

(28) See SILVER, 2007, p. 95 – 104; *contra* ERDKAMP 2005; ZUIDERHOEK, 2008, p. 159-180.

(29) We know that Demosthenes held the office of *sitones* in Athens in 338/337 BC (Plutarch, *Dem*, 21, 1). For one of the first epigraphic occurrences, see *IG* II², 1628. Cf. GARNSEY, 1988, p. 163; MIGEOTTE, 2010, p. 306; 2014, p. 176.

(30) DARMEZIN, 1991, p. 117; MIGEOTTE, *loc. cit.* p. 306 sqq.

(31) STRUBBE, 1989, p. 118.

(32) MASON, 1974, p. 19

terms of grain, not money: under the reign of Antoninus Pius, a public slave named Onesimos contributed (προσέθετο) 352 *modii* of grain a year – but for how long we do not know – to the *sitometrion* of Balbura.⁽³³⁾ A similar contribution was made to the *sitometrion* of Myra by a certain Amyntas.⁽³⁴⁾ As a last example, probably one of the most explicit, an inscription from Ancyra in Galatia, dated from the first third of the first century AD, refers to another Amyntas who ‘provided *sitometria* by shares of five *modii*’ (σειτομετρίαν ἔδωκ[εν] ἀνὰ πέντε μοδίου).⁽³⁵⁾ In most inscriptions however, the fact that grain is given in kind must be understood from the function itself: *σιτομετρέω* is nothing but *σίτον* + *μετρέω*, that is ‘measuring – or allowing a measure of – grain’. It is therefore not surprising that explicit mentions to grain in kind in *sitometria* inscriptions are not so frequent, for such statement would most often be redundant. On the other hand, only two inscriptions explicitly mention contributions to a *sitometrion* in money. The first, quoted by Garnsey, refers to a certain Ammias who provided 10,000 *drachmai* ‘for the grain distribution’,⁽³⁶⁾ while the second (dating from AD 152 at the latest) informs us of a gift of 10,000 *denarii* to the *sitometrion* of Patara.⁽³⁷⁾ However, neither of these two inscriptions can support the idea that the *sitometrion* would have been a ‘grain fund’ in the monetary sense, which would make it indistinguishable from the *sitònion*. Rather, these texts most probably imply that the gifts of money were intended to serve for the purchase of grain specifically devoted to the provision of the *sitometrion*, or to specific costs related to the maintenance of those infrastructures and to the logistic organization of the distribution of grain.

The question arises of whether the term *sitometria* refers to an institutionalized system or to occasional, informal distributions of grain. Evidence is ambiguous on this aspect: in inscriptions, indeed, the *sitometria* is often mentioned among the list of the different functions occupied by the official or benefactor concerned: *σειτομετρήσαντα*, as we can read for instance in an inscription from Kadyanda.⁽³⁸⁾ Yet, contrary to what Peter Garnsey argues,⁽³⁹⁾ this is not sufficient to say that the *sitometria* was a *munus*. Besides the fact that Aristotle classifies the *sitometrai* among the *epimeleiai* and not among the *archai*,⁽⁴⁰⁾ the aorist participle *σειτομετρήσαντα* is never accompanied by the usual laudatory adjectives related to the epigraphic presentation of magistracies or liturgies in honorific inscriptions, like *ἀγνῶς*, *φιλοτείμως*...etc. Secondly, there is not a single mention of any public fund that would have to be managed by the one who performed the *sitometria*, as is usually the case for magistracies. Thirdly, the language of inscriptions seems to indicate clearly enough that the *sitometria* had solely a verbal, transitive meaning, as in the inscription quoted above (*σειτομετρίαν ἔδωκ[εν]*), or even

(33) *LBW* II, 1228; see also: COULTON, MILNER and REYES, 1988, p. 134-139.

(34) *TAM* II, 774, l. 8-9.

(35) *OGI*, II, 533, l. 36-37 = *IGR* III, 157.

(36) GARNSEY, 1988, p. 263; unfortunately I could not find the text of the inscription.

(37) BALLAND, 1981, n°67.

(38) *TAM* II, 661.

(39) GARNSEY, 1988, p. 262-265.

(40) Aristotle, *Pol*, IV, 15, 3 (1299a); cf. MIGEOTTE, 2010b, p. 348.

more explicitly in an inscription from Oenoanda honouring Gaius Licinnius Thoantianus Fronto in which we can read ‘σειτομετρήσαντα πάλιν τοὺς πολεΐτας ἐκ τε τοῦ δημοσίου πυρο[ῦ] καὶ οὗ ἐκ τῶν ιδίων ἐπέδωκεν’.⁽⁴¹⁾ It is clear that the form *σειτομετρήσαντα* is implied in a relationship to another entity (here, the citizens), and may not be considered as a self-sufficient concept that could be isolated from the receivers. As we have seen above, the very etymology of the word does not refute this argument. The passage of the inscription from Oenoanda should thus be translated as follows: “having again distributed grain to the citizens from the public wheat and from the one he gave from his own resources”.

Complications result from the fact that the term *sitometria* is not only used in the straightforward sense of institutional distributions connected with public storage structures (*sitometrion*), but also in a more common sense of an informal distribution of grain (which may be by individual or governmental initiative),⁽⁴²⁾ or to signify any role played in supplying grain (for example to an army).⁽⁴³⁾ It is mostly in this second – vague – meaning that the word *sitometria* is used in the literary sources, which also explains the important frequency of this apparently very specific and technical term in the Greek literature of all periods and all genres. Louis Robert had therefore precisely understood the meaning of the *sitometria* when he considered it as being close to the *sitodosia*, that is, a mere distribution of corn⁽⁴⁴⁾ – since the *sitodosia* was no official charge and ‘had primarily a social significance’.⁽⁴⁵⁾

Both terms, however, are by no means synonyms. A first difference lies certainly in the procedure through which they were performed: while the *sitodosia* is nothing but a fairly informal distribution of grain from private resources, the *sitometria*, understood in its main epigraphic meaning, was linked to a municipal structure, the *sitometrion*, supplied both by ‘private’ and ‘public’ grain. But they also certainly differ regarding their receivers. Being a *sitodôtēs*, as mentioned in an inscription from Selge and another from Philadelphia,⁽⁴⁶⁾ seems simply to imply organizing a distribution of grain, without specifying any restriction, which could reasonably make us conclude that it was open to any member of the citizen body, and perhaps any resident of the city. The receivers of the *sitometria*, on the contrary, are not as easily identifiable. It has often been argued, indeed, that the *sitometria* targeted basically a specific group of citizens called *sitometroumenoi*,⁽⁴⁷⁾ whose status has been long debated. While some authors consider they formed an élite group who benefitted from the privilege of receiving an allowance of grain⁽⁴⁸⁾ – in the spirit of the *epidoseis* where higher status individuals are privileged – , Michael Wörle argues that the term rather referred to the citizens financially able – and therefore perhaps entitled –

(41) *IGR* III, 493, ll. 10-12.

(42) See for instance: Diodorus Siculus, *Hist.* II, 41, 1; *Genesis* (Sept.), 47, 12, 1; 14, 3.

(43) Polybius, *Hist.* I, 68, 9; IV, 63, 10.

(44) ROBERT, 1948, p. 75.

(45) DMITRIEV, 2005, p. 220.

(46) *IGR* IV, 1631; *IK-Selge*, 16.

(47) *TAM* II, 578; 579; *SEG* 27, 938; BALLAND, 1981, n°67.

(48) SARTRE, 1991, p. 183-184; COULTON, MILNER and REYES, 1988, p. 138.

to perform grain distributions and/or supply the *sitometrion*.⁽⁴⁹⁾ As for A. Balland, he sees the *sitometroumenoi* as the oriental counterpart to the *plebs frumentaria*,⁽⁵⁰⁾ considering thereby the *sitometria* as an Anatolian version of the roman grain-dole.

The connection between the *sitometria* and the *sitometroumenoi* is typical of Lycian inscriptions from the Roman imperial period. In this particular context, it is probably more convincing to understand the *sitometroumenoi* as a privileged group receiving an allowance of grain rather than as entitled suppliers of this system, since we argued above that the *sitometria* was no *munus*. Moreover, the expression '*sitometroumenoi*' is the mediopassive form of the present participle of the verb *siometrêo*. If this group of citizens were responsible for the supply and distribution of grain, one may wonder why ancient Greeks did not refer to them using the active form '*sitometroûntes*' instead, unless we should imagine that they were both suppliers and receivers... Yet, the *sitometria* is attested in several places outside Lycia,⁽⁵¹⁾ and this conclusion cannot, I think, be used to support the idea that the *sitometria* was generally or even primarily oriented towards the specific category of the *sitometroumenoi* elsewhere. As Maurice Sartre argues, the 'public wheat' referred to in the abovementioned inscription from Oenoanda⁽⁵²⁾ is not likely to have been reserved to such a restricted group.⁽⁵³⁾ This same inscription, moreover, states that the receivers of the distribution were the citizens (τοὺς πολεΐτας), without further limitations, which is supported by the expression *σειτομετρομένω δῆ[μω]* in the inscription from Phrygia quoted above. Finally, a document from Patara dating from the reign of Hadrian or Marcus Aurelius refers to an 'ἐπαρχ[ο]ν σειτομετρίου δήμου Ῥωμαίων',⁽⁵⁴⁾ a Greek translation for *praefectus annonae*.⁽⁵⁵⁾ Although no such corn-dole as the *annona* ever existed in the Roman East, the use of the word *sitometrion* as a lexical parallel to the *annona* seems to indicate that the *sitometria* could have had a much broader target than the restricted group of *sitometroumenoi* that we encounter in Lycia. As for the *sitometroumenoi* strictly speaking, they include members of the *bouleutic* order as well as sub-élite or 'middle class' citizens; like Peter Garnsey writes, 'they may well have included poor people, but it is unlikely that poverty would have been a criterion for inclusion'.⁽⁵⁶⁾

In the cities of Lycia, the *sitometria* appears to be an institutionalized form of grain distribution in kind, provisioned through a public channel (*sitometrion*) and most often restricted to a privileged group. In other regions, the lack of evidence for the presence of a *sitometrion* or the relative infrequency of occurrences is not sufficient to argue that the *sitometria* was a mere informal

(49) WÖRRLE, 1988, p. 131; DMITRIEV, 2005, p. 323, n. 160.

(50) BALLAND, 1981, p. 215 sqq.

(51) Caria: *IK-Stratonikeia*, 227, l.8; Phrygia: *MAMA* IV, 143, ll. 10-11; Galatia: *OGL*, II, 533, ll. 36-37 = *IGR* III, 157. In Egypt, *sitometrai* are mentioned in connection with granaries, and seem also to have been responsible for the transport of grain from granaries to harbours (WALLACE, 1969 [1938], p. 37).

(52) Cf. n. 39.

(53) SARTRE, 1991, p. 184.

(54) *TAM* II, 426, l. 11.

(55) MASON, 1974, p. 84, 138.

(56) GARNSEY, 1988, p. 263.

distribution in those cities. They most likely relied on both civic and private grain, as in the inscription from Oenoanda, in which case some public grain reserve – and thus some supervision by civic authorities – must have existed. The most striking difference probably concerned the recipients of this grain: although there probably was some variation over time, a specific group of citizens does not seem to have been clearly defined outside Lycia. Finally, in some cities, the word *sitometria* must also have been used in more common contexts of usual, informal or euergetic distributions of grain, as is the case in the literary sources. In those respects, we can safely argue against the view, expressed by Peter Garnsey, of the *sitometria* being ‘privately funded’, having ‘all the hallmarks of (yet another) liturgy’, reducible to a ‘Lycian system’ and being restricted to a group of privileged citizens consisting of a Greek version of the *plebs frumentaria*.⁽⁵⁷⁾

Evidence for eastern grain-doles? (2) – the *sitèresia*

The *sitometria* understood as a formalized grain dole targeting a specific population is in fact similar to another grain-related institution of the Greek world: the σιτηρέσιον (*siterèsion*; plur.: *siterèsia*). The term has mostly been used to describe a grain distribution system widely documented in Egypt between the mid second and early fourth century AD, especially in Oxyrhynchus, Hermoupolis, Antinooupolis and Alexandria. The earliest Egyptian attestation of the *sitèresion* originates from Antinooupolis in AD 154, but this case is special since it is an imperial foundation. Despite the concentration of the evidence in the last quarter of the third century, Jean-Michel Carrié has shown that we should acknowledge the regular organization of *sitèresia* for many decades during the third and early fourth century AD.⁽⁵⁸⁾ Except for Antinooupolis where we might reasonably assume the involvement of imperial finances, the *sitèresia* in the other Egyptian cities seem to have been mostly a municipal concern, though local benefactors also probably intervened on occasion.

As for the recipients of those *frumentationes*, their registration was slightly different from city to city. In Alexandria, they were organized in age classes, without further limitations,⁽⁵⁹⁾ while in Antinooupolis and Oxyrhynchus a *numerus clausus* appears. In Oxyrhynchus, three different categories are mentioned: the επικριθέντες, the metropolitans whose civic status had been verified at the age of fourteen; the πᾶμβοι, who were granted the right to claim an allowance of grain for having performed liturgies; and the ὁμόλογοι, whose criteria of admission are still unclear (they may have received grain on special authorization, or had only one metropolitane parent).⁽⁶⁰⁾ When we put all categories together, the total number of beneficiaries did not exceed 4,000.

(57) GARNSEY, 1988, p. 263-265.

(58) CARRIÉ, 1975, p. 1087-1088.

(59) Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*, VII, 21, 9, quoting a letter from Dionysius of Alexandria.

(60) LEWIS, 1974, p. 158-162; GARNSEY, 1988, p. 265-267; HUSSON and VALBELE, 1992, p.241; VIRLOUVET, 1995, p. 216-218, 246; ALSTON, 2002, p. 151, 276.

Despite notable differences between the cities, Egyptian *frumentationes* also shared certain characteristics: categories of recipients of the *sitèresia* were selected per tribe,⁽⁶¹⁾ and some random draw appears to have taken place, for example when a deceased beneficiary had to be replaced. Regarding the concrete organization of the distribution, the procedure is known from the material of Hermoupolis and Oxyrhynchus: recipients were given *tablai* (pieces of ceramic, similar to the Roman *tessera*) exchangeable for a definite quantity of grain.⁽⁶²⁾

In Asia Minor, the term *sitèresion* appears in seven inscriptions dating from the third and second centuries BC describing three different situations: grain rewards given by the city to prominent citizens (1), euergetic distributions of grain (2), and occasional grain distributions organized by the city⁽⁶³⁾ (3). For the Roman period, only two documents are known, both from the Antonine period. In four out of those nine inscriptions, a formalized distribution system can be assumed,⁽⁶⁴⁾ but the evidence is insufficient for us to be certain.⁽⁶⁵⁾

A full parallel between Egyptian *sitèresia* and the Roman *frumentationes* cannot be established: *per capita* quantities are smaller, and the annual frequency of the distributions is different.⁽⁶⁶⁾ But Roman and Egyptian grain doles also exhibit resemblances: there was a finite number of beneficiaries, selected by tribe; admission criteria encompassed both geographic and social parameters; and the logistic organization and procedure are remarkably similar.⁽⁶⁷⁾ Both in the case of the Egyptian *sitèresia* and the Lycian *sitometria*, beside the difference regarding the source of funds (municipal and euergetic *versus* imperial), further differences with the Roman *annona* seem mostly quantitative: smaller quantities and fewer beneficiaries (4,000 in Oxyrhynchus, 1,100 *sitometroumenoi* in Tlos).⁽⁶⁸⁾ Yet, the systems are of a similar nature: they consist of a more or less regular allowance of free grain to a definite number of (mostly) citizens.

The relative abundance of the word *sitèresion* (and its variants) in the literary sources might seem disconcerting with regard to the geographic and institutional specificity of the term, and compared to its scarcity in our body of inscriptions: it is indeed the third most frequent grain-related term in the TLG database (see Fig. 2). The reason for this lies in the generic sense in which the word *sitèresion* is used in the literature, encompassing three different situations: (1) provisions to an army,⁽⁶⁹⁾ (2) distributions of grain, whether as benefaction⁽⁷⁰⁾ or as an allowance of grain to soldiers,⁽⁷¹⁾ and (3), closer to the inscriptions and papyri, the *annona*.⁽⁷²⁾

(61) ALSTON, 2002, p. 149; VIRLOUVET, 1995, p.248.

(62) *P.Lips.inv.* 483, quoted in CARRIÉ, 1975, p. 1081. See also VIRLOUVET, 1995, p. 23. For a detailed discussion about the *tessera* in the Roman world: *Ibidem*, p. 309-369.

(63) *IPriene*, 108, l.154.

(64) *IK-Erythrai*, 24, l.18 & *IK-Erythrai*, 117, l. 33.

(65) For the Roman period: *IGR* III, 495 and *IK-Pergè*, 181.

(66) VIRLOUVET, 1995, p. 23 sqq.

(67) *Ibidem*, p. 250 sqq.

(68) *SEG* 27, 938.

(69) Demosthenes, *Phil.* I, 28-29; Xenophon, *Anab.* VI, 2, 4.

(70) Plutarch, *Crassus*, 2, 3.

(71) Herodotus, *Hist.* III, 3, 8; IV, 4, 7.

(72) Cassius Dio, *Hist. Rom.* LIX, 6, 4.

Sitologoi and sitobolarioi

The description of grain distribution systems, whether from public or private stores, prompts the question of grain storage. Among the list of grain-related offices, two terms are associated with granaries in the epigraphic documents: the *sitologos* and the *sitobolarios*.⁽⁷³⁾ The function of *sitobolarios* is only attested in one inscription from Asia Minor, but most probably refers to the guardian of the granary – the σῖτοβολών or σῖτοβολεῖον⁽⁷⁴⁾ – in the sense of ‘physical’ surveillance.

In Asia Minor, the word *sitologos* appears only in one – very mutilated – inscription from Nikaia.⁽⁷⁵⁾ Its functions can be illuminated by recourse to Egyptian documents: *sitologoi* were in charge of public granaries where they registered the inputs of tax-grain. After bringing their grain to the village threshing-floor, peasants or tenants brought it to the granary, where the *sitologos* issued receipts testifying to the payment and kept records of the grain received.⁽⁷⁶⁾ As part of the registration, one of their important tasks was to distinguish tax-grain from grain paid as rents on public domains.⁽⁷⁷⁾ Finally, *sitologoi* were also responsible for organizing the transport of a share of the collected grain towards Alexandria,⁽⁷⁸⁾ a task which required them to keep in contact with *negotiatores* (*nauklèroi*).⁽⁷⁹⁾ The connection of *sitologoi* with the harbours, possibly for commercial reasons in Ptolemaic times, could likewise be linked to the supply of Rome with Egyptian tax grain after the Roman conquest. Support for this statement might be found in the intermittent replacement of the *sitologoi* by the *dekaprotoi*⁽⁸⁰⁾ as grain-collectors. *Dekaprotoi* formed a social group consisting of a Greek equivalent of the Roman *decemprimi*; the institution resulted from the integration of the Eastern Mediterranean into the framework of Roman law.⁽⁸¹⁾ Here again, one may wonder whether the *sitologoi* in Asia Minor and Egypt had an identical role, especially with respect to the observation that in Asia Minor too were *dekaprotoi* engaged in tax collection.⁽⁸²⁾ In the inscription from Nikaia the term *sitologos* is surrounded by other food-related charges (*agoranomos*, treasurer of the oil fund) which most probably belong to the curriculum of a local official, indicating that it was understood in an institutional sense. This

(73) The word *sitodokos* is also a synonym.

(74) Cf. *supra*. Several different terms refer to granaries and storage structures, and terminology varied a lot across space.

(75) *IK-Iznik*, 1260.

(76) *P. Lond.* III, 1586a, quoted in HOBSON, 1993, p. 73-74; Herodotus, II, 109; *Genesis*, 47, 24-26; WALLACE, 1961, p. 34-35; ADAMS, 2007, p. 162-163; ADAMS, 2013, p. 6273.

(77) WALLACE, 1969, p. 37.

(78) ADAMS, 2007, p. 171.

(79) *Ibidem*, p. 191-194.

(80) THOMAS, 1975, p. 111-119; ADAMS, 2007, p. 170. *Dekaprotoi* replaced *sitologoi* from ca. AD 242-246 until ca. AD 303 when *sitologoi* reappear: THOMAS, 1971, p. 60-68; ALSTON, 2002, p. 278.

(81) Whether *dekaprotoi* were defined as a group of officials or as leading members of the city is still unclear. On the *dekaproteia* in the east, see DMITRIEV, 2005, p. 197-200.

(82) MAGIE, 1950, p. 648; SARTRE, 1991, p. 86; p. 347; DMITRIEV, 2005, p. 198.

contrasts with the literary sources, where the words derived from the word *sitologeîn* are used in the unspecialized sense of ‘collecting grain’ in order to supply a specific population, often in a military context;⁽⁸³⁾ a difference which explains the discrepancy between the abundance of the word in literary texts and its scarcity in epigraphic/papyrological documents, given the widespread presence of war-related subjects in the ancient literature. But most importantly, *sitologoi* are not mentioned elsewhere except in Egypt and Asia Minor, suggesting that the term had a similar meaning in the two regions whose respective grain-related institutions – the *sitometria* and the *sitêresia* – have already displayed some resemblance.

Generic terms

Apart from all those supply systems, offices and grain-related interventions, documents also mention some slightly more obscure officials: the *eubosiarchai* /*euposiarchai* (literally ‘in charge of the well-being’) and *euthênarchai* (‘in charge of the abundance’), on which very little is known from the sources.⁽⁸⁴⁾ Scholars usually agree to describe *eubosiarchai* as chief officials in charge of the food supply.⁽⁸⁵⁾ As for the *eutheniarchai*, according to some documents from Oxyrhynchus, one of their functions was to exercise a control over the bakeries.⁽⁸⁶⁾ The fact that *eutheniarchai* and *eubosiarchai* are a middling category in inscriptions but are completely absent from literary sources suggests that they did not belong to the common language of grain supply intervention and that they were characteristic of a specific (institutional) context. As the vague signification of those terms might indicate, they were most probably circumstantial officials, appointed perhaps in particular difficulties, either as expedients in cities lacking institutional responses, or as complementary officials to existing schemes in cities already endowed with grain supply infrastructures. The use of emphatic titles probably reflects a symbolic reward which must have played a significant role in convincing citizens to undertake such burdensome charges. What Sviatoslav Dmitriev writes about the variety of terms categorizing officials in the Greek cities in general also applies to the specific case of generic grain-related officials: ‘The use of these epithets by the Greeks reflected the social prestige of such offices rather than their administrative importance.’⁽⁸⁷⁾

Regional variations

As we have seen with the Lycian *sitometria* and the Egyptian *sitêresion*, similar grain-supply schemes may bear different names in different regions.

(83) For example Appian, *Mithr.* XI, 72; Appian, *Bell. Civ.* II, 6, 42; Polybius, *Hist.* III, 101, 4.

(84) MIGEOTTE, 2010b, p. 348.

(85) ROBERT, 1960, p. 236-237; SCHMITT-PANTEL, 2011, p. 372.

(86) CARRIÉ, 1975 p. 1081.

(87) DMITRIEV, 2005, p. 127.

Besides being a product of functional differentiation, one might thus wonder to what extent lexical diversity resulted from geographical variation. A good example is that of the *triteia* and its officials, the *triteutai*.⁽⁸⁸⁾ Solely attested in Pergamon and Thyateira, the *triteia* appears to be a mere regional variant of the *sitometria*, since it consists of an allowance of a ration of one third of a *medimnos* (*triton*),⁽⁸⁹⁾ but no clear identification of the recipients can be made from the documents. Similar geographic particularities can also be discerned in the case of circumstantial offices: all the references to *euposiarchai* come from the Aegean Basin (Thrace, Asia Minor and islands) – with the variant ‘*eubosiarchai*’ (instead of *euposiarchai*) being restricted to Pisidia – while another generic grain-related official, the *sitothetès*, is only known from Samothrace.⁽⁹⁰⁾ The *eutheniarchai*, however, appear as a more widespread designation, since they are known in Asia Minor, Thrace, North Africa, Egypt and Sicily,⁽⁹¹⁾ even though on the whole, the office remains fairly rare.

Regional variability is not limited to the titles of grain officials; it also affects their functions. The clearest case is probably that of the *sitophylakes*. As we have seen above, in Athens *sitophylakes* were overseers of the resale of grain. In some documents from Tauromenion, however, they seem to play an active role in the storage and management of public grain.⁽⁹²⁾ This matter of *custodia publici frumenti* is also the subject of a passage of Cicero concerning the Anatolian city of Temnos;⁽⁹³⁾ in this case however, Claude Nicolet dismisses the idea that it would refer to a *sitophylax* and argues that it concerns an ephemeral official of the granary.⁽⁹⁴⁾

Artificial diversity?

Beside such variations due to regional denominations of similar offices or to the attribution of different tasks to identical offices in different places, we also notice that different officials sometimes exercise the same functions in the same city. Similar interventions are indeed performed by *agoranomoi* and *sitonai*:⁽⁹⁵⁾ such overlap is suspected for Prusias,⁽⁹⁶⁾ for instance, while in some other cities we see *agoranomoi* adding funds of their own resources to keep prices low or to purchase additional grain, an intervention typically associated with grain funds managed by *sitonai* or to euergetic *parapraxeis* (sales below market prices).⁽⁹⁷⁾ The interventions of *sitophylakes* and

(88) MIGEOTTE, 2010b, p. 348.

(89) The evidence is the following: *TAM* V, 2, 939; 963; 982; *IGR* IV, 414; 1228; 1244; 1256; 1680.

(90) *SEG* 26, 1027; 31, 803; 36, 788; MIGEOTTE, 2010b, p. 347 & MIGEOTTE, 2010a, p. 318-319.

(91) Data from PHI inscriptions.

(92) *Syll*³, 954; BATTISTONI, 2013, p. 6273-6274; Migeotte, 2010b, p. 347.

(93) Cicero, *Pro Flacco*, 19 (45).

(94) NICOLET, 1982, p. 88.

(95) ERDKAMP, 2005, p. 270.

(96) FERNOUX, 2004, p. 334.

(97) DMITRIEV, 2005, p. 148; MIGEOTTE, 2010b, p. 346.

agoranomoi appear to display an even greater degree of similarity: both officials act as overseers of the agora, control the price at which grain is for sale, and ensure that the right measures and weights are used.

Such overlap in the tasks of different officials within the same city could make us wonder about the extent to which the administrative diversity of Greek cities could be deliberate. Grain-related interventions were costly, both for the city and for its élites. The diversification of offices might thus represent a significant advantage: by creating distinct offices – collegial, most of the time –, the number of potential contributors was increased, resulting in a smaller financial charge per magistrate or liturgist, while the symbolic prestige of such offices might have represented an important incentive for wealthy citizens to undertake such charges. To examine this hypothesis, the different documented functions of grain-related offices (except generic terms) are summarized in Fig. 3 *infra*. As we can see, a clear overlap between two or more offices occurs in four out of eight types of functions (col. II, IV, VI and VII). Yet what are the underlying reasons for this overlap? In the case of the *sitometria*, *triteia* and *siteresia*, we have already seen that their lexical differentiation derives mainly from regional idiosyncrasies. As for the apparent overlap between *sitologoi*, *sitobolarioi* and, in some places, *sitophylakes* regarding the control of the granary (col. IV), we are dealing with a mere illusion of similarity: *sitobolarioi* are responsible for the physical protection of the granaries, while *sitologoi* are officials recording the inputs of tax-grain. Although both related to the management of the granary, the details of such functions are actually clearly distinguished.

Let us now turn to the most significant cases of overlap: *agoranomoi* and *sitonai* on the one hand (col. VII), and *agoranomoi* and *sitophylakes* on the other (col. VI). As explained above, *agoranomoi* were the superintendents of the market; through this task, they often exercised a price control over the sale of grain. Like all magistrates, they managed a public fund for the expenses related to their functions. However, with the growing confusion between magistracies and liturgies that develops from the Hellenistic period and after,⁽⁹⁸⁾ magistrates were increasingly expected to contribute from their own resources (a financial participation that was already suggested in Aristotle's *Politics*).⁽⁹⁹⁾ As demonstrated by Léopold Migeotte, the role of the *agoranomoi* moved slowly from a predominantly judicial function of oversight over the transactions taking place in the agora, in the fifth and early fourth century, towards a broader involvement in the supply of foodstuffs to the city during the course of the fourth century and after, a role which often exceeded the restricted sphere of the agora.⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ This shift in the functions of the *agoranomoi* coincided with the independent development of the *sitonia* and resulted in a partial overlap between the two functions.

Even more identical are the interventions of *sitophylakes* and *agoranomoi*: leaving aside the regional variability for a moment and focusing on the

(98) For a good overview of this question see JONES, 1940, p. 167-168, 175-176; DMITRIEV, 2005, p. 114-119; SARTRE, 1991, p. 139-141; COULLLOUD-LE DINAHET, 1988, p. 324; PAVIS D'ESCURAC, 1987, p. 120; FRÉZOULS, 1991, p. 8.

(99) Aristotle, *Pol*, VI, 7, 6.

(100) MIGEOTTE, 2015, p. 34-39.

Athenian evidence, both *sitophylakes* and *agoranomoi* act as overseers of the agora, control the price at which grain is for sale, and ensure that the right measures and weights are used. At this stage, it is difficult to understand how those offices differ from each other. But, as already highlighted above, *sitophylakes* were tasked with regulating transactions taking place between importers (*emporoi*) and resellers (*sitopolai*, *kapeloi*). Raymond Descat has recently clarified the specific tasks of the *sitophylakes* through a revised interpretation of the *Athenaion Politeia* and of Lysias' discourse:⁽¹⁰¹⁾ *sitopolai* bought grain from *emporoi* in the *emporion*, and sold it on the *agora* of the Piraeus and of the city. *Sitophylakes* were present in both *agorai* and controlled the *sitopolai* on arrival: merchants were expected to show the contract of purchase realized in the *emporion* and to declare the price at which they would sell the grain. The *sitophylakes* could thus ensure that the officially allowed price margin was observed and that no *sitopolès* would hold more than the maximum quantity of grain legally authorized (50 *phormoi*).

But how can this reconstruction account for the fact that *agoranomoi* were also responsible for verifying that grain dealers actually sold their grain close to the price they declared? A plausible solution is to consider that *sitophylakes* exercised an *a priori* control, while the *agoranomoi* exercised an *a posteriori* control. Indeed, the fact that *sitopolai* would declare a price fitting the maximum benefit allowed at the entrance of the *agora* did not guarantee that they could not sell their grain at a higher price a couple of days later. The role of the *agoranomoi*, among their various other tasks, would thus have been to ensure that the *sitopolai* would keep their prices at more or less the same level during the whole time of their activities in the *agora*.

There remains the question, however, if we can generalize the Athenian case for the whole of the eastern Mediterranean in classical and post-classical times? As argued by Léopold Migeotte, the intense administrative fragmentation noticeable in Athens between *sitophylakes*, *agoranomoi* and *metronomoi*, the very specific distribution of tasks between them as well as the importance of the involvement of *sitophylakes* in the operational chain of the grain supply most likely resulted from the size of the city and its vital dependence upon commercially imported grain.⁽¹⁰²⁾ While this argument seems perfectly valid, it does not in and of itself imply that a similar distribution of tasks between *agoranomoi* and *sitophylakes* could not occur elsewhere, even in a smaller city. The only inscription recording a *sitophylax* in Asia Minor during the Roman period comes from Cyzicus and refers to a certain 'Μ. Αὐρ. Ἀμερίμνου σειτοφύλακος τῆς πόλεως'.⁽¹⁰³⁾ In this text, the expression '*sitophylax* of the city' seems pleonastic: *sitophylakes* were obviously civic officials, something of which the stonemason or those instructing him could hardly have been unaware. The most logical explanation is thus to understand the expression σειτοφύλαξ τῆς πόλεως as being distinguished from the σειτοφύλαξ τοῦ ἐμπορίου, just like in Athens *sitophylakes* exercised control both at the harbour and in the city, for we know that Cyzicus had a harbour.

(101) DESCAT, 2003, p. 598-599.

(102) MIGEOTTE, 2015, p. 28.

(103) *IMT Kyz. Kapu Dağ*, 1449, l.9-10.

Even though geographical specificities cannot be denied, as in the case of the *sitophylakes* of Tauromenion, the overlap between the tasks of different officials was mostly a *trompe-l'oeil*: Administrative differentiation – within the same city – was for the most part *not* artificial or irrelevant, but corresponded to distinct institutional functions.

	Distribution		Grain purchase	Control of the granary	Collection of tax grain	Control weights& measures	Price regulation	Registration of quantities
	From private stock	From public stock						
<i>Sitonès</i>								
<i>Agoranomos</i>								
<i>Sitometria</i>								
<i>Triteia</i>								
<i>Sitodotès</i>								
<i>Sitologos</i>								
<i>Siteresion</i>								
<i>Sitophylax</i>								
<i>Sitobolarios</i>								
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII

Table 1 Main functions of grain-related offices and supply systems

Conclusion

The analysis of the evidence undertaken in this paper has so far revealed two driving forces behind the lexical diversity observed in source references to grain-related interventions and institutions: an important functional differentiation on the one hand, and substantial regional idiosyncrasies on the other hand. From the functional point of view, the twelve recorded terms refer to merchants (*sitopolai*), grain distribution schemes (*sitometria/triteia* and *sitèresion*), and city officials. Among those offices, five appear to be regular or permanent functions (*agoranomoi*, *sitophylakes*, *sitonai*, *sitologoi*, and *sitobolaroi* – or any similar designation for the guardian of the granary), while the *eutheniarchai* and *eubosiarchai* seem rather temporary. However, the differentiation of tasks does not fully account for the lexical diversity observed: the Anatolian *sitometria* and the Egyptian *sitèresia*, although exhibiting differences regarding their technicalities, consisted of a similar feature of civic life, *i.e.* more or less regular grain distribution schemes. Even more meaningful are the differences observed between the tasks of identically named officials in different places (mostly *agoranomoi* and *sitophylakes*), which reveal that the institutional and geographic explanation cannot account for the entirety of the observed lexical diversity. As Jean Andreau explains, the distribution of tasks between officials in Greek and Roman cities was

not organized on the basis of radically separated spheres of competence, but was in fact affected by significant flexibility.⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ To which we should add the importance of the symbolic aspect of institutional divisions: in addition to fulfil objective needs, civic offices were also a mean of acquiring social prestige. To quote Sviatoslav Dmitriev: ‘Greek texts divide city offices in very many ways, and it is unlikely that each of these divisions corresponded to the institutionalized structure of city administration.’⁽¹⁰⁵⁾

Comparing the frequencies of grain-related terms between epigraphic and literary sources has shed another light on the question, beside the fact of providing complementary information concerning the most frequent and universal offices or functions (*sitonai*, *agoranomoi*, *sitopolai*, *sitophylakes*). Observed discrepancies are firstly due to the differential geographical areas encompassed by both kinds of sources: our epigraphic database refers solely to the cities of Anatolia (geographically speaking: the Roman province of Asia Minor, Cilicia, Bithynia, the central plateau of Galatia and Cappadocia), while the literary sources come from all over the Greek-speaking world. A second explanatory factor lies in the type of document concerned: inscriptions register the technical, institutional life of a city, taking account of its own cultural, linguistic and political peculiarities as well as of its insertion into a broader political entity (league, *koinon*, Empire,...); literary texts, on the other hand, while also influenced by the origin of the writer, do not always use words in their precise administrative or legal meaning, regarding a specific context. Rather, they sometimes use them in the metaphorical sense – this is particularly true of religious sources of course –, or in the sense of their most ‘common’, colloquial use.

In any case, the pervasiveness of the grain-related vocabulary in the literary sources as well as the administrative sophistication revealed by inscriptions both betray the crucial importance of the matter of the grain supply for the cities of the ancient Mediterranean: a regular grain supply was a *conditio sine qua non* for the effective functioning of civic life, especially in the case of Hellenistic kingdoms or the Roman Empire, which relied to a significant extent upon their municipal basis.

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(104) ANDREAU, 2012, p. 263. This is particularly true in a context where no conscious distinction between legal, executive and legislative offices exists (cf. DMITRIEV, 2005, p. 14).

(105) DMITRIEV, 2005, p. 128.

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SUMMARY

Urban grain supply was a major concern for the Greek cities of the Hellenistic and Roman periods, as for most pre-industrial societies. Trade and benefactors no doubt played a crucial role in making the food markets more fluid, but civic systems and distribution schemes were also pervasive and were often responsible for the most regular interventions. Yet, grain-related offices and supply schemes display a considerable lexical variability which could hardly be explained *a priori*. On the basis of a comparison between epigraphical and literary sources, this paper thus aims at emphasizing the different patterns explaining their terminology, focusing on the Eastern Mediterranean. It reveals, *inter alia*, that such variability results to a significant extent from the intense institutionalization of the grain supply.

Graeco-Roman institutions – civic interventions – benefactions – euergetism – food – grain – distributions

SOMMAIRE

L’approvisionnement urbain en blé constituait une préoccupation majeure pour les cités grecques de l’époque hellénistique et romaine, comme pour l’ensemble des sociétés préindustrielles. Commerce et bienfaiteurs jouaient à n’en pas douter un rôle crucial dans la fluidification des marchés alimentaires, mais les mécanismes civiques et les systèmes de distributions publiques étaient également proéminents, et bien souvent responsables des interventions les plus régulières. Ceci étant dit, les charges publiques liées à l’approvisionnement en blé sont caractérisées par une considérable profusion de termes, difficilement explicable expliquée *a priori*. Se fondant sur un croisement de sources littéraires et épigraphiques, cet article se donne pour but de mettre en lumière les différents schémas facteurs expliquant cette variabilité terminologique, en se concentrant sur l’orient méditerranéen. Il révèle, entre autres, que cette variabilité résulte dans une large mesure du haut degré d’institutionnalisation du secteur de l’approvisionnement en grains.

SAMENVATTING

Zoals in alle pre-industriële maatschappijen was de graanvoorziening van cruciaal belang voor de Griekse steden van de Hellenistische en Romeinse periode. Hoewel handel en weldoeners zonder twijfel een bepalende rol speelden in het soepelder maken van de voedselmarkten, waren burgerinitiatieven en publieke uitdelingen eveneens essentieel – én vaak verantwoordelijk voor de meest regelmatige tussenkomsten. De magistraturen verbonden met de graanverdelingen kenden een bijzonder diverse terminologie die moeilijk *a priori* te verklaren valt. Op basis van een vergelijking tussen epigrafische en literaire bronnen behandelt deze paper de verschillende patronen binnen deze benamingen, met een focus op de oostelijke Middellandse Zee. Hieruit blijkt, *inter alia*, dat deze verscheidenheid tot op grote hoogte het gevolg is van de verregaande institutionalisering van de graanvoorziening.

