Philochoros, gifts of grain and the scrutiny of citizens in classical Athens

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Appendix 1: Grain supply and distribution in Athens

Athens needed to import a substantial amount of grain. Fluctuations in weather conditions had an impact on food production and in Athens, as in any society, the resilience to such climate conditions vitally depended on socio-political organization, notably control of land use, food production and handling of resources, including their distribution.[1] In the fifth and fourth centuries, Athens secured its supplies from overseas with diplomatic negotiations and its naval power, and the polis made institutional arrangements at home to supply the grain to the population at reasonable prices.[2] From the intensive debates on these issues, I select here the relevant information.[3]

Grain provided on average 70 per cent of daily nutrition; barley was the most common, but wheat the more desirable grain.[4] An adult male consumed about 7 *medimnoi* of grain (barley) annually, women and children received less to about half this amount.[5] The 5 *medimnoi* barley referenced in *Wasps* would feed one adult male Athenian, his wife and a few children for about half a year. An adult male consumed about 5 *medimnoi* of wheat a year; the gift of Psammetichos would have fed 6,000 male Athenians for a year and 12,000 for half a year, a few months less if their families were included. Classical Athens imported substantial amounts of wheat and barley on a regular basis, and when its own production slumped, it imported much more.[6] Estimations of the necessary imports vary considerably, and I pick here Errietta Bissa's calculation that the average import needed was about 936,000 *medimnoi* of barley or 780,000 *medimnoi* of wheat.[7]

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[1] Weiberg et al. (2021) 9–10: 'the outcome of climate change is therefore dependent on prior socio-economic settings and, perhaps especially, socio-political control functions'. *Cf.* Weiberg and Finné (2019). *Contra* Camp (1982), who argued that periods of drought aggravated anxieties about the food supply (see below) in the fourth century; Weiberg et al. (2016), especially 47–51, show relative wetness; Klingborg (2017) 61–63, 124–25 notes a rise in the number of cisterns in the fourth century, often in domestic settings, and increasing public management of water supplies.

[2] Because of the insecurity of harvests and other factors, from the fourth century on most Greek *poleis* had institutional arrangements to oversee the grain supply and its selling at home, *cf.* Garnsey (1988) 15–16; Pazdera (2006) 173–202; Bissa (2009).

[3] For an overview Rosivach (2000); Bissa (2009) 169–91. For the parameters Whitby (1998); Moreno (2007) 3–33; Akrigg (2019) 179–87.

[4] Foxhall and Forbes (1982); Moreno (2007) 32.

[5] Bissa's summary (2009) 173: 4.8 *medimnoi* (barley), a minimum consumption figure based on ethnographic studies for modern Greece; 6.3 *medimnoi*, proposed by Foxhall and Forbes (1982); 8.7 *medimnoi*: a maximum figure based on 1 *choinix*/person/day. *Cf.* Isager and Hansen (1975) 18; Gernet (1909) 295; Moreno (2007) 32; overview of production and consumption in Attica, Bissa (2009) 172–76, Akrigg (2019) 192.

[6] Garnsey (1985) 73 with estimations by T. Gallant.

[7] Bissa (2009) 176.

In the fifth century, Athens' main suppliers of grain were, to the north, the klerouchies on Lemnos, Imbros and Skyros, the Chersonesos and Thrace,[8] and, to the west, southern Italy and Sicily.[9] To the south, some evidence points to Egypt: leaving Psammetichos aside for the moment, some mention is made of merchant ships coming from Egypt that possibly carried grain.[10] But Athens' chief supplier was undoubtedly Euboea.[11] Here, 4,000 klerouchies were established after Athens defeated Chalcis in 506 and confiscated the lands of the *hippobotai*. When Percles suppressed the revolt of the Euboean agricultural population in 446, he made an agreement with several cities but confiscated the lands of Hestiaia for distribution among Athenian klerouchs.[12] The Spartan occupation of Dekeleia in 413 obstructed imports from Euboea, and the loss of the island in 411 was a serious blow to Athens (Thuc. 7.28.1, 8.95–96). In 405, after losing many ships in the battle at Aigospotamoi (406), the city was under siege and suffered a famine.[13]

In the fourth century, the same regions (with the exception of Euboea) supplied grain to Athens, with Egypt now more prominent in the evidence. Perhaps from the last decade of the fifth, but certainly in the first half of the fourth century, the Black Sea region and notably the kingdom of the Bosporos became important suppliers.[14]

The home market at Athens was regulated with a series of laws, overseen (in the fourth century) by about 50 officials, most of whom were drawn by lot.[15] Bulk grain was bought and imported by *emporoi* who sold their cargo in Athens, but when prices offered there were too low, they would go elsewhere (Xen. *Oec*. 20.27–28).[16] Prices fluctuated depending on the season, the weather and circumstances causing difficulties such as warfare

[8] Keen (2000); Kallet (2013). The grain imports from Lemnos, Imbros and Skyros were the subject of the Grain Tax Law of 374/3 (below), *cf.* Stroud (1998); RO 26; Stroud (2010); Magnetto et al. (2010).
[9] Gernet (1909) 302–14; Keen (2000) 65; Moreno (2007) 337–43. Sicily's grain may have been an additional reason for Athens to try to capture the island in 415.
[10] Thuc. 8.35 (412 BCE); Gernet (1909) 314. Thuc. 4.53 (424 BCE) concerns Cythera, where the merchants from Egypt and Libya seem to supply the Spartans rather than the Athenians. Cyprus and Rhodes operated as entrepots for Egyptian cargo; Bissa (2009) 163.
[11] Moreno (2007) 339–40 for all evidence on Euboea's crucial role as grain supplier.
[12] Whether *IG* I^3 40 concerns the arrangements with Chalkis and *IG* I^3 41 those with Hestiaia in 446/5, or these documents belong to the campaign of 424/3, is debated; see *AIO* IGI^3 40; Lambert (2017).
[13] For the date of *IG* I^3 30, which mentions a σίτο ἐνδεί[ας] in 411 or 405, see Matthaiou (2017). On the lack of grain in 405, Xen. *Hell*. 2.2.10; Lys. 13.11.
[14] Braund (2007); Moreno (2007) 144–208. The relationship with Athens lasted from the reign of Satyros I (432–389) to 344/3, the end of the reign of Spartokos II and Pairisades. Tsetskhladze (2008) argues that the kings were a substantial, but not the main, supplier, providing grain incidentally rather than continuously. Dem. 20.30–32 claims that the kingdom of the Bosporos provided Athens annually with 400,000 *medimnoi* of wheat on attractive conditions, an amount equal to that of all other providers put together, a picture Demosthenes may well have exaggerated to serve his political aims.
[15] Overview with all relevant sources: Engels (2000) 97–102; Moreno (2007) 334–36.
[16] RO 26 comm. on 127.

and piracy.[17] *Emporoi* were obliged to unload all grain in Piraeus, where they paid the 2 per cent trade tax, and next bring two-thirds to the city. Long-term storage provisions did not exist in Athens; hoarding of marketed grain was considered objectionable because it suggested pushing up the price, and the whole system was geared to immediate distribution and sale.[18] In the Attic countryside, sizeable farms could store grain for up to two years, but in the urban centre people had no space to do so and depended on a regular supply.[19] The grain was retailed as soon as possible in quantities of no more than 50 *phormoi* (probably roughly the same as 50 *medimnoi*) by the *sitopōlai*, the majority of whom were metics primarily selling barley, and a group of Athenians making a (lucrative) trade of wheat, especially from the Bosporos.[20] While capping the profits retailers at home could make on grain, for the price of the imports the polis still depended on wider markets. With increased dependence on grain supplies over a longer distance,[21] *sitodeia* occurred more frequently than in the fifth century.[22]

Athens responded to these difficulties in various ways. When grain prices were high, the city made efforts to get it cheaper by diplomatic means, honouring individuals who provided the city with grain at a price below the wider market or supported the grain supply in other ways.[23] The Grain Tax Law of 374/3, enacted in or just after a period of scarcity, enticed traders to bring the tax in the shape of grain collected from Lemnos, Skyros and Imbros to Athens, and put setting its price in the hands of the assembly. This measure provided the people with a substantial amount of affordable grain, the profits of which went to the polis' treasury, the *stratiōtikon*.[24] Likewise, the accounts of the First-Fruits Decree of

[17] For grain prices, Rosivach (2000) 53–55.
[18] The *alphitopolis* in Piraeus was built as a market rather than for storage; Panagos (1997) 258–64. Rejection of hoarding: Rosivach (2000) 47; Engels (2000) 99 n.15; Figueira (1986) on συμπρίασθαι and συνωνεῖσθαι in Lys. 22. The grain collected from the Grain Tax Law (below) was to be weighed and stored in the Aiakeion within 30 days after import (RO 26 l.15–18). Fear of scarcity could encourage hoarding: Pazdera (2006) 99.
[19] Dibble (2010) 67–77.
[20] On the *phormos*, Engels (2000) 99 n.15, who suggests the maximum was 50 *medimnoi per day*, considering the enormous amounts of grain sold in Athens. On the *sitopōlai*, Figueira (1986); Montgomery (1986). Prominent Athenians trading wheat: Moreno (2007) 220–25.
[21] Garnsey (1988) 150–51.
[22] *Sitodeiai* are mentioned in sources in 387/6, 376/5 or 374/3, 362/1, 361/60, 357, 340/39 (?), 338/7, 335/4 or 332/1 (?), 330/29, 329/8 (?), 328/7, 325/4 (?), 322/1, 307–303, 300 and 287; Garnsey (1988) 146–64; Pazdera (2006) 237–320; Moreno (2007) 311 n.7. At some point between *ca.* 330 and 326 (Garnsey (1988) 159 suggests 328/7 because of the severe scarcity that year), Cyrene provided grain to cities throughout Greece to alleviate shortages (RO 96). It was not a gift, but a traded commodity; Pazdera (2006) 143–59, 261–62. Athens got 100,000 *medimnoi* (no details of the weight or type of grain known).
[23] Lambert (2012) 155–62, 166–67, 277–80.
[24] RO 26 ll. 49–50. The grain was to be collected in the autumn and sold in early spring when homegrown supplies were exhausted; the incoming grain is estimated at *ca*. 30,000 *medimnoi*, feeding 6,000 individuals for a year or 70,000 for a month (RO 26 comm. on 127).

329/8 reveal that at that time the assembly set the prices at which the collected produce was to be sold; possibly, this practice was added to the existing governance of this 'tax' to meet the needs of these years.[25]

Free grain distribution perhaps took place during the famine of 405; if it was, it was on the initiative of the polis' government.[26] Some grain imports from the Bosporos were probably partly a gift; one occasion for such a gift might have been the *sitodeia* of 361/0.[27] The sale and distribution of grain took place in Piraeus and in the city. In the fifth century, the market administration, short-term storage of grain and its distribution probably took place in the South Stoa of the Agora, built *ca*. 430–20.[28] In the fourth century, barley was distributed in the Odeion, where court cases took place that had to do with the grain supply, and wheat was distributed in the Pompeion.[29]

[25] *IG* II^2 1672/*I.Eleusis* 177, ll. 283, 287. The original First-Fruits decree (*IG* I^3 78a; *I.Eleusis* 28a, *ca*. 435) rules that the council and *hieropoioi* are to provide sacrifices to the divinities of Eleusis from the proceeds and to sell the rest, but the *dēmos* has no say in the price. What these accounts have to do with the original decree is uncertain; for the information they provide on the Grain-Tax Law and food supplies of the fourth century, see Stroud (1998) 31–38. Athens was the first polis to create conditions for *sitos dēmosios* by law and notably by raising a tax in kind, see Migeotte (2010) 33–36; *cf*. Fantasia (2010) 76–79 for initiatives in this direction in the later fifth century.

[26] *IG* I^3 379 ll. 86–91, very damaged, interpreted by Loomis (1998) 222–23 as regarding distribution.

[27] According to Tsetskhladze (2008) 58 n.60, the absence in the region of coins with which Athens would have paid for the supply suggests this grain was often a gift rather than a commodity. This option is a part of the picture: the details in Dem. 20.30–33 on the profitable conditions granted to Athens in the grain trade with the Bosporos are too concrete to be ignored; *cf*. Moreno (2007) 220–25. Probably, both options applied: in the famine of 361/60 King Leukon sent a supply that was not only enough for Athens but left a surplus that the Athenians sold at a profit of 15 talents (Dem. 20.33).

[28] Ar. *Eccl*. 686 mentions the *stoa alphitopolis* in the Agora. On the South Stoa, Thompson (1954) 39–45; (1968) 43–56; Camp (1992) 122–26. For its role in grain distribution, Raubitschek (1956).

[29] Odeion (built in the 440s): Ar. *Vesp.* 1109; Poll. *Onom*. 8.33. Dem. 34.37 (dated to 327/6) refers to distributions during shortages the year before. Pompeion: Dem. 34.39; *cf*. Pazdera (2006) 181–83. In the fifth century, the Pompeion was a modest wooden construction, replaced in stages by a marble building between 410 and 390 (Hoepfner (1976)), so is unlikely to have been used for grain distributions before 390.

Appendix 2: *Diapsēphisis* and its supposed connection to Pericles' Citizenship Law

Diapsēphisis is the procedure and result of casting votes in a specific way and in specific circumstances. With the stem *psēphos* ('pebble', later: voting ballot), *psēphizein* literally meant voting with pebbles, but the verb and its far more frequent middle voice *psēphizesthai* came to mean 'to vote' with or without pebbles.[30] P.J. Rhodes suggests that 'There was a tendency in Athens to use ψηφίζειν and χειροτονεῖν of different kinds of decision rather than different methods of voting … and (δια)ψηφίζειν is regularly used of the decision to accept or reject a citizen.'[31] While the latter observation is correct, *psēphizesthai* is not solely used for voting about persons; Thucydides uses the same verb, for instance, for people voting to revolt (4.88.1). Rather, (*dia*)*psēphizesthai* appears to mean 'secret ballot', which by necessity had to be carried out with tokens, in contrast to *cheirotonein*, voting by raising hands for all to see.[32]

A secret ballot was the fitting method when the voting was about individuals.[33] While the noun and the verb were used in a general sense of '(secret) vote' in the context of court cases (Antiph. 5.8, 90; Pl. *Leg*. 855d, 956e), the specific meaning of *diapsēphizesthai* and *diapsēphisis* was indeed voting in the assessment of citizen status, the counterpart *apopsēphisis* ('to vote out') meaning acquittal in court cases and rejection in citizenship cases.

The council voted by secret ballots in scrutinies (*dokimasiai*) of individuals receiving benefits from the polis.[34] For orphans brought up at the polis' expense, for instance, strict rules of citizenship applied; when Theozotides' decree (probably 410/9) provided the children of the men murdered by the oligarchs with an obol a day, *nothoi* and adopted children were excluded, despite the relaxation of Pericles' Citizenship Law (PCL) in these years.[35] These scrutinies concerned tens of individuals, perhaps a few hundred. It is difficult to envisage how the council could have been the body to conduct the scrutinies of the thousands who needed grain. On the further arguments provided in the main text, the option that a *diapsēphisis* was the means of scrutiny for grain distributions can be rejected.

The idea that PCL provided the legal grounds for a *diapsēphisis* to remove illegal citizens is equally implausible. For such an effect, PCL had to be retroactive, but Athenian

[30] ψηφίζειν: Aesch. *Ag.* 1353; ψηφίζεσθαι: Thuc. 1.119. 1.124, etc.
[31] Rhodes, *CAAP* 498–99 *ad Ath. Pol.* 42.1; cf. *Ath. Pol.* 13.5; 55.4.
[32] 'Secret' is occasionally explicated: Thuc. 4.88.1: κρύφα διαψηφισάμενοι; [Andoc.] 4.3; *IG* II^2 1183 l. 18: [κ]ρύβδην (post-340, a deme decree of Myrrhinous; cf. Whitehead (1986) 384–85); *IG* II^2 1237 (396/5), the deme decree of the Dekeleans (Demotionidai), l. 82: the members of the phratry vote in secret (κρύβδην).
[33] Hence to distribute the highest offices among oligarchs: [Arist.] *Rhet. Al.* 2.18: τὰς δὲ μεγίστας [ἄρχας] κρυπτῇ ψήφῳ μεθ' ὅρκων καὶ πλείστης ἀκριβείας διαψηφιστάς.
[34] For instance, invalids lacking resources; Lys. 24. For all such benefits, Blok (2015).
[35] On Theozotides' decree (*AIO* 1049; OR 178) and its date, Matthaiou (2011).

laws never were. Laws with a retroactive effect of sorts were meant not to start, but to cease, a persecution among Athenians: the statutes in Draco's law terminating previous feuding,[36] the decree of Patrocleides (405) renouncing penalties of *atimia* handed down in preceding years (Andoc. 1.73–80) and the reconciliation agreement with its 'amnesty law' to 'forget past wrongdoing'.[37] But even these laws were not retroactive in the true sense: they prescribed what should happen (or not) in the future. This was also the case with PCL. When it was reinstated after its relaxation in the Peloponnesian War, it was to be valid as of the archonship of Eucleides (403/2), just like all other laws revised or re-enacted in these years; those born before that archon year were Athenians even if only one parent, in effect the father, was Athenian (Schol. Aeschin. 1.39; Is. 6.47; [Dem.] 43.51; Dem. 57.29–30). Given the legal framework of citizenship in the mid-fifth century, in so far as we can reconstruct it, PCL meant that those born after 451/0 should have two Athenian parents to acquire citizen status.[38]

If the *diapsēphisis* took place five years after Pericles' Law, the point of such an enterprise is anything but clear. A number of Athenians would appear to be of partly non-Athenian descent, but what would be the use of establishing what was no secret at all? Only those who claimed Athenian citizenship but turned out to have no Athenian parents would be rooted out as illegal, but they were also illegal before PCL.[39] If the polis was eager to detect this group, we should ask why this might be so in 445/4. If it had to do with PCL alone, we might expect the Athenians not to wait five years to find out. It was neither a feasible nor the regular method for a grain distribution, as in the event of the gift from Egypt, as explained in

[36] *IG* I^3 104; OR 183A, ll. 19–20: 'And those who killed previously shall be liable to this ordinance.' See also Carawan (1998) 37–38, who observes that this 'retroactive provision … would have been otiose at the time of reinscription'; Phillips (2008) 49–57.

[37] For the reconstruction of the agreement, Shear (2011) 188–99; for part of the oath Andoc. 1.90–91. The agreement and law were to be in force from 403/2. What exactly *mē mnēsikakein* did and did not include in terms of legal retribution is disputed; according to MacDowell (1962) 128, retroactive litigation for offences committed in the time of the Thirty was banned; Joyce (2008) 517 n.51; *cf.* Carawan (2013).

[38] Humphreys (1974) supposed that PCL was retroactive for children who were not yet adults in 451/0, to target especially the elite, where marriages with partners from other *poleis*, mostly women, were more common. But Carawan (2008) argues persuasively that having a non-Athenian wife was more common among the ordinary citizens who were the majority of the *klērouchoi* and were active abroad when serving in the navy, than among the elite.

[39] Krateros *FGrH* 342 F4 (Harp. Sud. s.v. Ναυτοδίκαι): … Κρατερὸς γοῦν ἐν τῷ δ΄ τῶν Ψηφισμάτων φησίν· "ἐὰν δέ τις ἐξ ἀμφοῖν ξένοιν γεγονὼς φρατρίζῃ, διώκειν εἶναι τῷ βουλομένῳ Ἀθηναίων, οἷς δίκαι εἰσί, λαγχάνειν δὲ τῇ ἕνῃ καὶ νέᾳ πρὸς τοὺς ναυτοδίκας ('If someone born with two *xenos* parents enters a phratry, anyone of the Athenians with the right to persecute who wishes to do so may charge him, to be tried by the *nautodikai* on the last day of the month'). Jacoby dates this fragment to *ca*. 438, but as Gomme (1934) 137 n.28 observed: 'the fact that one foreign parent is allowed shows that the law is either earlier than 451/0 or belongs to the period before 403 when Pericles' law was in abeyance, and, if the latter, that Pericles' law had been formally abrogated.'

the main text. To send out *klērouchoi* in 446/5 to Euboea, the Athenians selected 1,000 citizens;[40] their antecedents would have been checked in a *dokimasia* and did not need a *diapsēphisis* of all male citizens. Finally, if the Athenians wanted to clean up the muster rolls for military service, we might wonder if at this moment, when the Thirty Years Peace of 446 was getting settled, a scrutiny would seem redundant or, on the contrary, a useful measure.[41] Either way, this scrutiny would have involved only those listed for military service, rather than the whole male citizen population.

Abbreviation

AIO *Attic Inscriptions Online* (https://www.atticinscriptions.com/)

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[40] Moreno (2007) 300 explains the scrutiny in this context.

[41] Muster roll of land forces at the time of the Peloponnesian War, Arist. *Pol*. 1303a12; the Thirty Years Peace, just after Pericles' campaign in Euboea, Thuc. 1.115.

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