

## Grain for Cibyra. Veranius Philagros and the 'great conspiracy'

Ancient sources concerning food production and distribution usually deal with the activities of powerful individuals, particularly those in a position to play a prominent role in the grain supply of ancient communities. Inscriptions create the overall impression that the economic forces involved in grain production and trade were connected exclusively with the pursuits of local notables. Occasionally, however, public documents provide indirect evidence for the economic behaviour of farmers and its role in the local grain trade. In the following, I would like to suggest that an inscription from Lycian Cibyra<sup>1</sup> can be better understood through a closer study of the text, based on the hypothesis that the grain trade on a local level was in fact a complex matter, involving players on both ends of the economic spectrum.

### Grain as a traded commodity

The governor Antistius Rusticus writes to Pisidian Antioch: "Since the duoviri and decurions of the most splendid colony of Antioch have written to me that because of the harsh winter the market price of grain has shot up, and (since) they have requested that the people have the means of buying it, [...] all those who are either citizens of the colony of Antioch or are inhabitants of it shall state openly before the duoviri of the colony of Antioch [...] how much grain each person has and in what place, and how much for seed or for the annual allowance of his family he deducts, and the rest of the grain, the whole supply, he shall make available to the buyers of the colony of Antioch..."<sup>2</sup>.

The trade in grain is mostly considered in terms of transactions on a large scale, with large quantities being shifted from one end of the empire to the other, mainly in order to feed large urban centres, and with rich merchants becoming even richer through massive speculation. When we speak of a grain crisis, we usually refer to dramatic situations

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<sup>1</sup> T. Corsten (ed.), *Inschriften Griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien, vol. 60: Die Inschriften von Kibyra I*, Bonn 2002 (henceforth: *IK Kibyra*), n. 41. First published by W. Henzen, *Annali dell' Istituto di corrispondenza archeologica* 24 (1852), 171-174.

<sup>2</sup> AD 92-93. H.-U. Wiemer, *Das Edikt des L. Antistius Rusticus: Eine Preisregulierung als Antwort auf eine überregionale Versorgungskrise?*, *Anatolian Studies* 47 (1997), 195-215, Col. 2, l. 4-25. First published by D. M. Robinson, *A New Latin Economic Edict from Pisidian Antioch*, *TAPhA* 55 (1924), 5-20 and by W. M. Ramsay, *Studies in the Roman Province Galatia VI*, *JRS* 14 (1924), 179-184. Cf. i.a. F. F. Abbott / A. C. Johnson, *Municipal Administration in the Roman Empire*, Princeton 1926, 381-3 n. 65a; M. McCrum / A. G. Woodhead, *Select Documents of the Flavian Emperors*, Cambridge 1961, 139f n. 464; R. S. Sherk, *The Roman Empire: Augustus to Hadrian*, Cambridge 1988, 149f n. 107 (translation), cf. B. Levick, *The Government of the Roman Empire. A Sourcebook*, London 2000<sup>2</sup>, 120.

involving famine and social unrest. The recurring and inevitable bad harvests, even when they did not cause famine or even food crisis<sup>3</sup>, certainly caused price fluctuations, and no doubt merchants looked to profit from those. But dealings on the other end of the economic spectrum, that is, small-scale cumulative transactions, may also have had consequences worth considering.

In the text of Antistius Rufus' edict, there is no indication that those affected by the governor's instructions were professional grain traders or rich merchants or, in fact, wealthy people at all, and there is no reason to assume that they were. "The citizens of the colony or inhabitants of it" were to declare and sell any surplus grain they had stored, and all those who possessed more grain than they would need in that year were to sell it on the market on a certain date. In a valuable study, H.-U. Wiemer has shown that both the sellers and the "emptores", the buyers to whom the grain was to be made available, were most probably citizens and residents of the colony, that is, the consumers themselves, rather than professional merchants<sup>4</sup>. Another conclusion of Wiemer's enquiry into the circumstances of this edict is that it must have been issued in response to a regional rather than a widespread crisis affecting large parts of Anatolia, as had been previously assumed.

Taking these results one step further, we must conclude that grain should have been available for import from areas outside the region that was affected by the crisis. Yet the governor does not mention this possibility, nor does he mention previous efforts to counter the crisis, which may have included failed attempts to import grain. According to Wiemer, the edict was most likely issued in June, shortly after it had become clear that the harvest, which took place in that month, would be a bad one<sup>5</sup>. If so, then the edict was an early response to the pending crisis, and its prescriptions were based on the assumption that the effects of the one bad harvest could be countered if the citizens and inhabitants of Antioch would take their grain to the market. The governor presumably expected the price to return to normal levels when local stocks were made available. At the time of the edict, prices had shot up because the locals in Antioch held on to their grain, storing more than the quantity they and their families would normally need until the next harvest. The edict provides

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<sup>3</sup> P. Garnsey, *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity*, Cambridge 1999, 23; id., *Famine and Food Supply in the Graeco-Roman World. Responses to Risk and Crisis*, Cambridge 1988 (henceforth: Garnsey, *Famine*), 3-7 on the "categorical error, committed frequently in the literature" of describing every food crisis as a famine, and on the "boundary between famine and shortage".

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.* (above, n. 1), 203-204.

<sup>5</sup> See Wiemer's chronological considerations, *op. cit.*, 202-203.

evidence of everyday people acting not only as consumers but also as producers and sellers of small quantities of grain.

Grain was consumed everywhere and was grown almost everywhere in the Mediterranean. Different types and qualities were stored with varying degrees of success, but in many cases grain could have been preserved for four years or more and have still been consumable. It was a perishable good, however, and one that required special storage facilities. Transport costs that varied, and a host of other factors, made for considerable fluctuation in the price of grain from time to time and place to place. We have ample evidence that in years when a city's domestic crop was average or above average, the price could also fluctuate considerably<sup>6</sup>. The price of grain could be influenced by psychology, sometimes in ways that evoke the fluctuations of the price of oil today. In 67 BC, following pirate attacks on merchant ships, the price of grain in Rome rose dramatically, only to plummet on the very day Pompey was appointed to combat piracy. When he visited the city soon after, Pompey found the markets full of provisions<sup>7</sup>. Such fluctuation gave ample scope for profit or loss, with the effect that stored grain had a particular financial value to professional and non-professional traders alike.

Small farmers with limited storage facilities did not hold onto grain for much more than two years<sup>8</sup>. If they stored part of their production, they may have done so simply out of fear of a bad harvest to follow or in order to avoid running out of a vital foodstuff and having to purchase it. On the other hand, it would have been unwise to take a grain surplus to the market just as its price was expected or beginning to rise. A decree from Erythrai in honour of a man named Polycritos aptly illustrates that references in ancient sources to "famine" can signify a food shortage worsened by farmers' reluctance to sell their surplus:

and then, when because of the famine no-one brought grain to the market, he (Polycritos) promised the people to give money as a loan for the officials in charge of the grain supply who will be appointed, and to bring his own grain to the market to feed (the population)<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> D. W. Rathbone, *The grain trade and grain shortages in the Hellenistic East*, in: P. Garnsey / C. R. Whittaker (eds.), *Trade and Famine in Classical Antiquity*, Cambridge, 1983, 45-55.

<sup>7</sup> Cicero, *Imp. Pomp.* 44; Plutarch, *Pomp.* 26.2; 27.2; Appian, *Bell. Mith.* 14.93-6. See Garnsey, *Famine*, 200-201.

<sup>8</sup> Garnsey, *Famine*, 54. Cf. T. W. Gallant, *Risk and Survival in Ancient Greece. Reconstructing the Rural Domestic Economy*, Cambridge 1991, 94-98.

<sup>9</sup> Ca. 275 BC. H. Engelmann, R. / Merkelbach, *Die Inschriften von Erythrai und Klazomenai I*, Bonn 1972, 28, ll. 25-29: ὑστερόν τε διὰ τὴν σιτοδείαν οὐθενὸς εἰς τὴν ἀγορὰν ἐχφέρει[ντ]ος σίτον, ὑπέσχετο τῷ δήμῳ χρήματά τε δώσειν εἰς ὑποθήκην τοῖς ἀποδειχθησομένοις σ[ι]τώναις, καὶ τὸν ὑπάρχοντα αὐτῷ σίτον εἰς τὴν τροφήν ἐξοίσειν εἰς τὴν ἀγορὰν. The editors translate ὑποθήκη as "Leihkapital", though the word usually refers to mortgage of immovable property rather than money; H.-A. Rupprecht, *Die dinglichen Sicherungsrechte nach der Praxis*

Unless we adopt an entirely primitivistic view of the ancient economy, we must assume that hope of selling some of their surplus later or selling it elsewhere at a better price played a role in farmers' calculations. Failing a reason to do otherwise, when the market price began to rise, they were likely to defer selling a surplus in anticipation of better profits as the price rose still further. This sort of speculation in the grain supply - speculation on a small scale but done regularly and by many people - was bound to have influenced the price of grain even in reasonably good years, and to have had effects on a local society. For some citizens of Erythrai the situation may indeed have become dramatic when those who had grain to spare - including the honorand - withheld their stocks until measures were taken to counter the crisis.

Grain traders did not depend solely on bad harvests to expand their profit margin. Their ongoing stratagems for making satisfactory profits played an important role in bringing about price fluctuations. The best known literary attestation of such practices is Lysias' speech against the retailers of grain. In it, a prosecutor speaks against a group of retailers who face the death penalty if convicted. The charge against them is obscure in detail, but it seems that they were accused either of hoarding grain, or of operating a cartel, or both.

When transport costs were affordable, merchants profited from regional price differences. But because transport and communication were normally very costly, they were best undertaken in cooperation with other traders, as was true in the case of a notorious financial controller of Egypt under Alexander. This man had supported a network of trade partners and informers who worked together to control certain markets, establishing the most profitable time and place to sell. Unsurprisingly, they did so in disregard of the needs of local populations<sup>10</sup>.

By seeking to profit from price fluctuations farmers could, however unwillingly, play into the hands of those seeking to manipulate the market, the people referred to in Roman law sources as *dardanarii*<sup>11</sup>. Moreover, given the opportunity, farmers might sell their surplus stocks to a buyer who offered more than the current market price, be that a grain merchant or anyone who had the necessary cash and storing facilities. Considering the limited size of ancient communities and the realities of political life in the cities of the Roman empire, such transactions are bound to have had complex consequences. For if the buyer's

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*der Papyri*, in: R. Feenstra et al. (eds.), *Collatio iuris romani*, Amsterdam 1995 (*Studia Amstelodamensia ad Epigraphicam, Ius Antiquum et Papyrologicam Pertinentia* XXXV), vol. 2, 425ff.

<sup>10</sup> Callisthenes: *Dem.* 56.7-9; Arist., *Oec.* 1352 a-b.

<sup>11</sup> *Dig.* 48.19.37.

speculations triggered or worsened a grain crisis, we can expect most citizens to have turned against that person, or indeed to have supported efforts to prosecute him.

Civic magistrates, *agoranomoi*, *sitophylakes* or *sitones*, are known to have attempted to prevent malpractices or at least to minimize their effects<sup>12</sup>. But magistrates and benefactors were themselves members of the few elite families that regularly stood to benefit from grain production and trade. They had at their disposal the cash needed to alleviate a shortage when it became acute, and their help usually came in the form of interest-free loans for the purchase of grain. The type of munificence most frequently mentioned in honorary decrees for benefactors in times of grain shortage is having provided such ἄτοκα δάνεια<sup>13</sup>. Naturally, honorary inscriptions do not mention the sources of a benefactor's wealth in general or his liquid assets in particular. Nor do intellectuals such as Dio Chrysostom volunteer information on their business dealings. But that does not mean that they had none.

It is generally assumed that the orator Dio suffered injustice from a mob that threatened to burn his house because it suspected him of hoarding grain<sup>14</sup>. Whether the accusation was true or not we do not know. But the incident illustrates that a crowd in his native city suspected Dio of speculating in grain. Rich citizens of Prusa were apparently expected to attempt to profiteer in that way, even a professional orator, and famous advocate of moral integrity and the simple life, such as Dio Chrysostom. It was apparently assumed that those who had the financial resources, be they merchants, local notables or farmers, might buy and store grain when the price was expected to rise, thereby threatening to trigger a grain crisis.

Philostratus' story of a high official who was saved from an angry crowd by the intervention of the sage Apollonius<sup>15</sup> also need not be true, either in essence or in detail. But if such a story was to be credible, it had to agree with the general tenor of civic life within the experience of Philostratus' readers. Scholars have therefore inferred from this source that leading political figures could potentially have become the target of public rage in times of food shortage. The anecdote hints also at another reality of civic life. When,

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<sup>12</sup> In times of dearth, *agoranomoi* are known to have intervened in the market at their own expense in order to keep prices at an affordable level. In Aphrodisias for example (*SEG* 32 (1982), 1097): καὶ ἀγορανομήσαντα ἐν τῇ χαλεπωτάτῃ σιτοδείᾳ καὶ σῖτον εὖωνον παράσχοντα τοῖς ἰδίῳις ἀναλώμασιν. For Egypt see R. Alston, *Ritual and power in the Romano-Egyptian city*, in H. M. Parkins (ed.), *Roman Urbanism. Beyond the Consumer City*, London 1997, 157-8.

<sup>13</sup> See below.

<sup>14</sup> Or. 46.6; 8.

<sup>15</sup> VA 1.15.2-3

thanks to Apollonius, the threatened official spoke to the crowd, he provided them with the names of those who were responsible for the crisis:

Recovering his courage, the official said, "so-and-so and so-and-so" (naming several people) "are responsible for the present famine. They have taken the grain and are storing it in different parts of the country"

On the evidence of this anecdote, that year's harvest had been deliberately gathered and hidden to prevent it from reaching the market. The reader was likely to infer that this had been a coordinated action, though the point was not explicitly made. It is implied, moreover, that the grain had not been bought up and carried away by foreign merchants; the estates at which it was kept were apparently in the vicinity<sup>16</sup>. In addition, the anecdote attests that a high official, either the principal civic magistrate or the Roman governor<sup>17</sup>, knew that the harvest had been gathered and withheld. He also knew the identities of the men who withheld it, but he either could or would do nothing to stop them. The entire anecdote may be a fabrication, but it presumably matched expectations.

<sup>16</sup> διακελευομένων δὲ τῶν Ἀσπενδίων ἀλλήλοις ἐπὶ τοὺς ἀγροὺς φοιτᾶν.

<sup>17</sup> VA 1.15.3 (ed. C. P. Jones, London 2005): ἀναθαρρήσας οὖν ὁ ἄρχων "ὁ δεῖνα" ἔφη "καὶ ὁ δεῖνα" πλείους εἰπὼν " τοῦ λιμοῦ τοῦ καθεστηκότος αἴτιοι, τὸν γὰρ σίτον ἀπολαβόντες φυλάττουσι κατ' ἄλλος ἄλλος τῆς χώρας." The translation is that of Jones with minor changes. J. J. Flintermann, *Power, Paideia, and Pythagoreanism. Greek Identity, Conceptions of the Relationship between Philosophers and Monarchs, and Political Ideas in Philostratus' Life of Apollonius*, Amsterdam 1995, 111, n. 98 is right in questioning the confidence with which ἄρχων in this passage has been assigned the meaning "Roman governor" by many scholars, following F. C. Conybeare's translation of 1912. In his earlier translation (*Philostratus. Life of Apollonius*, Harmondsworth 1970), C. P. Jones renders the word as "magistrate". In his new edition (cited above), he opts for "chief magistrate". But the translation as "governor" may still be preferable. In the VA, the word is sometimes used to denote the Roman emperor, as in 8.7.33 where Apollonios, speaking to Domitian, says: βασιλεῦ, σεαυτὸν καὶ τοὺς ἔτι πρὸ σοῦ ἄρχοντας. In many other instances, the word clearly refers to the provincial governor. I know of no instances where we can be sure that it is applied to a civic magistrate, and we are not free to assume that "archon" refers to such a magistrate when no specification is made. In fact, civic administration and its representatives are hardly ever visible in the VA. Philostratus' hero is concerned mainly with the highest representatives of government, supporting good emperors and fighting bad ones. To a lesser extent, he interacts with governors, and those Apollonius usually scorns. If the episode in 1.15.3 concerns a civic magistrate, then it represents a rare case. Flintermann (*ibid.*), argues that the man's close familiarity with the local situation speaks against his being a provincial governor. But Roman governors, especially imperial legates, who usually spent about two and a half years in their province, cannot always have avoided getting drawn into local affairs (cf. C. Kokkinia, *Ruling, Inducing, Arguing. How to govern (and survive) a Greek City*, in: L. De Ligt (ed.), *Roman Rule and Civic Life: Local and Regional Perspectives. Proceedings of the Fourth Workshop of the International Network Impact of Empire (Roman Empire, c. 200 B. C. - A. D. 476)*, Leiden, June 25 - 28, 2003, Amsterdam 2004, 40-48). Such incidents as described by Josephus, in which Roman governors appear deeply entangled in local politics (*bel. Iud.* 2.284-291) or come under threat from angry crowds (*op. cit.* 2.280-281), may have taken place also outside Judea. If indeed the distinction was of any consequence for Philostratus' story, both the provincial governor and a civic magistrate are possible candidates for the "archon" mentioned in the text.

### Honours for Veranius Philagros

Let me now turn to our inscription from Lycia. It preserves one of several honorary decrees issued for an important citizen of Cibyra in the first cent. AD, Quintus Veranius Philagros. The document was inscribed in the theatre of the city, where it is still to be seen today.

- [Ὁ δῆμος ἐτείμησεν] Κοί ντον Οὐηράνιον Τρωΐ λου υἱὸν Κλουστουμείν[α]  
 [Φίλαγρ]ον ἱερέα Ἀρετῆς διὰ βίου, <sup>ν</sup> πρεσβεύσαντα δωρεὰν τετρ[ά]-  
 [κις] πρὸς τοὺς Σεβαστοὺς [εἰς Ἑρ]ώμην καὶ περὶ μεγάλων πραγμάτων  
 4 ἐπιτυχόντα, <sup>ν</sup> καὶ ἐγδικήσαντα δημοσίας ὑποθέσεις πολλὰς καὶ μεγάλα[ς],  
 ἐξ ὧν ἱκανὸν ἀργύριον ἐχώρησεν εἰς τὸν κτισμὸν τῆς πόλεως, <sup>ν</sup> καὶ δημοσίους δούλους  
 ἐγνείκησαντα ἑκατὸν ἐπτὰ καὶ κτήσιν Κομ[ . ]ρα, <sup>ννν</sup>· καὶ ἱερέα γενόμενον Καί-  
 8 σαρος Σεβαστοῦ καὶ ἐπιδόντα τῇ πόλει ἐπὶ ἱκανὰ ἔτη διαδόματος εἰς εὐωχίαν  
 Καισαρείων δραχμὰς Ἑρδίας πεντάκις μυρίας τετράκις χειλίας, <sup>ν</sup> καὶ δανείου δέκα  
 μυριάδας Ἑρδίας χαρισάμενον, οἷς ὁ δῆμος ἠθέλησεν, <sup>ν</sup> καὶ καταλύσαν-  
 12 τα συνωμοσίαν μεγάλην τὰ μέγιστα λυποῦσαν τὴν πόλιν· <sup>ν</sup> ἃ δὲ ἦν ἀνανκαι-  
 ὀτατα τῶν ἐν ταῖς πρεσβείαις ἐπιτευχθέντων, ἠτημένον ἀπὸ Τιβερίου Κλαυ-  
 δίου Καίσαρος ἀπεσκευάσθαι Τιβέριον Νεικηφόρον πράσοντα τὴν πόλιν  
 καθ' ἕκαστον ἔτος δηνάρια τρισεῖς καὶ λαμβάνοντα, <sup>ννν</sup>· καὶ τὴν τοῦ σείτου  
 πρᾶσιν γείνεσθαι ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ κατὰ ζευγος μοδίων ἑβδομήκοντα πέντε  
 ἐκ πάσης τῆς χώρας, ἐφ' οἷς ἡ πόλις ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ τὰς ἀριστέως τειμαί.

The decree begins by naming Philagros' most important service to his community at that time, which was also the immediate motive for bestowing the present set of honours: at his own expense, he had carried out four embassies to the emperors in Rome, succeeding "on important issues"<sup>18</sup>. Following an account of Philagros' earlier, or less vital, services to the city (lines 4-10), the decree returns in the last section (lines 11f.) to his embassies, highlighting the two most important accomplishments he had achieved through them, ἀπεσκευάσθαι Τιβέριον Νεικηφόρον (...) and τὴν τοῦ σείτου πρᾶσιν γείνεσθαι ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ (...). It closes with a reference to the honours bestowed, described in the concluding line as the ἀριστέως τειμαί.

The document, then, has a circular structure, beginning and ending with the embassies and the honours voted for them. Its structure otherwise presents difficulties for the modern reader. For the most part, it consists of a series of textual elements linked with καί<sup>19</sup>. Only

<sup>18</sup> Ll. 3-4: περὶ μεγάλων πραγμάτων ἐπιτυχόντα.

<sup>19</sup> At least one καί in each line of the middle section, ll. 3-9, and one in the last section in l. 13.

in line 10, at the point where the enumeration of earlier benefactions ends and the decree returns to the subject of the embassies, does a variation occur: here the transition is marked by δέ, introducing a relative sentence (ὃ δέ...) that emphasizes the concluding section<sup>20</sup>. All other connections are introduced with a plain *kai*, and it is not always clear whether a *kai* is followed by additional information pertaining to a benefaction just mentioned, or whether it introduces a new benefaction<sup>21</sup>.

In some cases, however, it is clear that the text includes details of benefactions that were presumably of secondary importance: we are given the exact number of slaves Philagros had been able to secure for the city, and the name of an estate he won in court (l. 6); we are informed of the exact size of a donation he made for a banquet (l. 8); and we hear something of the terms on which the beneficiaries of a loan had been chosen: they had been nominated by the *demos* (l. 9). It is hence surprising that the text contains no explicit indication of the nature of the "great conspiracy" that "harmed the city severely", mentioned in l. 10. This conspiracy Philagros is said to have broken up, either on his own or mainly through his own efforts, to judge by the wording of this passage (l. 9-10). Surely, breaking up a great conspiracy was an important accomplishment. But after mentioning the enigmatic *sunomosia*, the decree returns immediately to Philagros' two principal achievements as ambassador, which, if we follow the current interpretation, were much less impressive: one was the removal of a corrupt Roman official who appropriated the rather modest sum of 3000 denarii per year<sup>22</sup>. The other resulted in the setting up of a local

<sup>20</sup> ἡτημένον and the infinitives that depend on it, ἀπεσκευάσθαι and γείνεσθαι.

<sup>21</sup> It is clear, for instance, that after mention of the four embassies in the beginning of the document, the first *kai* that occurs, in line 3, does not introduce a reference to another benefaction, but links instead to the positive results of those embassies. On the other hand, it is not at all clear how the connection following that is to be understood. We do not know where Philagros' service as a public advocate took place. If he had represented the city in Rome, the section beginning with ἐγδικήσαντα could contain details of his activity as envoy to Rome. In this case, the *kai* in line 4 would introduce an illustration of his activity as representative of the city in the imperial court. But Philagros may instead have acted as a public advocate in a local or a provincial court, in which case lines 4-6 would refer to court cases unrelated to his travels to Rome. Similarly, we cannot know for sure whether he made his epidosis of 54 000 Rhodian drachmae (ll. 7-8) in his capacity as imperial priest (ll. 6-7), as was often the case, or independently of his term in this office, in which case the *kai* in line 7 would introduce a benefaction taking place subsequent to his priesthood. In most cases, two to three letter spaces preceding καί were left uninscribed. Except, it seems, where this word connects an action with its immediate result or direct consequence. This appears to be the case with the *kai* in line 3, the second *kai* in line 4, and maybe that in line 7, if Philagros' *epidosis* had been connected with his priesthood. I would nevertheless hesitate to attribute much significance to the spatium, as it is rarely used consistently even within the same inscription.

<sup>22</sup> D. Magie, *Studies in Roman Economics and Social History in Honor of A. C. Johnson*, Princeton 1951, 152-154, sees in Tiberius Nikephoros a low official in the imperial fiscus; cf. S. Mitchell, *Anatolia I*, Oxford 1993, 249, n. 43. M. Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, Oxford 1957<sup>2</sup>, vol. 3, p. 700, n. 21, believes Nikephoros was an imperial libertus and provincial procurator.



grain market. The transition between these two is provided by a simple *kai* (l. 13), and most scholars prefer to see no connection between the two matters, or indeed between the two and the suppression of the *sunomosia* that had preceded them in the inscription<sup>23</sup>.

A closer look at the text may suggest otherwise. To summarize my argument, the document can be expected to contain some indication of what the "conspiracy" was. This indication is possibly to be found in the implicit connection between Philagros' most important achievements, the two mentioned at the end of the document. Further, the word *aposkeuazomai*, which describes the action taken against Nikephoros (l. 12) is too strong, and one unlikely to have been used by the provincials, to denote the recall of an imperial official by the emperor, as the current interpretation has it. I suggest instead that Nikephoros may have been a powerful man who, having gained control over the local market, placed himself in a position to press the city for money. He may well have been connected with the "conspirators".

#### **Disgrace for Tiberius Nikephoros**

The first of Philagros' successes as an ambassador concerns a man named Tiberius Nikephoros, whom scholars universally assume to have been a Roman functionary, a fiscal officer or procurator<sup>24</sup>. The honorand had persuaded the emperor Claudius to remove this man, and the expression used to refer to his removal is noteworthy. Ἀποσκευάζομαι means *to displace* or *dispose of*, always with clearly negative connotations; *get rid of*, *drive away*, or *do away with* are possible translations for this word<sup>25</sup>. Used in an official document that was intended for monumental publication, this seems an unlikely expression for referring to a Roman functionary, even a corrupt one. One would expect ἐκβάλλω or ἀνακαλλῶ, in any case a more neutral word, to describe Claudius' recall of an imperial official<sup>26</sup>. In fact, I see no reason to identify Nikephoros as a 'real' Roman rather than as a

<sup>23</sup> Most interpretations of the last section of this document have been based on the assumption that the word πρᾶσιν in line 14 is a mistake for πρᾶξιν. This view was first expressed by D. Magie (*ibid.*) who had at his disposal only a transcription of the text containing errors. But there are no mistakes in the inscription itself apart from a common haplography (πράσσοντα in l. 12). The reading of the square Σ in ΠΡΑΣΙΝ is secure. The letter is preserved and well visible. See the photograph in Corsten, *IK Kibyra*. p. 56 and the discussion pp. 60-62.

<sup>24</sup> See above, n. 22.

<sup>25</sup> See now *DGE (Diccionario Griego-Español)* ἀποσκευάζω A II 3.

<sup>26</sup> M. Alpers' rendering of ἀπεσκευάσθαι as "sich vom Halse schaffen" reflects well the negative tone of the original (*Das nachrepublikanische Finanzsystem*, Berlin 1995, 269, n. 921). On the other hand, Nikephoros was troubling the city, not the emperor. Ἀποσκευάζομαι is therefore better understood as passive instead of middle; Philagros asked the emperor that Nikephoros be

local man, such as Philagros was. Instead of recalling an imperial official, in response to Philagros' embassy the emperor may have sent a letter to the provincial governor, urging him to act against Nikephoros. It has been assumed that Nikephoros was a Roman fiscal officer or a procurator, mainly because *πράσσω* often refers to tax collection. According to this explanation, Nikephoros exacted a sum of 3000 denarii each year, which he kept, instead of remitting it to the *fiscus*. Scholars have taken *πράσσοντα* here to mean "exacted a tax"<sup>27</sup>, in which case one must assume *λαμβάνοντα* to be pleonastic, or take it as a gloss for "misappropriate", a rather forced conclusion<sup>28</sup>. It is much more preferable to understand *πράσσειν* in this context as "demand, exact, press for payment"<sup>29</sup>. *Λαμβάνοντα* would then serve as an unsurprising corollary to *πράσσοντα* in this context: year after year (*καθ' ἕκαστον ἔτος*), he demanded *and received* 3000 denarii.

The key to understanding why the city disbursed this sum to Nikephoros each year might be provided in the final section of the document. Philagros motivated the imperial administration to help regulate the corn trade in Cibyra. The emperor decreed that a certain amount of grain was to be sold for every iugum of land, and that those transactions were to take place in the market. This measure is referred to in ll. 10-11, jointly with the expulsion of Tiberius Nikephoros, as *ἀνανγκαιότατον*, *most needed*, or *urgent*. That is, there had been some sort of grain crisis in Cibyra, but we hear nothing of its details.

Unless, that is, we see Tiberius Nikephoros as a businessman and the 3000 denarii as money extorted from the city through his *hetairia* in the context of his manipulating, or threatening to manipulate, the grain supply. 3000 denarii is not a particularly noteworthy sum. But supposing that Nikephoros extorted this sum each year before loosening his grip on the local grain market, such a "conspiracy" could very well be described as *τὰ μέγιστα λυποῦσαν τὴν πόλιν* (l.10).

If this reconstruction of events is correct, then Nikephoros was operating what we would call today a cartel. A cartel is a "secret, verbal and informal" agreement to fix prices or

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forced out, driven way. In the phrase *ἡτημένον ἀπὸ ... Καίσαρος, ἀπὸ + gen.* obviously stands for *παρὰ + gen.*

<sup>27</sup> "Erheben" (J. Nollé, *Epigraphica Varia*, *ZPE* 48 (1982), 267-282, 273); "einziehen" (Corsten, *IK Kibyra*, p. 57).

<sup>28</sup> J. Nollé, *op. cit.*, 273: "in die eigene Tasche gesteckt". There are several words that could mean to misappropriate money, but *λαμβάνω* is not necessarily one of them. Particularly if *πράσσοντα* was used in the sense "received a tax", we would not expect *λαμβάνω* here, but rather - for example - *νοσφίζομαι*, *ἐξειδιάζομαι*, maybe *σφετερίζω* or *ιδιοποιῶ*.

<sup>29</sup> *LSJ* *πράσσω* VI.

limit supply<sup>30</sup>. If we wanted to describe such a practice in ancient Greek, the word *sunomosia* would be a good choice. *Sunomosia* is also a perfectly good alternative for *hetairia*, when referred to in a negative context<sup>31</sup>.

There is no doubt that there were corrupt officials in the Roman empire. On the other hand, there is no reason to assume that local magnates always used their wealth, clientele and influence to benefit their communities. If trading in grain offered ample opportunity for gain, we must expect such people to have profited from it, on occasion to the detriment of their own or neighbouring communities. A powerful man could have gained control over the local market by purchasing large quantities of grain from local peasants; he could have prevented clients from selling their surplus, thus substantially affecting prices; finally, he could have coordinated his activities with other traders to achieve maximum gain. In all three cases, we might expect him to have exacted a 'compensation' for eventually allowing the market to operate free of his manipulation, as Nikephoros apparently did. Alternatively, supposing that the citizens of Cibyra did choose the extremely strong ἀποσκευᾶσθαι to refer to the recall of a Roman official, it is likely that he was guilty of extortion in connection with the grain supply<sup>32</sup>.

Whatever the details of Nikephoros' manipulations, Cibyra had not been able to defend itself against them for years, and the governors of Asia<sup>33</sup> had either been equally ineffective, or had not been asked to intervene. Veranius Philagros appears in this text to have been the initiator of a plan to seek help directly from Rome, a plan he was willing to carry out at his own expense, and by accepting the risk - and the honour - of a journey to the capital. After the successful outcome of his embassies, the city issued a decree in Philagros' honour. In the version of this document that was destined for publication on stone, on the interpretation proposed here, the city included an explicit mention of

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<sup>30</sup> See the website of the British Office of Fair Trading, [www.offt.gov.uk](http://www.offt.gov.uk); cf. W. Goode, *Dictionary of Trade Policy Terms*, Cambridge 2003, 56.

<sup>31</sup> Δ. Δημητράκος, *Μέγα Λεξικόν τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Γλώσσης*, Athens 1952, συνωμοσία 3, cf. *LSJ* συνωμοσία II.

<sup>32</sup> The *lex iulia repetundarum* mentions financial transactions in connection with the grain supply among those likely to involve extortion (*Dig.* 48.11.7.2): *Illud quoque cavetur, ne in acceptum feratur opus publicum faciendum, frumentum publice dandum praebendum adprehendum, sarta tecta tuenda.* "It is also provided that no credit is to be given for the carrying out of public works, for the giving, providing, or importing of corn for the public, or for the maintaining of buildings..." (transl. A. Watson, *The Digest of Justinian, Latin text by Theodor Mommsen and Paul Krueger; English translation by Alan Watson*, vol. 4, Philadelphia 1985).

<sup>33</sup> Or those of the new province of Lycia. It is not clear whether Cibyra was included in the new province. In a newly discovered text preserving the treaty of 46 BC between Rome and the Lycian Federation, the boundary is drawn much further to the south, along a line from Phaselis through Choma to Telmessus. See S. Mitchell, *Papyri Graecae Schøyen* 2004 (forthcoming).

Nikephoros' name, thus subjecting its enemy to public and permanent humiliation, while it underlined Philagros' merit.

### Emergency loans?

In contrast to Nikephoros, Philagros, the perpetual priest of Virtue<sup>34</sup>, had provided 100 000 drachmae, apparently as interest-free loans. J. Nollé<sup>35</sup> interprets the phrase δανείου δέκα μυριάδας Ῥοδίας χαρισάμενον οἷς ὁ δῆμος ἠθέλησεν (lines 8-9) as meaning that Philagros forgave the debts of those whom the city recommended, thus remitting a total amount of 100 000 drachmae. While Nollé's reading of χαρίζομαι in similar contexts is essentially correct, this particular phrase presents difficulties. As H. Pleket<sup>36</sup> argues, in combination with the gen. δανείου, paralleled by διαδόματος in l. 7, χαρισάμενον is best understood as referring to the act of giving an amount of money. His suggestion to read "he gave by way of loan = he lent to those whom the demos proposed" must be correct, because, translated literally, the object of χαρισάμενος is "a loan of 100 000 Rhodian drachmae to those whom the people wanted". So the loan is referred to as a unit (δάνειον, not δάνεια) that was subsequently divided among a number of recipients proposed by the demos. Instead, Nollé's interpretation suggests a procedure by which the demos recommended to Philagros a selection of persons whose existing debts he might remit, and the individual amounts remitted amounted to a total of 100 000 drachmae.

This number presents a further difficulty. While it cannot be ruled out that individual remissions added up to this round sum by chance, or that the sum was rounded up by the editors of the decree, it seems more plausible that a round figure such as this represents Philagros' initial offer. The other sum donated by the same man, 54 000 for the banquet, is also a round figure, whereas numbers representing the results of his actions in other fields seem accurately given, rather than round or rounded: 107 slaves, 75 modii of wheat per iugum of land. It seems more plausible, then, that the number 100 000 represents a sum that Philagros was prepared to make available for loans, and that the city indicated those most in need of such assistance.

The reason why this act is referred to by means of the verb χαρίζομαι is in all probability connected with a situation that we encounter frequently in honorary inscriptions: Philagros had apparently provided the loans free of interest. The usual expression is ἄτοκος (frequently ἄτοκα) and it is regularly associated with loans provided in times of need, especially in times of grain shortage<sup>37</sup>. Here, the reference to Philagros' loan is immediately followed by a

<sup>34</sup> ἱερεὺς ἀρετῆς διὰ βίου, l. 2.

<sup>35</sup> *Op. cit.* n. 26, 271-272.

<sup>36</sup> *SEG* 32 (1982), 1306.

<sup>37</sup> *IG* IX,2, 1104 (Thessaly); *ISM* (Istros) 1; *IG* XI,4, 1055 (Delos); *IG* XII, 5, 1011 (Ios); *IG* XII,9, 900a (Euboia); *I. Didyma* 12; *I. Erythrai* 18, cf. l. 39f. Cf. P. Millett, *Lending and Borrowing in Ancient Athens*, Cambridge 1991, 122-126.

reference to the 'conspiracy'. Once more, however, we stand before a simple *kai*-connection that does not permit secure linking of Philagros' benefactions to a grain crisis, or indeed a grain crisis created by Nikephoros' extortion. His loans may be connected to the food shortage, but we cannot exclude the possibility that they had been issued in response to a different problem. Be that as it may, Philagros appears to have employed accumulated capital in financial enterprises without neglecting the citizens' needs in times of crisis. What earned him the present set of public honours may have been his successful denunciation of an unscrupulous fellow financier before the emperor:

"[The people honoured] Quintus Veranius, son of Troilus, Philagros, member of the tribus Clustumina, lifelong priest of Arete, who undertook at his own expense four embassies to the emperors in Rome and was successful on important issues, and acted as legal representative (public advocate or prosecutor) in many important public lawsuits, as a result of which a significant amount of money went into construction works in the city, and won in court (for the city) 107 public slaves and the estate Kom[...].ra, and became priest of Caesar Augustus and for several years bestowed upon the city for the banquet of the Caesaria a donation of 54 000 Rhodian drachmae, and provided 100 000 Rhodian drachmae as interest-free loans to those whom the demos proposed, and broke up a great conspiracy that harmed the city severely. And - what constituted the most crucial achievements of his embassies - he asked of the emperor Tiberius Claudius Caesar that Tiberius Nikephoros be driven away, who demanded and received of the city each year 3 000 denarii, and that (in the future) the sale of grain take place in the market, 75 modii (of grain) per iugum (of land) out of the whole territory, for which (benefactions) the city bestowed upon him the honors becoming to a most distinguished citizen (*aristeus*)".<sup>38</sup>

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Athen

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