

	<b>Archive of the corn dole of Oxyrhynchus</b>
Place	Oxyrhynchus
Date	AD 268-272
Language	Greek
Material	Papyrus
Number of texts	46 certain + 1 uncertain [+ 2 erroneous]
Type	Official archive of the officials in charge of the corn dole: applications, registers, lists, extracts of the public records of the <i>demosia bibliotheke</i> , official correspondence
Collections Find/Acquisition	Oxford, Sackler Library [find/acquisition]

### Bibliography

J.R. REA (ed.), *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* XL, London, 1972.

J.-M. CARRIÉ, *Archives municipales et distributions alimentaires dans l'Égypte romaine, in La mémoire perdue. Recherches sur l'administration romaine* (Collection d'École française de Rome 243), Paris, 1998, pp.271-295.

### Description

The archive of the magistrates in charge of the corn dole (*siteresion*) in Oxyrhynchus dates from the reigns of Claudius II and Aurelian (AD 268-272). It was first identified by J. Rea and published by him in *P.Oxy.* XL **2892-2940**<sup>1</sup>. It is one of the few archives surviving from Oxyrhynchus, since most have disappeared in the rubbish dumps of the city. The bulk of documents was found on day 22 and 23 of the third season (19 of excavations at Behnesa. A few come from the 3rd and 4th day of the first season. Since they date from the same period and are of a type corresponding with texts from the third season, their relation to the archive is beyond doubt. In Carrié's view, the latter, except for **2896** and **2922**, were duplicates of official applications actually submitted, kept by the applicant, since they do not contain a subscription of the magistrates of the *siteresion*. However, this argument is not valid, for some applications found during the third campaign, as part of the main archive, do not contain a subscription either.

**2923** and **2938**, though dating from the same period, are unlikely to be part of the archive, for they have been excavated during the fourth campaign and are of a type not found among the other documents. **2923** must have been part of the archive of the strategos to whom the document is addressed.

To understand the typology of the archive, we first discuss the procedure of corn dole, which was modelled on the institution of corn dole of Rome.

#### a) Procedure of corn distribution

The procedure of corn distribution, first discussed by Rea<sup>2</sup>, has been revised by Carrié<sup>3</sup>.

With view to the *siteresion*, the city was divided into twelve districts, each containing a group of quarters and named after one quarter. Since the phylarchs were responsible for drawing up lists of eligible persons in their districts each district is probably to be identified with one phyle.

As noted by Rea, "the corn dole was not a provision for the very poor, but a perquisite of the already privileged middle class of the cities, as in Rome"<sup>4</sup>. Recipients of the corn dole were enrolled in one of three categories. The first category, limited to 3000, are those qualified as *epikrithentes*, i.e. citizens of Oxyrhynchus (i.e. *metropolitai*) as well as citizens of Rome and Alexandria residing in Oxyrhynchus. Places fell vacant by death and were filled by lot. The selection was probably held annually, as in Rome. Former liturgists (λελειτοουργημότες) and

freedmen who had performed a public service (ἀπελεύθεροι λελειτουργηκότες), formed the second group of maximum 900 recipients (**2908 III**): the *rhemboi* (“sundries”). Their place was not filled by lot; ex-liturgists became automatically eligible on completing their term of service. As noted by Rea and Lewis<sup>5</sup>, participation in the *siteresion* was offered as reward in an age when liturgies were widely regarded as a burden to be avoided. According to Lewis<sup>6</sup>, these recipients were enrolled for the *siteresion* in rotation, i.e. the year following their completion of liturgic service. Carrié, however, argues that it is improbable that 900 liturgists would retire altogether in the same year and be followed by 900 new liturgists. The *homologoi* formed the last and smallest category with an ideal number of 100. They are fully described as ὁμόλογοι ἀπογραφέντες καὶ ἀπὸ γραφῆς ἀφηλίκων προσβάντες (**2927**, 4). According to Rea, these persons were technically ineligible, but admitted by the authorities as a kind of concession. Lewis<sup>7</sup> thinks they were promoted from the status of minors and equal (*homologos*) to the *epikrithentes* with regard to payment of poll tax, though born unprivileged (because not born of parents both of metropolitan class).

Carrié argues against Rea that the recipients were automatically enrolled in the registers, and did not need to apply to the administration of the *siteresion*<sup>8</sup>. The registers were updated regularly by the phylarchs, who added new candidates to the existing list (cf. **2930-2937**). Registers were updated by reproducing older lists and adding new names. The registers were drawn up in a rough alphabetical order. Within each letter the order of the names reflects the date of enrolment. In fact, the lists were never thoroughly reviewed<sup>9</sup>.

The phylarch submitted the list of new candidates to the commission of *diakritai* of the *siteresion* for the procedure of *diakrasis* (cf. **2898**, 15-17; **2908**, **2915**, **2916**). These *diakritai*, appointed by the city council (**2913**), formed a superior authority beyond the phyle, investigating omissions and fraude, due to (not) voluntary inattention by the phylarch while transcribing information from the official archives. Besides controlling the lists of recipients, the board of inspection also issued *tessarae*(τὰβλα), tokens which the candidates had to produce in exchange for a quantity of corn (cf. **2924**).

To this *diakrasis* was added an extra screening (*anagoria*) during which all candidates had to present themselves and to answer to their names. The identity of all enlisted was authenticated by a witness of identity (*gnoster*). The *anagoria* confirmed the enrolment and the share in the distribution of corn and was probably meant to avoid abuses and to prevent candidates who were away from home at that time, from passing on their rights to a non-beneficiary. According to Carrié, this *anagoria* concerned only the new candidates and could be renewed to examine persons who were absent at the regular *anagoria* or whose names were omitted from the list<sup>10</sup>.

The distribution, based on a monthly ration of probably one artaba, was managed by officials of the curial class, appointed by the city council (**2918**, **2924**). The distribution proper, however, took place at phyle level, five times a year with a delay of three to six months at the theoretic months<sup>11</sup>. The first month of distribution was January, covering the corn dole of October and November.

#### b) Types of documents

Various types of documents can be distinguished in the archive (cf. graph in fig. 1).

1) By far the largest group are applications, addressed to different officials of the *siteresion* (**2892-2922**). Most were grouped into *tomoi synkollesimoi*; the individual applications,

arranged by area, were pasted together so as to make a roll and received an item number at the top (cf. **2892, 2898, 2906, 2908, 2911, 2912**). Carrié identifies two types of applications<sup>12</sup>:

- Applications submitted by persons already enrolled in the lists of recipients, requesting for *diakrisis* (**2892-2895, 2904, 2911, 2914-2916**). These are the applications properly speaking.
- Petitions of candidates whose names were omitted from the list by mistake (**2895 II, 2898-2901, 2905, 2906 I, 2907 II, 2908 III, 2913 II, 2917-2920**) or who were absent at the *anagoria* (**2902, 2903, 2906 II, 2908 II, 2909, 2910, 2912**). The candidates themselves submitted evidence for their qualifications (**2913 III, 2915, 2916**) in order to be enrolled eventually.

The applications were addressed to different officials. The secretary Aurelius Plution and Aurelius Eudaimon alias Helladios received for the most part straightforward applications from persons whose qualifications are not in doubt (first type; **2892-2895, 2904, 2906 II, 2911, 2916**). The *hypomnematographoi* Marcus Aurelius Achilles alias Ammonios and Calpurnius Horion, receive applications of the second type (**2898, 2899, 2903, 2905, 2906 I, 2908, 2909, 2912, 2917, 2918, 2920**). Maybe Plution and Eudaimon administered the routine affairs of the dole, while Horion and Achilles headed a commission to hear and settle doubtful claims<sup>13</sup>. The applications addressed to Plution cover the period of indecision between the reigns of Claudius and Aurelian; those addressed to Horion date to the first year of Aurelian and Vaballathus. However, the interplay of officials and boards to whom the applications are addressed is far from clear. Rea's suggestion that Achilles(?), Plution, Horion and Eudaimon succeeded each other as secretaries of the corn dole, seems rather too simple<sup>14</sup>. According to Carrié<sup>15</sup>, the *hypomnematographos* was not a member of the commission of *siteresion*, but a kind of legal officer, judging in case of omitted or neglected candidates. Anyway, the petitions addressed to him, were kept in the same archive as the straightforward applications addressed to the secretary.

2) **2939** and **2940** are extracts from the public records in the *demosia bibliotheke*, made by or for individuals, to serve as documentary evidence for the *diakrisis*. Although they are not dated, the fact that they were found during the third season and the closeness of the inventory numbers suggest that they belong to the archive. They were probably added to the applications as separate extracts (cf. **2913 III, 9: ἐν ἐντάκτω**). Similar extracts were included within the application (cf. **2915**).

3) The third type of documents consists of correspondence between officials of the *siteresion* concerning the corn dole (**2925, 2926**). It is uncertain whether **2924**, found during the first campaign, belongs to the archive<sup>16</sup>, though it certainly relates to the corn dole. It is a public notice of the corn dole officials, that they are leaving office and that the holders of *tessarae* issued by them should collect their corn immediately.

4) The fourth group are registers recording the names of recipients of the corn dole and drawn up by the phylarchs. According to Rea, **2930-2937** are the headings and fragments of the same registers<sup>17</sup>. Carrié, however, distinguishes two types of registers<sup>18</sup>. **2930-2932** and **2936** are registers limited to the newly enlisted recipients drawn up by the phylarch to complete the general register of his phyle. **2934-2935** are chronological sections of an older

register, which have been maintained.

5) Finally some lists contain district totals of candidates in the category of *rhemboi* and *homologoi* (**2928**) and in the category of *epikrithentes* (**2929**), kept by the officials of the *siteresion*. Here we also classify **2927**, a formulary with several specimen formulas<sup>19</sup>.

As noted by Carrié<sup>20</sup>, the archive contains two levels of administration: (1) a central organism in Oxyrhynchus with officials, a secretary and a commission of *diakritai* for newly enlisted recipients and (2) the urban *phylae* with phylarchs, composing and updating the list of candidates, arranging the lottery and organizing the distributions. Apparently the superior board of *siteresion* was responsible for the *diakrasis* and *anagoria* while the practical activities took place on phyle level. However, all documents concerning the corn dole were kept in one single central archive.

## Appendices

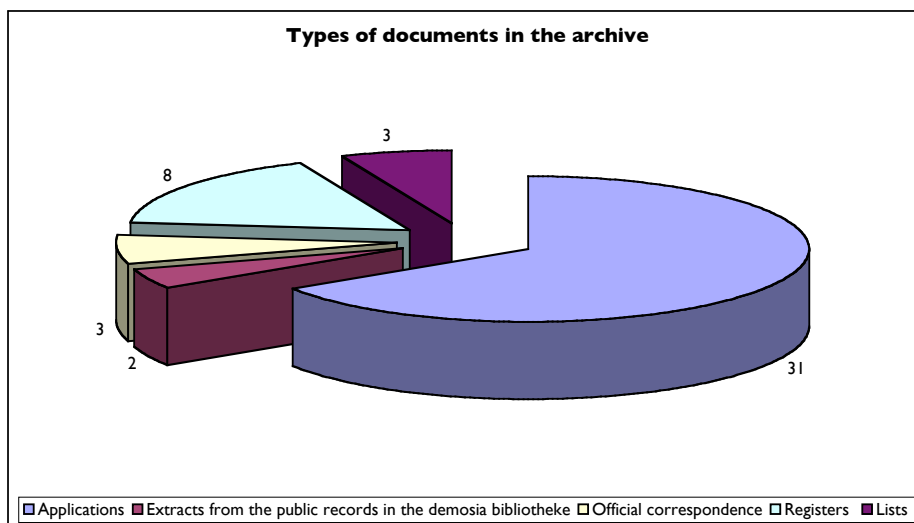


Fig. 1: Types of documents in the archive

<sup>1</sup> The numbers in bold refer to the text in *P.Oxy.* XL.

<sup>2</sup> REA 1972, pp.5-8.

<sup>3</sup> CARRIÉ 1998.

<sup>4</sup> REA 1972, p.8.

<sup>5</sup> REA 1972, p.4; N. LEWIS, *BASP* 11 (1974), p.55.

<sup>6</sup> N. LEWIS, *CdE* 49 (1974), pp.160-161.

<sup>7</sup> N. LEWIS, *CdE* 49 (1974), p.162.

<sup>8</sup> CARRIÉ 1998, p.282.

<sup>9</sup> CARRIÉ 1998, pp.273-275.

<sup>10</sup> CARRIÉ 1998, p.279.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. CARRIÉ 1998, pp.282-283.

<sup>12</sup> CARRIÉ 1998, p.278.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. REA 1972, p.32.

<sup>14</sup> REA 1972, p.32.

<sup>15</sup> CARRIÉ 1998, p.287.

<sup>16</sup> The document is not dated, but Septimius Horion (l. 1) is mentioned in AD 298 (*P.Oxy.* XII 1416), some 30 years after the documents from the archive.

<sup>17</sup> REA 1972, pp.93-94.

<sup>18</sup> CARRIÉ 1998, pp.275-276.

<sup>19</sup> Rather than a “compendium” of formulas, CARRIÉ 1998, p.279, thinks this is a “schème rédactionnel complet, exposé dans l’ordre, du compte rendu des opérations annuelles d’administration des nouveaux bénéficiaires dans les trois catégories”.

<sup>20</sup> CARRIÉ 1998, p.288.