

Larissa. Aedile Quintus Caecilius Metellus and the Thessalian corn

Description: Marble stele engraved with three honorific decrees of the Thessalian league. The upper part is split at the sides, but this does not concern the present decree located in the middle. However, the central part presents a quite long strip of peeling, which erased some letters. Dimensions: h: 1.30 m w: 0.49 m d: 0.10 m

Layout: Non stoichedon. The decree discussed here is one of three that have been engraved together, without any interruption

Letters: Attic letters

Origin: Larissa, temple of Zeus Eleutherios

Dating: 129 BC

Findspot: Southern slope of Ffourion hill, near Larissa

Current location: Diachronic Museum of Larissa

Reference edition: SEG 34 558 (only as far as the second decree is concerned, which starts from the end of the l. 16)

Other editions: ed. pr. Gallis 1976 [1984], 176-178; Garnsey, Gallant, Rathbone 1984; F. Canali De Rossi, ISE III 146

Photographs: Gallis 1976 [1984], tab. 127; Touchais 1985, 759-862, fig. 112

Translations: Garnsey, Gallant, Rathbone 1984 (in English); Canali De Rossi 1995, 147-149 (in Italian); F. Canali De Rossi, ISE III 146 (in Italian); Migeotte 2003, no. 13 (in Italian; transl. by U. Fantasia); Bagnall, Derow 2004, no. 81 (in English); Bresson 2016, 396-397 (in English)

Bibliography: Gallis 1984-1987, 210-212; Manganaro 1983, 405-409; Garnsey, Rathbone 1985, 25; Viriouvvet 1985, 91-96; Canali De Rossi 1997, no. 213; Bresson 2008, II, 193-195

...
 ... ἐπειδὴ
 Κόϊντος Καϊκίλιος Κοϊντοῦ Μέτελλος ἀγορανόμος Ῥωμαίων ἀ-
 νὴρ καλὸς καὶ ἀγαθὸς κ[αὶ] φίλος καὶ εὖνους ὑπάρχων τῷ ἔ-
 θνει ἡμῶν ἐπελθὼν ἐπὶ [τὸ σ]υνέδριον ἀνενεώσατο τὰς γεγενη-
 μένας εὐεργεσίαι[ς τὰ]ς ὑπ[ὸ τ]ῶν προγόνων αὐτοῦ καὶ διελέγετο
 20 παρακαλῶν, ἐπέειπερ ἦν [ῆ]ρημένος ἐπὶ τὴν τῆς ἀγορανομίας
 ἀρχήν, τὰ δὲ κατὰ τὴν χ[ώρα]ν αὐτῶν κατὰ τὸν παρόντα καιρὸν ἐν

25 ἀφορία καθειστήκει, ὅπως δοθῆ σῖτος ὑπὸ τοῦ ἔθνους τῆ συνκλήτῳ
 καὶ τῷ δήμῳ, ὅσος ἂν ᾦ ἐν π[ρ]ατῶι, ἐκρίθη τοῖς συνέδροις, μνημονεύον-
 [τ]ας τῶν γεγενημένων ἐ[ύε]ργετημάτων εἰς τὸ ἔθνος ὑπὸ Κοῖν-
 του καὶ τῶν προγόνων αὐτ[ο]ῦ καὶ τῆς συνκλήτου καὶ τοῦ δήμου τ[οῦ]
 Ῥωμαίων, ἐξαποστεῖλαι ἐ[ί]ς Ῥώμην ὥστε τῆ συνκλήτῳ καὶ τῷ δήμῳ[ι],
 καθὼς Κόιντος διελέγη, π[υ]ρῶν κοφίνων μυριάδας τεσσαράκοντα
 30 τρεῖς καὶ τοῦ προγεγραμμέ[ν]ου πλήθους σίτου ποιήσασθαι διάταξιν ἐ-
 πὶ τὰς πόλεις Πετραῖον τὸν [σ]τρατηγὸν μετὰ τῆς συναρχίας καὶ τ[ῶν]
 συνέδρων· τὰς δὲ πόλεις ἐκ[ά]στην τοῦ διαταγέντος σίτου ποιήσασθαι[ι]
 τὴν καταγωγὴν ἐπὶ λιμέν[α] τὸν ἐπὶ τοῦ Δημητριεῖου ἢ ἐμ Φαλάροις ἢ ἐν
 Δημητριάδι, τῶν μὲν τριάκ[ο]ντα δύο μυριάδων Πελασιώτας μὲν καὶ
 Φθιώτας ἐν τῷ μηνὶ τῷ Ἀφρίῳ, Ἰστιώτας δὲ καὶ Θεσσαλιώτας ἐν τῷ μη-
 35 νὶ τῷ Θυίῳ πρὸ τῆς εἰκάδος, τῶν <δὲ> δέκα μίας μυριάδων ἐν τῷ μην[ί]
 τῷ Φυλλικῶι πρὸ τῆς πέντε καὶ δεκάτης ἐπὶ τῆς Πετραίου στρατη-
 γίας, καὶ τὴν ἐσομένην δ[α]πάνην ἐκ τοῦ ἐμβληθῆναι τὸν σῖτον
 εἰς τὰ πλοῖα διδόναι τὰς πόλεις ἐκάστην τοῦ καθ' αὐτὴν πλήθους·
 40 περὶ δὲ γε τῆς εἰς Ῥώμην διακομιδῆς τοῦ σίτου ἠξίωσαν Κόιντον
 φροντίσαι ἵνα, ἐπεὶ οὐχ ὑπάρχει πλοῖα τοῖς Θεσσαλοῖς, ἵνα ποιήση-
 ται τὴν ἔγδοσιν, ὡς ἂν αὐτῶι φαίνεται βέλτιστα, τὰ δὲ ναῦλα δι-
 ορθώσασθαι τοὺς ἀποσταλέντας πρεσβευτὰς εἰς Ῥώμην
 περὶ τούτων ἐκ τῆς τοῦ σίτου τιμῆς· ἐὰν δὲ μὴ δυνηθῆ Κοῖντος ἐκ-
 45 πέμψαι τὰ πλοῖα, ἀποστείλῃ δὲ τοὺς ναυλωσομένους, φροντί-
 σαι Πετραῖον τὸν στρατηγὸν μετὰ τῶν συναποταγέντων ἵ-
 να διακομισθῆ ὁ σῖτος εἰς Ῥώμην καὶ τοὺς συνεπιπλευσομένους
 ἵνα συναποστείλῃ Πετραῖος καὶ τὴν εἰς ταῦτα δαπάνην καὶ ἐξα-
 ποστολὴν ποιήσασθαι Πετραῖον τὸν στρατηγὸν μετὰ τῆς συναρ-
 50 χίας γράψαντος Πετραίου διάταξιν ἐπὶ τὰς πόλεις· ἐὰν δὲ τις
 μὴ ἀπαγάγῃ τὸν σῖτον ἐπὶ τοὺς λιμένας ἐν τοῖς ὠρισμένοις χρό-
 νοις, ἀποτινέτω τοῦ κοφίνου ἐκάστου στατῆρας δύο καὶ ὀβολοὺς ἐν-
 νέα, καὶ τῆς διατιμῆσεως ταύτης ποιεῖσθαι τὴν πρᾶξιν Πετραῖον
 τὸν στρατηγὸν καὶ τοὺς ὑπὸ τούτου ἀποταγέντας ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόν-
 55 των τῆ τε πόλει καὶ τοῖς κατοικοῦσιν ἐν τῇ πόλει καθ' ὃν ἂν τρόπον
 βούλωνται, ἀνυποδίκους καὶ ἀζημίους οὖσιν καθ' ὃν ἂν τρόπον πράξ-
 ωσιν. ...
 ...

Apparatus criticus: I. 22: χ[ώρα]ν Garnsey, Gallant, Rathbone : χ[ρεῖα]ν Gallis (ed. pr.). I. 24: ἐν πρ[α]τῶι Gallis : ἐν [δυν]άτῳ Garnsey, Gallant, Rathbone. I. 37: ἐκ Gallis, sed Garnsey, Gallant, Rathbone ἕως legunt.

Translation:

Since Quintus Caecilius Metellus, son of Quintus, aedile of Rome, being a good and noble

man, friend and favorably disposed towards our nation, has approached the synedrion and recalled the past merits of his ancestors and has spoken requesting, as he has been elected to hold the position of aedile and his region is plagued by infertility, that it be given by our nation as much grain as is salable to the senate and the people, the councillors, remembering the previous merits to the nation of Quintus and of his ancestors and of the senate and of the people of Rome, decided to send to Rome for the senate and the people 430,000 kophinoi of wheat, according to the speech of Quintus, and that the allocation among the cities of the prescribed quantity be made by the strategos Petraios with the other magistrates and the councillors; that each of the cities arrange the transport of its assigned quantity of grain down to the harbour, whether that of the Demetreion or at Phalera or at Demetrias; that the transport of 320,000 (kophinoi) of the abovementioned quantity be made by Pelasgiotai and Phthiotai in the month of Aphrios, and by the Hestaiotai and Thessaliotai in the month of Thyros before the 20th, and of 110,000 (kophinoi) in the month of Phyllikos before the 15th, during the strategia of Petraios; and that each of the cities pay the costs that arise from the loading of the wheat on the ships, as regards its own quantity.

As concerns the transport by ship of the wheat to Rome, (the councillors) decided that, since Thessalians have no ships, Quintus provide for contracting it out as seems best to him and that the freight-charges be settled by the envoys sent to Rome on this business out of the price of the grain.

(They decided that), if Quintus is not able to send out the ships, but sends out the charterers, Petraios the strategos with the other appointees be responsible for shipping the wheat to Rome and for Petraios sending it with the men who will be in charge of it; and that Petraios the strategos with the other magistrates pay the costs of these things and provide for the dispatch and that Petraios make the allocation among the cities.

If any city does not transport the grain down to the harbours within the specified times, it will be fined 2 staters and 9 obols per kophinos; and that the collection of this assessment from the possessions of the city and of the inhabitants of the city be made, in any way they want, by the strategos Petraios and those charged by him, who are to be immune from punishments or fines, whatever the method by which they have made the collection.

Commentary:

The first and main problem which the inscription involves concerns its dating and the identification of the persons mentioned in the decree. Many scholars tried to solve these problems. Gallis (1984-1987, 211) thinks that the inscription has to be dated to around 150 BC and that the aedile sent to request the grain is identifiable as Q. Caecilius Metellus later called Macedonicus (on the foreign affairs that could have caused the food shortage in Rome around this year, see Garnsey, Gallant, Rathbone 1984, 39; on Quintus Caecilius Metellus Macedonicus, see RE s.v. Caecilius, no. 94 = Van Ooteghem 1967, 51-78). Manganaro (1983) proposes instead to date the inscription to 104 BC (when the second slave revolt in Sicily broke out), identifying Quintus as Q. Caecilius Metellus Nepos (RE s.v. Caecilius, no. 96 = Van Ooteghem 1967, 217-219). Finally, according to Canali De Rossi (1995, 147-159) the decree should date back to 57 BC (as in that year there was a terrible dearth that vexed Rome) and Quintus would be Quintus Caecilius Metellus Pius Scipio Nasica (RE s.v. Caecilius, no. 99 = Van Ooteghem 1967, 178-216; however, on the date of his aedilitas the issue is open, see Shatzman 1968, 350-353; Badian 1970, 4-6), whereas Petraios, the Thessalian strategos, has to be identified as the otherwise known partisan of Caesar (on this figure, see Kramolisch 1978, 115-117).

First of all, it must be said that neither Gallis nor Manganaro bother to identify the strategos Petraios. Furthermore, the flaw shared by all the scholars mentioned above is that they do not take into account the totality of the decrees with which the stone is engraved. In fact, all three were inscribed by the same hand and must date back to the same year (for this structure made up of more contemporaneous decrees, see for example SEG 57 510, a stele from Larissa of the same period, edited and commented in Helly, Tziafalias 2007, 421-474). Garnsey, Rathbone (1985, 25), after having supported the dating proposed by Gallis (1984-1987, 37), distanced themselves from it starting their new proposal with a prosopographical analysis of the third decree. It concerns the bestowal of the honour of equestrian statues to Timasitheos and Diotimos, who were strategoi in the period 146-135 BC (Kramolisch 1978, 61-74). If we assume that this honour was bestowed upon them after the end of their strategia and consider that Petraios, the strategos of the present decree, fulfilled his charge in the period 129-125 BC (on this figure, see Kramolisch 1978, 75-77, and Helly 1987, 39-53), we can conclude that the decree dates back to around 129 BC. In this year, in fact, a confluence of events occurred that makes a grain request from Rome (see below, Comm. ad ll. 20-24, ἀφορία) plausible. In this case, Quintus Caecilius Metellus mentioned in the present decree has to be identified as the man later called Balearicus, consul in 123 and therefore aedile in 129 (RE s.v. Caecilius, no. 82 = Van Ooteghem 1967, 87-92). For these reasons I prefer to follow their proposal of dating.

The decree starts with a presentation of the person of Quintus Caecilius Metellus and the mention of the services of his ancestors to the Thessalians. In ll. 21-24 the request of wheat is made with the mention of the cause that led Rome to submit it, namely the famine. In ll. from 24 up to 31 the κοινόν concedes what is requested explaining the details. Then in (ll. 31-38), some instructions are provided about the issue of the grain transport by land and the loading of it onto the ships. Furthermore, the problem of the shipment of the grain to Rome is dealt with: two different solutions are envisaged. The first one is that Quintus send out the ships and the Thessalians pay the freightage afterwards (ll. 39-43); otherwise, Quintus is to send out ships and shippers and the Thessalians are to pay a part of the freightage in advance (ll. 43-49). In the last section of the decree (ll. 49-56), a punishment is established for eventual delays in the delivery of the wheat down to the harbors.

- Lines 16-20.

εὐεργεσίας: The benefits recalled by Quintus explain why he himself had been sent in Thessaly in search for grain. In fact, since the beginning of the second century BC the family of Metelli showed interest towards Thessaly, offering some services to it (for a detailed list, see Helly 1983, 356; Garnsey 1988, 187). We may say that it was as if the Metelli were patroni of the Thessalians, according to the custom, rather widespread up to the late Republic, for which a renowned roman family established a relationship of patronage with foreign communities (see Gruen 1984, 162-172).

συνέδριον: The council of the Thessalians, the legitimate representation of the koinon, was based in Larissa, as proved by Livy (36, 8, 2) and an inscription (IG IX 2 261, l. 12). For an overview on the Thessalian koinon in the Roman age, see Larsen 1968, 281-94.

- Lines 20-24.

ἦ[ν ἡρ]ημένος ἐπὶ τὴν ἀγορανομίας ἀρχήν: Quintus, in submitting his request, besides indicating the contingent cause that had led Rome to send him in search for grain (namely the famine, ἀφορία), also makes reference to his own institutional role. In fact he had been sent there, as well as for the bonds of his family with Thessaly, even as aedile. This charge played a central role in the provisioning of Rome (cf. Livy 10.11.9; 10.13; 23.41.7; 30.26.5;

31.4.6; 38.35.5; Cic. Off. 2.17.58; see further RE s.v. Aedilis, cols. 455-456). However, as noted by Virlouvet (1985, 93 n. 21), the expression might indicate that Quintus had been only appointed as aedile and would take office afterwards. If this is the case, he had gone in search for grain on his own initiative to solve the problem of food supply in advance.

κατὰ τὴν χ[ώρα]ν: Here I prefer the restoration of Garnsey, Gallant, Rathbone (1984), that seems to make more sense than κατὰ τὴν χ[ρεία]ν proposed by Gallis in the editio princeps (although afterwards he himself opted in favour of χ[ώρα]ν, see Gallis 1984-1987). In fact, the latter seems to make the phrase too profligate, as it is useless to say «their situation of need consisted of famine», whereas it is more plausible that there is a reference to the situation of dearth that the territory (χώρα, presumably either the Italic peninsula, one of the main grain sources for Rome, see Rickman 1980, 101-104; Garnsey 1988, 188-191, and Erdkamp 2013, 270, or merely the territory of Rome) was experiencing.

ἀφορία: If we follow the chronology proposed by Garnsey and Rathbone (1985), the term ἀφορία cannot indicate insufficient harvests, but simply a famine caused by some events that kept the potential sources from which Rome could obtain the grain engaged. In fact, in Asia, in 131-129 BC, there was the riot of Aristonikos, in Syria, in 129-128 BC, Antiochus VII undertook a campaign against Parthia and Egypt, in ca. 130-127 BC, was living through the dynastic struggle between Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II and Cleopatra II (cf. Garnsey, Rathbone 1985, 25).

ἐν [πρ]ατῶι: Here there is not agreement among the scholars. Gallis restores with ἐν [πρ]ατῶι, whereas Garnsey, Gallant, Rathbone prefer ἐν [δυσ]άτῳι, but, as Gauthier points out (BE 1987 262), both restorations seem unsatisfactory and it would be better to restore this point with something like a passive tense of a verb such as ἀγείρω or ἀναφέρω.

However, the photos of the stone do not allow an understanding of how many letters could fill the gap. I prefer to follow the restoration of Gallis because it explains by now that the grain will be bought by Rome (as will be said below, l. 28).

- Lines 24-31.

ἐκρίθη τοῖς συνέδροις: The decision is made by the council, the only body that held decision-making power in the Thessalian league (and that explains why there is no need to mention other authorities, as for example in the decrees of the Magnesians, where besides the σύνεδροι we also find ἐκκλησία, cf. IG IX 2 1103, l. 34).

τῆ συγκλήτῳ καὶ τῶ δήμῳ: Although the grain was addressed to the plebs, the Senate had the task of establishing the modalities of distribution (cf. Liv. 2.34.7).

π[υ]ρῶν κοφίνων μυριάδας τεσσαράκοντα τρεῖς: 430,000 kophinoi of wheat are tantamount to 80,625 Attic medimnoi or 438,750 modii or 32,250 quintals (see Hultsch 1862, 542-544; 1864-1866, I, 206, 320; for the kophinos see IG VII 2712, l. 65). This figure may seem small if compared with the population of Rome at this time. In fact, if we assume that the population was of 250,000 people (cf. Garnsey, Gallant, Rathbone 1984, 40; however, on the complex issue of calculating ancient Roman demography, with many references to the earlier bibliography, see Scheidel 2001) in the middle of the second century and that the average individual food requirement was of 2.5 modii (16.65 kg) of grain per month for a total amount of 7,500,000 modii (about this issue, see Pomey, Tchernia 1983, 38; Foxhall, Forbes 1982, 41-90), we can conclude that the Thessalian grain could satisfy only a small percentage of it (6.5%). That could be explained supposing either that the request to the Thessalians was only one of the many devices to remedy the famine (Virlouvet 1985, 95-96) or that the timetable plays here a very important role (see below).

πετραῖον τὸν [σ]τρατηγὸν μετὰ τῆς συναρχίας: The strategos, the other magistrates

(συναρχία) and the councillors had to establish the partition of the grain sum due among the cities. For the formula ὁ στρατηγὸς μετὰ τῆς συναρχίας, cf. IG IX 508, ll. 30-31: Φιλοκράτην τὸν [στρα]τηγὸν καὶ τοὺς συνάρχοντας. The term συναρχία encompasses more charges, the most important of which are the ἰπάρχης, the γραμματεὺς and the ταμίας (cf. IG IX 2 507, ll. 1-3), charges that obviously were subordinated to the strategos. - Lines 31-38.

τὴν καταγωγὴν ... Δημητριάδι: It is noteworthy that there is a choice of harbors and this in order to allow the cities to go to the most reachable one. However, it must be said that all the Thessalian harbors had been made more easily reachable thanks to the passages of the Othrys, whose control Rome had won by virtue of the good relations with the town of Narthakion (relations that Rome formed siding with it in a territorial dispute with Meliteia, see Syll.³ 674). This town, for its strategic position, gave the Romans easy access to the harbors as well as to northern Thessaly (see Cantarelli 1999, 130-131). The grain was presumably transported to the harbors by wagons or caravans drawn by oxen, mules or donkeys (on the grain transport by land, see Rickman 1980, 120-121; on the transport by land in the ancient world, see Schneider 2007, 163-164). Although the text is not explicit, it is implied that the costs of transport were paid by the cities themselves. It is interesting to note that sometimes, even when the grain was sent to Rome as regular tribute and not extraordinarily, the Roman State was exempt from covering the costs of the transport of grain to the harbours. Noteworthy are the cases of Sicily, where the tithe-collectors were responsible for the grain transport by land (Cic. 2Verr. 3.14.36; on the topic see Carcopino 1965, 19-24) and (obviously under the empire) of Egypt, where it was directly the cultivators that covered such costs by means of a tax (see Rickman 1980, 121).

τῶν μὲν τριάκοντα ... ἐπὶ τῆς Πετραίου στρατηγίας: Pelasgiotis and Phthiotis, as nearest to the harbors (about 50 and 15 km respectively), are required to deliver their own sum earlier. Garnsey, Gallant, Rathbone (1984, 40) point out that the timetable of the contribution seems to explain the apparent exiguity of the sum of grain given by the Thessalians compared to the food requirement of Rome. In fact, assuming that Aphrios may correspond to the period March to May and Thyos to the period April to June, they suppose that 75% of the whole sum would arrive to Rome in the period just preceding the Italian harvests of June-July, namely the most critical period in the year (according to their estimate this amount represented from 10 to 30% of the available Thessalian surplus). In this way, according to the scholars, Quintus would distribute in each of two consecutive months 180,000 modii. The remaining part (123,750 modii; this last part was probably of new grain, namely from the new Thessalian harvest) would arrive in Rome after about July (i.e. after Phyllikos; on the Thessalian calendar, see Trümpy 1997, 216-229; see further Bennett 2005, 173), therefore after the Italian harvests. However, the number of people supplied before the harvests would be about 72,000, that is still a small number compared to a population of 250,000 people. Therefore, it seems inevitable to think, as Virlouvet does (cf. above), that other strategies had been put in place to feed the Roman population besides the request to the Thessalian koinon.

τὴν ἔσομένην δ[α]πάνην ... τοῦ καθ' αὐτὴν πλήθου[ς]: The loading costs are borne by Thessalians. A similar case (although our source is not totally explicit) may be that of Massinissa who in 200 BC supplied Roman armies and was responsible for loading and shipping the reinforcement knights and the grain (cf. Liv. 31.19.4: ipse in naves imponendos (i.e. equites) curavit et cum ducentis milibus modium tritici, ducentis hordei in Macedoniam misit).

- Lines 39-43.

ἐπεὶ οὐχ ὑπάρχει πλοῖα τοῖς Θεσσαλοῖς: The Thessalians have to apologize for not having cargo ships as it was customary for the grain donors to be responsible for loading (above) and shipping it (cf. Liv. 33.42.8).

ἵνα ποιήσῃται τὴν ἔγδοσιν: The term ἔγδοσις means here the farming out of a service by a (either public or private) customer to a private individual or company (cf. Polyb. 6.17.4; IG VII 303, l. 27). The resulting relationship between the parties was sanctioned by means of a contract. The contracts that the Roman State during the Republic usually pledged with ship-owners (through tenders chaired by magistrates) were called redempturae (Livy 23, 48, 5), whereas if a private citizen farmed out the service, the contract was a simple locatio-conductio one (on this topic, see Sirks 1991, 24-36). Therefore, if Quintus was already in charge, the contract he had to pledge was of the former type; if he was only aedilis designatus, he would farm out the shipping of grain as a private citizen, therefore pledging a locatio-conductio contract. While, as said above, when it was a matter of donations, the donor country usually shipped the grain to Rome, the recourse to public companies of ship owners by the State was the normal procedure when the grain was the tribute of a province (Varro Rust. 2, 1, 3; Columella Rust. I, praef. 20; see further Garnsey 1983, 121-126). If we assume that the average cargo of a ship in this age was tantamount to 10,000 modii (65 tons), to transport ca. 480,000 modii 48 ships would be needed (for the estimate, with references to the ancient sources and the earlier bibliography, see Virlouvet, *Famine et émeutes*, 95 n. 27).

τὰ δὲ ναῦλα ... ἐκ τῆς τοῦ σίτου τιμῆς: The κοινόν finds the compromise to pay the freightage (ναῦλα, lt. vecturae) with the proceeds from the sale of the grain, but only after the arrival of the Thessalian ambassadors in Rome. Hence we can infer that, although Thessaly was offering Rome its own grain, it would be paid. This is not surprising if we think that in 191 BC the Roman Senate said it would accept the grain offered by Massinissa only on the condition it could pay for it (Liv. 36.4.5). According to the estimate followed by Garnsey, Gallant, Rathbone (1984, 43), the average Greek price of wheat in the second century BC was of around 48-47.6 g of silver per quintal (this figure approximately corresponds with that reported by Reger with regards to the average grain price in Hellenistic Greece and Western Asia and generally accepted by the scholars, namely 5-6 drachmae per medimnos, that is the same as 54.5-65.4 g of silver per quintal, see Reger 2007, 469; for the weight-standard of the Attic-Alexandrian drachma, see Head 1911, 366-367). So, it could be inferred that the total price of the Thessalian wheat would be more than 400,000 drachmae (403,125-483,750). Although it is practically impossible to calculate with accuracy the costs of transports in the Roman world (on the issue see Adams 2012, 220-225), thanks to the present text we can at least infer that the freightage costs would be tantamount to less than 400,000 drachmae, that is less than ca. 450,000 denarii (456,525-547,831, this assuming that in 129 BC the denarius had a weight of 3.85 g, cf. Crawford 1967, 613-614).

τοὺς ἀποσταλέντας πρεσβευτὰς εἰς Ῥώμην περὶ τούτων: Bresson (2008, II, 195) thinks that these Thessalian envoys would have had to take care of the grain sale in Rome. However, it must be said that, as far as we know about the public grain distributions before the *lex frumentaria* of Gaius Gracchus, it was the aediles (and not envoys of the donors) that managed it in Rome, fixing the price of the grain, whether they had played a role in looking for it (see Liv. 33.42.8) or not (see Liv. 31.4.6; on the public grain distributions before Gaius Gracchus, see Veyne 1976, 447-451; Garnsey, Rathbone 1985, 20-24). Therefore, in my

opinion, the *πρεσβευταί* of the present decree had to go to Rome to cash in the price of the grain from the Roman State (alternatively from merchants that acted as mediators on behalf of the State, see Veyne 1976, 523 n. 330), namely the price of the external market. Afterwards, the State itself (by means of its aediles, very presumably in concert with the Senate) would sell the grain to the population, fixing a new price, the domestic market one.
- Lines 43-49.

The *koinon* proposes a second possibility: if Quintus is not able to send out ships, he can send the ship-owners and the Thessalians will take upon themselves the shipping costs. In my opinion, this rather unclear expression could be explained supposing that the private shipping company (or the individual ship-owners) required an advance payment and that here the eventuality that Quintus is unable to pay it is contemplated. This seems to be confirmed by the fact that, in this case, Petraios would raise funds from the Thessalian poleis before leaving Thessaly (l. 49). After all, the habit of paying a part of the freightage in advance is attested by some Greek contracts on papyrus (see Vélissaropoulos 1980, 282 n. 57). It is interesting that even in a building contract such a procedure is applied. In fact, we have an inscription of Puteoli (105 BC ca.) concerning the construction of a temple (ILLRP 518, ll. 53-6), in which it is determined that half the sum be paid by the city to the company when the chief of the contractors (presumably the *manceps*) gives guarantees (*praedia*) as security for his ability to fulfill the contract, the other half after the completion (for a broad treatise on the contracts between the Roman State and public companies, see Badian 1972, 67-81). For a different interpretation of this difficult passage, see Garnsey, Gallant, Rathbone 1984, 43; Gauthier 1987, no. 327; Bresson 2008, II, 195.
- Lines 49-56.

Judging by the inflexibility with which an eventual delay would be treated, we can infer that the situation of famine that Rome was living was rather serious. In fact, assuming that two staters and nine obols is equivalent to 16.5 g of silver and comparing this figure with the average grain price of 48-76 g of silver per quintal, it may be concluded that the fine would amount to 220 g of silver per quintal (Garnsey, Gallant, Rathbone 1984, 43), an exorbitant sum. Furthermore, it is likely that such an inflexibility depends on the fact that the ship owners would receive a penalty if they had had to wait for the grain in the harbors.

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