

STUDI DI EGITTOLOGIA
E DI PAPIROLOGIA

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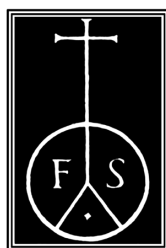
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BREAD WITHOUT CIRCUSES

ANGELIKI SYRKOU

ABSTRACT: Cereals were the basic ingredient that people initially exploited to make a great variety of bread, the consumption of which reflected the social and economic hierarchy in the ancient world. As people's staple food for centuries bread appears in different qualities and ingredients that signify the poverty or wealth of a society as well as its cultural level.

KEYWORDS: bread, flour, cereals.

PROLEGOMENA

THE ease and long established nature of communication among the Mediterranean people created a "unified" world sharing the material benefits of this civilization. People living around the Mediterranean Sea largely enjoyed the same foods, using the same ingredients and similar recipes. Of course every country had, and still has, its own peculiarities influenced by its geographical position, its landscape and the climate, factors which determined the culture, lifestyle and eating habits of its inhabitants; a case in point is Egypt, the culture of which was shaped by two key elements, the river Nile, (and the fertility it brought) and the barren vastness of the surrounding desert. In the case of Greece, our knowledge of ancient Greek cuisine and eating habits derived from literary and artistic evidence, while much of what we know about the eating habits and food culture of the Romans came from the Apicius,¹ a collection of cookery books from a fourth century A.D.

Food (with drink, air and shelter) is one of the basic necessities of life, but in all eras it has been refined into a pleasure and is intimately connected with ceremonies and social events. People have, in their quest to taste something different for sake of new culinary experienc-

es and to preserve their food for as long as possible, experimented with various recipes, which, as the time passed, traveled from one Mediterranean country to the other.

Valuable testimonies regarding the culinary habits of the Ancient Greeks reflect a world dominated by enormous disparities between rich people and poor, slaves and free men; a world that, despite its contradictions, was united by the food and drink as social commodities.² The culinary habits of people were relevant to their economic and social status. The campaign of Alexander brought the Greeks into contact with the East, something which had an enormous influence on their eating habits. The philosopher-scientists of the era of Alexander who travelled to the newly conquered East brought new products to Greece, citrus fruits, peaches, peanuts. The new dishes brought "inflation" and a social unrest to the class of people able to enjoy these new delicacies. Gradually the wealth of the East permeated westwards and arrived in Rome. The Roman cuisine was influenced first by the Greek and then by that of the East. Cooks coming from the East initiated the Romans into the use of spices, which they then incorporated into their own gastronomy. The Greek and Roman cuisine mainly differ in the amount of spices used. The cuisine of classical Greece used three or four herbs or spices in a dish, while in a typical recipe we meet in Apicius ten strong spices enhanced its attractions to Roman tongues.³

Meanwhile, the life of the poor changed little during this long period. Bread remained their staple food, marked the poverty or wealth of a society according to its lack or abundance, and referred to situations of famine or prosperity;⁴ but even the lavish sym-

* I am grateful to my colleague Nikos Charalabopoulos for his comments on this paper.

¹ M. Gavius Apicius, early 1st AD, wrote on sauces and claimed to have created an «eating house cuisine». The collection of recipes *De re coquinaria* attributed to him is fourth-century AD.

² A. DALBY-S. GRAINGER, *The classical cookbook*, London 1996, p. 8.

³ DALBY-GRAINGER, *The classical cookbook*, cit., pp. 16-17.

⁴ I. ANAGNOSTAKIS, *The Loaves of the King and the Loaves of Cinderella. Byzantine Tales of Bread in Silk and in Ash*, in A. PELLETTIERI (ed.), *Il pane di Matera e I Pani del Mediterraneo*, Foggia 2014, p. 116.

posia began with bread. So, cereals were the basic ingredient that people initially exploited to make a great variety of bread, the consumption of which reflected the social and economic hierarchy in the ancient world.

FLOUR AND CEREALS

By the end of the 5th century BC, all Greek cities had a developing bread trade, especially Athens, where the bread industry was flourishing. In Classical Greece the cereal varieties used to make bread were as follows:

status. A free daily issue of bread was given to poor people and a monthly ration of corn to certain categories of citizens until 58 BC, later to be converted into an equivalent amount of bread.¹¹

In Egypt the change which must have affected the diet of more people than any other concerned the staple cereal crop. Until the Ptolemaic period, besides barley (*Hordeum vulgare*), *tetraploid* emmer wheat was the stable cereal crop of the country: this is the grain referred to as *olyra* by Herodotus and

	Cereal	Properties and Varieties of the cereal
αἶρα	ergot	The poison ergot was known and its appearance in bread caused blindness. ¹
ἄλφιτον	groats	The grain from barley was known as groats, particularly when cooked and coarsely ground.
βρόμος or βόρ- μος	oats	Referring to oats a Byzantine dietician wrote that oats could be consumed by humans only in case of famine.
κέγχρος	millet	This was less known. The well known and popular varieties of μελίνη ² and ἔλυμος were sweeter but less durable than millet.
κριθή ³	barley	Barley was the best known cereal. Its varieties are: δίστοιχοι, τρίστοιχοι, τετράστοιχοι, πεντάστοιχοι and ἐξάστοιχοι. ⁴
κρίμνον	krimnon	<i>Krimnon</i> was the name of the most coarsely ground barley.
σεμίδαλις	semidalis	It is also known as flour from grain cultivated in the eastern Mediterranean and imported from the Phoenician cities. ⁵
σῖτος	wheat	<i>Asprosi</i> was the best known variety of wheat in the classical era.
τίφη ⁶	tifi	Bread made from <i>tifi</i> was exceedingly nutritious. ⁷ <i>Pyros</i> (πυρός) is a variety of <i>tifi</i> known from the prehistoric period in east and central Europe. ⁸
χόνδρος	grain	It was the name of the flour and the crushed seed of <i>asprosi</i> . ⁹

In Rome a huge variety of choice was available to consumers, including wheat, barley, bread of different types and other cereal products.¹⁰ These varied in price, and were enjoyed by people according to their financial

later in papyri. In the Ptolemaic period, a naked *tetraploid* (*Triticum durum*) wheat was introduced into Egypt and soon completely supplanted the earlier emmer wheat. From *triticum durum* flour of two qualities was

¹ A. DALBY, *Siren Feasts: A History of Food and Gastronomy in Greece*, London-N. York 1996, p. 90.

² Xenophon, *Anabasis* I 2, 22; II 4, 13; VI 4, 6; VI 6, 1.

³ Archestratus in his *Gastronomy* says that the best flour is of fruitful barley (εὐκάρπου κριθῆς) coming from Eresus in the island of Lesbos, which would be loved by Gods, if they ate bread, see Athenaeus III 77. The bread made of barley in Thebes and Thasos is also good.

⁴ Theophrastus, *Historia plantarum* VIII 4, 2, 9-11 τῶν μὲν κριθῶν αἱ μὲν εἰσι δίστοιχοι αἱ δὲ τρίστοιχοι αἱ δὲ τετράστοιχοι καὶ πεντάστοιχοι· πλεῖστον δ' ἐξάστοιχον.

⁵ DALBY, *Siren Feasts* cit., pp. 91, 239-240.

⁶ DALBY, *Siren Feasts* cit., pp. 90, 239 and n. 221.

⁷ Athenaeus 115 f.

⁸ The flour produced from the *pyros* was called ἄλευρον; Homer, *Odyssey* XX 109 "ἐπεὶ κατὰ πυρὸν ἄλεσσεν".

⁹ DALBY, *Siren Feasts* cit., p. 90.

¹⁰ P. GARNSEY, *Food and Society in classical Antiquity*, Cambridge 1999, pp. 119-122.

¹¹ A. H. M. JONES, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602 I*, Oxford 1964, p. 696.

produced: *semidalis* which was the top quality flour and whole-wheat (*autopyros*) flour. *Olyra* continued to be grown but in decreasing quantities. Besides coarse loaves, a rough porridge-like substance known as *chondros* was made from *olyra*; it is interesting that in the Apollonius estate the daily food allowance drawn by Zenon and his brothers Epharmostos and Styra might occasionally come in this form.

The influx of Greeks into Egypt following Alexander's conquest would have put an increased demand for food, especially cereals, on the resources of the country. Another cereal, maybe the Syrian wheat, by the name of *einkorn*, was first recorded under Philadelphus; other cereals strains too were introduced and a variety of these were grown on the estate of Zenon. Cereals had always been the staple food crop of Egypt, so, it is hardly surprising that the Egyptian peasants embraced the improved wheat strains, but they were not enthusiastic about the royal attempts to exploit the country with new methods and cash crops.¹ Small property owners in Egypt who handed on of their estates during their lifetime made stipulations for their own maintenance at the expense of their heirs. Their only alimentary requirements were wheat and oil.²

The Egyptians were mainly bread-eaters.³ The staple form of bread and cereals consumed varied according to social class; the Egyptian poor mainly had *olyra*, a cereal of low value, often eaten in the form of a kind of a loaf, called *kyllestis*, which was also a common food for animals.⁴

Wheat prices were liable to fluctuate vio-

lently according to whether the local harvest was good or bad. The farmers tended to sell most of their crop soon after the harvest.⁵ Both the Roman and Byzantine empires lived very much from hand to mouth and there were no substantial reserves carried over from year to year, so that a bad harvest and the fact of inadequate methods of land transport could raise prices sky high. The difficulty and cost of transport meant there was a considerable difference in the prices of wheat between a large town or city, where much of the supply had to be brought in from a distance, and country areas.⁶ So it was possible for prices to be on famine level in one area and normal or cheap in another.⁷

BREAD: ψωμίον-ἄρτος-ἄρτίδιον

Bread and porridge were the staple foods of the peoples living around the Mediterranean Sea. For bread, the term ψωμίον was widely used; a diminutive of the word ψωμός; the word ψωμός is derived from ψήω or ψήχω.⁸ Its meaning changed from «lump of meat»⁹ to «bread» in later authors.¹⁰ Afterwards the term ψωμίον is used more often by the Fathers of the Church.¹¹

In the ancient world bread was known by the term ψωμίον rather than ἄρτος or ἄρτίδιον.¹² For the word ἄρτίδιον as it appears in literary sources from the 2nd century A.D. and afterwards see the Appendix.

TYPES OF BREAD

The many types of bread varying not only in the raw materials used but also in the way they were cooked, for example, ἱπνίτης was

¹ D. J. CRAWFORD, *Food: Tradition and change in Hellenistic Egypt*, «Word Archaeology» 11 (1979), pp. 140-141.

² R. P. DUNCAN-JONES, *The price of wheat in Roman Egypt under the Principate*, «Chiron» 6 (1997), p. 241.

³ Athenaeus 4 18 f Αἰγυπτίους δὲ Ἐκαταῖος ἄρτοφάγους φησὶν εἶναι κυλλήστις ἐσθίουσας.

⁴ D. RATHBONE, *The weight and measurements of Egyptian grains*, «ZPE» 53 (1983), pp. 273-274. The qualities and the ingredients of ἄρτος, as they appear in papyri, are listed in E. BATTAGLIA, «Artos» il lessico della panificazione nei papyri cecii, Milan 1989, pp. 73-95.

⁵ DUNCAN-JONES, *The price of wheat in Roman Egypt under the Principate* cit., p. 250.

⁶ JONES, *The Later Roman Empire* 284-602 cit., pp. 445-446.

⁷ For example in the second quarter of the fourth-cen-

tury A.D. there was a year with a shortage in Egypt and wheat stood at 5 *artabae* to the solidus.

⁸ BATTAGLIA, «Artos» cit., p. 97.

⁹ Homer, *Odyssey* IX 374 οἶνος ψωμοὶ τ' ἀνδρόμεοι.

¹⁰ Callinicus, *Vita sanctii Hypatii* 14 5, 2 τὰ διδόμενα αὐτῷ ψωμία ἐν τῷ κελίῳ (A.D. III) and Cyrillus, *Vita Euthymii*, p. 27 10, 12 ἐνθα ὀλίγα ἔκειντο ψωμία (A.D. IV).

¹¹ Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronographia* 430, 14, ἵνα καθ' ἐκάστην ἡμέραν δίδονται ψωμία μυριάδες γ (A.D. IX) and the Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, 9, 75, ἄλλοι δὲ καὶ ψωμία καὶ κρέατα (A.D. X).

¹² In papyri according to the list of BATTAGLIA, «Artos» cit., p. 73 the term ἄρτίδιον appears as early as the 3rd century B.C. in SB XVI 12468; sometimes ἄρτίδια are mentioned as καλά in PFlor II 177, 3 or μεγάλη in PHeid 7 407r 13.

cooked in the oven¹ while ἐσχαρίτης was grilled. There were three basic attributes that characterized the types of bread; its taste, its nutritive value and how easily it was digested. Some considered that the loaves made of wheat (πυρῶν κριθίνων) are far more nutritious and far more digestible than those made of barley, and are in every respect superior to them; and the next best are those made of semolina (σεμιδαλῖται); and after those come the loaves made of sifted flour, and next to them those called *syncomisti* (συγκομιστοί)

made of unsifted meal.² The rolls made of bran give a much less wholesome taste, and they are far less nutritious. All bread is more digestible when eaten hot than cold, while the stale bread is less nutritious. The rolls made from barley and wheat bread accompanied formal Athenian dinners. It seems that wheat bread was precious, so Solon made a law stipulating that round loaves of wheaten bread were reserved exclusively for consumption on special occasions.³ The main types of bread are mentioned by Athenaeus:

Type of bread	Properties
ἀνάστατος	A fluffy bread made for Arrhephoroi daughters (114 b).
ἀνθρακίτης	It was cooked over charcoal and was lighter than λάγανον. In Alexandria during the sacrifices to Kronos they offered the ἀνθρακίτης ἄρτος to those wanted to eat in the sanctuary (110 b).
ἄζυμος	<i>Azymos</i> is the Greek word for “unleavened”, for unfermented bread. The <i>azymos</i> bread was the unleavened bread made specially in Thessaly (110 d) and mainly ash bread for the Byzantines. ⁴
ἀλειφατίτης	This was a kind of bread cooked with fat (110 c).
ἀπαλός	This was a kind of bread, soft and friable made with a little milk, oil and of salt. It was also known in Cappadocia and Syria, by the name <i>halman</i> (113 b-c).
ἀποπυρίας	This was cooked over charcoal (111 e).
ἄρτολάγανον	This was made up with a little wine, pepper, milk and a little of oil (113 d).
ἄρτοπτίκιος	The kind of loaf which is called ἄρτοπτίκιος differs in some respect from that made in a pan, and from that made in an oven. If it was made with hard leaven, it would be bright and nice, so that it might be eaten dry; but if it was made with a looser leaven, then it would be light but not bright. The loaf, which was made in a pan or in an oven, required a softer kind of leaven (113 b).
ἄταβυρίτης	This was full of taste (109 e).
ἀχάϊνης	A type of bread eaten during the Thesmophorea (109 e).
βάκχυλος	This was cooked in the hot ashes (111 d).
βλῆμα	This consisted of the hot bread crumbs that are put into soup (114 e).
βλωμιαῖος	This was the name of the loaf with divisions marked on it (114 e).
βραττίμη	A bread made of bran (114 e).
βωλήτινος	This was a loaf made to look like a mushroom, and the kneading-trough is sprinkled with poppy seeds to prevent the dough sticking to it while the yeast is mixed in (113 b).

¹ Athenaeus 110 b.

² Athenaeus 115 c.

⁴ ANAGNOSTAKIS, *The Loaves of the King and the Loaves of Cinderella* cit., p. 117.

³ R. FLACELIÈRE, *Daily Life in Greece at the Time of Pericles*, New York 1965, p. 169.

Type of bread	Properties
δίπυρος ¹	This was a luxury bread (110).
ἐγκρίδα	A pancake with oil and honey (645 e).
ἐγκρυφίας	A tasty pie cooked in the hot ashes, it was mainly a specialty of Tegea, heavy and difficult to digest (112 b). It was very tasty according to Arcestratus, ² on the contrary Byzantines considered <i>egkryphias</i> to be the worst bread and the driest of all. ³
ἐπανθρακίτης	This was a very thin and soft bread (112 b).
ἐσχαρίτης	Cooked in the grill, this was sweet and soft, a perfect accompaniment to wine; easily digested because of the added oil in it (115 e).
ἐσχαρίτης διάχριστος ⁴	This was a sweet and soft bread prepared for Thesmophoria in honor of Demeter and Persephone.
ἐτνίτης	This was made from coarse wheat, ground, but unsifted (111 c).
ζυμίτης	This was leavened bread (109 c).
ἡμίαρτιον	Half a loaf of bread (109 c).
θάργηλος or θαλύσιος	The first loaf made after the bringing in of the harvest is tasty (114).
ἱπνίτης	This was indigestible, cooked in the oven (115 d-e).
καμινίτης	It was indigestible (114 d-e).
κριβανίτης ⁵	A very good quality bread, pleasant, good for the stomach and digestible. It was baked in an earthenware container, <i>kribanos</i> , (115 e).
κριβανίτης or κριβάνιος	This was made from semolina, sesame and honey (109 f).
κρίθινος ⁶	This was made from barley.
κιλίκιοι	Produced in the form of big loaves (110 d-e).
κριμματίας	This was made from wheat meal (109 b-c).
κριμνίτης	Bread very carefully prepared (111 b).
κνηστός	This was made in the form of twisted strips, made mainly in Ionia (111 d).
κόλλαβος	Bread made from very fresh wheat (111).
κόλλιξ	<i>Kollix</i> was a spiral shaped bun made from coarsely milled barley (112 b, f). It was a Boeotian staple according to Aristophanes. ⁷
κολλύρα	Round bread (111).
κυλλάστις ⁸	Bread with a sour taste. <i>Kyllastis</i> was Egyptian sourdough emmer bread (114 c-d).
κύβος	A kind of loaf, square in shape, seasoned with anise, oil and cheese (114).
λάγανον	This was light and not nutritious (110 b).

¹ Athenaeus 110 b.² Arcestratus fr. 135; Athenaeus 115 e.³ ANAGNOSTAKIS, *The Loaves of the King and the Loaves of Cinderella* cit., pp. 117-118.⁴ DALBY, *Siren Feasts* cit., p. 178.⁵ DALBY, *Siren Feasts* cit., p. 91.⁶ Athenaeus 115 c.⁷ Aristophanes, *Acharnians* 872 ὃ χάϊρε κολλικοφάγε Βοιωτίδιον.⁸ Herodotus II 77, 2 ἄρτοφαγέουσι δὲ ἐκ τῶν ὀλυρέων ποιεῦντες ἄρτους, τοὺς ἐκεῖνοι κυλλήστις ὀνομάζουσι.

Type of bread	Properties
λεκιθίτης	This was made from coarse wheat, ground but unsifted (114 c).
μελίνη or ἄρτος ἐκ μελινῶν	This was made from millet (109 c).
ναστός ¹	This was excellent dense leavened bread, made in large thick loaves with a filling (111 c).
ὀβελίας	This got its name either because it was sold for one <i>obelos</i> , as in Alexandria, or it was cooked in a mold and sold during the fiestas. A makeshift idea said to have been invented by the god Dionysus on one of his campaigns (110 b-c, 111 b).
ὀρίνδιος	This was made of rice or seeds looking like sesame (110 f).
ὄλυραι or ἄρτος ἐξ ὄλυρων	A form of rye bread (109 c).
πανός	The Romans also made the bread <i>πανα</i> .
πυρνός	The bread made of unsifted wheat, containing the bran and everything (114 e).
πυραμοῦς	A kind of cake made of roasted wheat and honey or kneaded with sesame (109 c).
ρύπαρός	Coarse brown bread containing impurities (110 d, 114 e).
σεμιδαλίτης	The bread, made from semolina, was very nourishing and cheap (109 b-c, 115 c).
σησαμίτης	A very tasty bread made of sesame (114 b).
σποδίτης ²	This bread was baked in the hot ashes.
σπολέα	The kind of loaf eaten only by relatives when they gathered together (114 e).
σταιτίτης	Made from wheat (110 c).
στρεπτικός	This was made up with a little milk, pepper, and a little oil (113 d).
συγκομιστός	This was prepared from single seeded wheat, the most cathartic type of bread (115 c).
ταγηνίτης	It was a cheesecake fried in oil (646 ε).
τίφη or ἄρτος ἐκ τιφῶν	Bread made from a kind of millet (109 c).
τυρόες	This was a cheese pie (110 e-d).
χονδρίτης	This was made from single seeded wheat, a kind of corn or of groats (109 c, 110 b).

Ψωμίον AND ἄρτος IN PAPYRI

In papyri the term *ψωμίον* appears more often after the 2nd century A.D., mostly in the plural, and after the 4th century A.D. it can be considered a synonym of *ἄρτος*; both words

are frequently met in the expressions *ψωμίων ζεύγη* and *ἄρτων ζεύγη*.³

There were grades of flour, which are recorded by Pliny, and confirmed by the papyri. Egyptians enjoyed bread of different qualities.⁴ According to Herodotus *olyra* (ὄλυρα),

¹ Aristophanes, *Birds* 567 ἦν δ' Ἡρακλέει θύη τι, λάρφα ναστός θύειν μελιτοῦντας; Dalby, *Siren Feasts* cit., p. 91.

² DALBY, *Siren Feasts* cit., p. 91.

³ BATTAGLIA, "Artos" cit., pp. 97-8.

⁴ BATTAGLIA, "Artos" cit., pp. 73-99; PRyl IV 629 (317-323 A.D.), 627 and PNeph 1 (A.D. IV).

a cereal of low value, was the main source for making bread in Egypt,¹ but it declined in importance in the later Hellenistic period.² The bread made from *olyra* was rather bitter and called *cyllastis* (κυλλάστις).³ It is generally accepted that the standard wheat of Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt was durum.⁴ The best quality of bread consisted of pure wheat, *katharos*,⁵ «clean» (PRyl iv 629, 317-323 A.D., and PNeph 1, A.D. iv) in contrast with the *penis cibarius* which was eaten by slaves (PRyl iv 627 ψωμιών κιβαρίων); κιβάριος primarily used for bread of a coarse quality.⁶ The ordinary bread was less refined and may have been made from the previous year's grain.⁷ Another type of bread was made from barley,⁸ which is well documented in papyri and was produced in substantial quantities. Barley usually cost about half the price of wheat; although all aspects of its use are not absolutely clear, it was certainly a food for horses and mules⁹ and possibly used to make bread for the poor. Wheaten bread was very often mixed with other cereals in various proportions cf. 2:1.¹⁰ In POxy XLIX 3455, for example, we find proportions of 15:12:7 of wheat, barley and *olyra* used to make bread.

One ψωμίον possibly implied a standard weight or quantity of grain per loaf of bread,¹¹ while the control over the compliance was a duty of the administration,¹² and the baking of bread required a considerable amount of labor. For ordinary meals the food was presented in simple forms: wheaten bread and barley mash. The loaves were prepared normally from *asprosi*. Both white and brown bread was known, as well as the superior beneficial properties of black bread for indigestion. Unleavened bread was usual, but the fermented form was also known,

because soda ash and yeast wine were already known.¹³ A type of baked whole grain bread was *artos* (ἄρτος) and another kind of bread with sweet or salty filling was *nastos* (νάστος).¹⁴

Bread or *bucellatum* (biscuit), wine, oil and meat, were the staple foodstuffs for early Byzantine soldiers. The 6th century papyri show that a soldier would have 3lb. of bread per day while an ordinary working man was not so amply provided for. For soldiers on active service *bucellatum* was partially substituted for bread. The grinding of the corn and the baking of bread and *bucellatum* was a compulsory task imposed on the civil population, normally via the bakers' guilds and the landowners. When *bucellatum* had to be baked as traveling provisions for a military expeditionary force, all privileges and exemptions were suspended and even people of the highest rank had to participate in this task.¹⁵ Since the key element in feeding both an army and a city was the bread supply, the government ensured that all the major cities and the military had ample bakeries supplied with wheat and workers.¹⁶

Although markets were regulated by the imperial government, especially after the year 301 AD when the Emperor Diocletian tried to control prices Empire wide, trading conditions varied from place to place. As the papyri confirm people who were selling goods at the market were subject to dues, some for the right to sell and some for the lease of a stall, bread makers included. The authorities were concerned to supply the city with food to avoid dissatisfaction among residents and possibilities of civil unrest. If the free market failed to supply the necessary goods, then they might lean on the suppliers.

¹ Herodotus II 77, 4 Ἄρτοφάγεοι δὲ ἐκ τῶν ὀλυρέων ποιεῦντες ἄρτους, τοὺς ἐκείνοι κυλλάστις ὀνομάζουσι.

² CRAWFORD, *Food: Tradition and change in Hellenistic Egypt*, cit., p. 140.

³ Aristophanes, fr. 257 l. 1 καὶ τὸν κυλλάστιν φθέγγου.

⁴ R. BAGNALL, *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, Princeton 1996, p. 23 and n. 45.

⁵ BATTAGLIA, "Artos" cit., pp. 81-82.

⁶ Cicero, *Tusculan* 5 34, 97 and PCairIsid xx 2,15.

⁷ POxy VII 1071. ⁸ PBad IV 95 (A.D. VII).

⁹ BAGNALL, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* cit., p. 25, nn. 57, 58.

¹⁰ PMichael 43 (526 A.D.) or 60:48 in POxy XLIX 3455

(A.D. III/IV) n. 37 and also RATHBONE, *The weight and measurements of Egyptian grains* cit., pp. 265-275.

¹¹ F. MORELLI, *Olio e retribuzioni nell'Egitto tardo* (V-VIII d.C.), Firenze 1996, pp. 101-102.

¹² E. TENGSTRÖM, *Bread for the people: Studies of the Corn-supply of Rome during the Late Empire*, Stockholm 1976, p. 89.

¹³ BATTAGLIA, "Artos" cit., p. 418 and n. 230.

¹⁴ DALBY, *Siren Feasts* cit., p. 91.

¹⁵ JONES, *The Later Roman Empire* 284-602 cit., pp. 447, 629.

¹⁶ BAGNALL, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* cit., p. 24.

Above all there was the necessity of daily bread; for all Egyptians, bread remained an important and central part of the domestic routine. Most of the bread was produced at home mainly by female slaves. The balance of the bread needed was produced by professional bakers, *sitopoios* or *artokopos*. This kind of business required premises, equipment (oven, mills) and ingredients (wheat, salt, water and often yeast). The baking itself seems often to have been done in portable stoves called *klivanoi*. Bread normally came in loaves (small or large) and the loaves in pairs. A pair of loaves, two small ones, joined together, could represent a day's ration for one man.¹

MASHES AND PORRIDGE

Mashes of boiled grain constituted a quick and easy way to feed the laboring class of the population with a filling food. The pulp of barley was called *mass* (μάζα), while the pulped grits were termed *kollix* (κόλλιξ). The grain extracted from barley was kneaded into a mass and made up the staple source of nutrition for the lower classes.² The barley porridge was called «meat offering», and the soldiers were usually fed with this during the classical era and porridge from *asprosi* called *χόνδρος* groats. Another popular barley porridge was made from a different variety of barley, pearl barley, considered by some doctors to be a panacea, and cure for many diseases. The different ways of processing cereals, and the subsequent preparation of bread, marked the social separation of the rich from the poor and the middle class of farmers.³

Greeks enjoyed pancakes made with honey and sesame seeds⁴ while porridge (*kykeon*) was a favorite from Homeric times.⁵ Egyptians also used to very often cook porridge; a form of porridge which referred by several authors was *athera* used as a food for both cultic

and regular purposes.⁶ Hesychios described *athera* as a food made of grain and milk, which was porridge –like in substance.⁷ Porridge sellers, *atheropolai*, are recorded from Fayum villages where they took their place alongside other vendors of fast food/street food of pumpkins, chickpeas.⁸ Porridge was cooked in great vats or *chalkia*. The two main ingredients were olyra-meal and water; salt is not specially recorded. The simple recipe for *athera* is: one measure of olyra-meal and 9 jars of water; mix and cook, while stirring well.⁹

THE CONSUMPTION OF BREAD

Greeks in the classical era, like the French today, were connoisseurs of good bread, something that was a specialty of the time, and many cities were renowned for the quality of their bread. Athenians enjoyed a wide variety of tasty bread while Thessaly was famous for its handmade round buns, its *krimnites* (Ath.111 b), Tegea for semolina and bread baked in the embers and Erythrai for white bread baked in clay pots (Ath.117 f). In 3rd century BC Macedonia, unleavened bread formed the base on which meat was served (Ath.128 d); as in medieval Europe where this was called a «trencher».

So we can see that throughout the Byzantine era, bread was both a basic staple food, and, in its high quality varieties, a kind of specialty and delicacy for the richer classes of the population. In the 9th c. AD in Constantinople, the guild of bakers was the most favored and privileged of the guilds of tradesmen, as recorded in the Book of the Eparch, 18, 895 AD. Both bakers and their animals were exempted from conscription for public services in order not to hinder the continued production of bread.

The Byzantines ate both white and brown bread, known by the names *pure* (καθαρόν) and *dirty*, (ρυπαρόν) respectively or bread in

¹ P. J. PARSONS, *City of the sharp-nosed fish. Greek Lives in Roman Egypt*, London 2007, pp. 104, 106-110.

² R. FLACELIÈRE, *Daily Life in Greece at the Time of Pericles*, London 1965, p. 169.

³ DALBY, *Siren Feasts* cit., pp. 91-92.

⁴ DALBY-GRAINGER, *The classical cookbook* cit., p. 38.

⁵ Homer, *Iliad* XI 624 τοῖσι δὲ τεῦχε κυκεῖω ἐϋπλόκαμος Ἐκαμήδη and 641 ἐπεὶ ῥ' ὤπλισσε κυκεῖω; DALBY-GRAINGER, *The classical cookbook* cit., p. 40-41.

⁶ D. THOMPSON, *Food for Ptolemaic temple workers*, in J. WILKINS-D. HARVEY-M. DOBSON (eds.), *Food in Antiquity*, Exeter 1995, p. 320.

⁷ Hesychios, s.v. *athera*.

⁸ PSorb inv.555 (B.C. II); POxy 1432, 4-6 (214 A.D.) and 3138, 2-3 (A.D. III/IV); THOMPSON, *Food for Ptolemaic temple workers* cit., pp. 320-1.

⁹ The papyrus UPZ 1 98 provides evidence for the preparation of porridge.

Silk and bread in Ash,¹ bread for the wealthy and bread for the poor people. The ash baked bread is that baked carelessly in the oven: the loaves end up full of ashes or burned coals. The bread baked in ash was given the ancient names *spodites* and *egkryphias* by the Byzantines, especially in literature. *Egkryphias* is the loaf covered in ash, which, according to Byzantine recipes is prepared without leaven, just with flour, water and salt; *egkryphias* is considered to be the worst and the driest of all. Another popular ash-baked bread is the *azymos* bread, unleavened bread. As bad bread, the ash-baked bread was usually consumed by the poor, farmers and mountain-dwellers, and was always intended for people in dire need; it was bread made during times of war, siege and deprivation and apparently eaten by people who under normal conditions would have avoided it.² On the contrary, the silk bread originally could mean fine bread, for emperors, princes, abbots. However, it was not only the word silk which determined the quality of this bread, but a technique too. Silk bread was prepared from the finest flour, with no trace of bran, which had been screened and sifted through a very special sieve made of very thin, silk cloth.³

CONCLUSION

People living around the Mediterranean Sea have always shared the same natural products. They have exploited them in an inspirational manner, transforming them into essential components of their cultural capital. Their eating habits have transcended territorial and cultural borders; traveling over time from country to country and passing from generation to generation before arriving on our tables. Bread was people's staple food for centuries, as even now in poor countries, and its form and ingredients formed markers of the poverty or wealth of a society. So, cereals were the basic ingredient that people initially exploited to make a great variety of bread, often combining it with cheese or honey, the consumption of which reflected the social

and economic hierarchy in the ancient world. Even now we are able to taste many of their recipes and enjoy excellent delicacies, admiring their ingenuity and their fine flavors.

APPENDIX

The word ἀρτίδιον appears rarely in literary sources from the 2nd century A.D. and afterwards as follows:

In the 2nd A.D. sources:

- In Soranus, *Gynaeciorum libri* iv, book 2, chap. 46, sect. 5, l.1 ποτὲ μέντοι καὶ ἀρτίδιον ἀπαλὸν ἐκ κραματίου προσφέρειν ἔστιν and book 2, chap. 48, sect. 5, l.4 τὸ ψώμισμα διαιρεῖν καὶ ξηρὸν ἀρτίδιον αὐτῷ δοδόναι.
- In Apollonius Dyscolus, *De adverbis*, part 2, p. 174, l. 29 κυνὸς κυνίδιον, ἄρτου ἀρτίδιον, λέγω τῶν μετὰ συμφώνου ἐκφερομένων.
- In Galenus, *De compositione medicamentorum secundum locos* libri x, vol. 13, p. 175, l.12 Ἀρτίδιον γοῦν περιγγμένον ὡς εἰς κρίκον.
- In Iamblichus Chalcidensis, *Babyloniaca*, fr. 108 l.1n ὁ δὲ τινα τῶν βασιλικῶν παίδων αἰτήσας ἀρτίδιον κατεχρήσατο.

In the 3rd A.D. sources:

- In Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum* vii 13 where the philosopher Zeno eats little loaves of bread, honey and drinks sweet smelling wine ἥσθιε δε, φησί, ἀρτίδια καὶ μέλι καὶ ὀλίγον εὐώδους οἴναρίου ἔπινε.

In the 5th century sources:

- In Hesychius, *Lexicon*, alphabetical letter kappa, entry 3401, l.1 κόλυρας· ἀρτίδια μικρά, καθάρεια.

In the 6th century sources:

- In Maximus the Confessor, *Quaestiones and dubia*, section 16, l.5 Χαύωνές εἰσιν ἀρτίδια ἐκ διαφορῶν εἰδῶν ὄντα.

In the end of the 10th century:

- In the lexicon Suda, *Lexicon*, alphabetical letter alpha, entry 4038, and l.1 2 Ἀρτίδιον: μικρὸς ἄρτος· ὁ δὲ τινα τῶν βασιλικῶν παίδων αἰτήσας ἀρτίδιον κατεχρήσατο.

In the 12th century:

- Eustathius, *De capita Thessalonica*, 124, l.28 Ἀρτίδιον γοῦν περιγγμένον ὡς εἰς κρίκον, ὅσον ἂν ἀντίχειρ καὶ λιχανὸς διαγράψειαν.

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¹ ANAGNOSTAKIS, *The Loaves of the King and the Loaves of Cinderella* cit., pp. 115-117.

² ANAGNOSTAKIS, *The Loaves of the King and the Loaves of Cinderella* cit., p.118.

³ ANAGNOSTAKIS, *The Loaves of the King and the Loaves of Cinderella* cit., p. 121 and n. 9.

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