Ancient Greece

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Tamiai in Homeric Epic

Julia Lougovaya, Heidelberg

This paper investigates the parameters of apparent managerial tasks associated with the words *tamias* or *tamia*, 'steward' or 'controller', in Greece of the Early Iron Age, archaeologically speaking, a society whose functioning, especially in respect to its basic economic organization, finds some reflection in Homeric epic.[1] Although there may have been no bookkeeping in the strict sense of the word in Greece in that period, for there were neither books nor writing at the time, keeping track of supplies—their acquisition, storage, and distribution—appears to have been perceived as a distinct duty discharged by a *tamias* or *tamia*. Since of all activities that entail movement, exchange, and consumption of goods in epic the most frequently described one is feasting, commensality being of paramount importance in Homeric society, *tamiai* are depicted as primarily associated with the distribution of victuals. Analysis of the passages in Homer in which they are described or even simply alluded to allows for some insight into their possible roles. It is hoped that this will also lay the groundwork for future investigation into possible continuity between the *tamiai*'s tasks in epic and an office related to a sanctuary supervision and administration attested from the late archaic period.[2]

The etymology of the word ταμίας has been traditionally seen in the aorist ταμεῖν, 'to cut', although its morphology remains unclear.[3] Male anthroponyms *ta-mi-je-u* and *ta-me-je-u* appear in two Linear B tablets originating in Pylos (Jn 310.3) and in Thebes (Av 106.6), respectively; presumably they denote an occupation, but its nature cannot be ascertained.[4] By the time it appears in epic, the word has a large spectrum of applications and

1 Cf. the fortuitous remark by Walter Donlan about Homeric society that, "[a]lthough it is not an 'historical society' in any sense of the word, we can, in a scientific manner, extract a real society from it. The basic economic situation is especially clear and consistent in the texts, and to some extent matches up with the archaeology of the period," W. Donlan, "The Homeric Economy," in I. Morris and B. Powell (eds), *A New Companion to Homer*, Leiden 1997, p. 649-667, at p. 649.

2 This is subordinate to a larger project that aims to investigate the emergence and working of magistracies in archaic Greece, an issue which is closely related to the tantalizing question of state formation. For an especially updated approach to the question of state formation in Early Iron Age Greece, see J.K. Davies, "State Formation in Early Iron Age Greece: The Operative Forces," in A. Duploy and R. Brock (eds), *Defining Citizenship in Archaic Greece*, Oxford 2017, p. 51–78.

3 P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque. Histoire des mots*, T. IV.1 (P-Y), Paris 1977, s.v.; R. Beekes, *Etymological Dictionary of Greek*, Leiden 2010, s.v. Somewhat misleadingly, LSJ states under ταμίας 'prop. *one who carves and distributes*'; given the association of *tamiai* in epic with food distribution, this may suggest their involvement in carving meat, for which, however, there is no evidence. Cf. also W. Bubelis, *Hallowed Stewards*, Ann Arbor 2016, p. 119 with n. 1.

4 V. Aravantinos, "Mycenaean Thebes: Old Questions, New Answers," in *Espace civil, espace religieux en Egée, Actes des Journées d'archéologie et de philologie mycéniennes, Lyon, 1er février et 1er mars 2007*, Lyon 2010, p. 51-72, at p. 60-61. For the edition of the Theban tablet, see V.L. Aravantinos,

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tends to indicate an agent concerned with control, preservation, and dispensation of funds, which are normally not in his or her possession. Since the feminine form of the word, ταμίη or ταμία, occurs much more frequently in early epic than its masculine counterpart, it has been assumed that the form *tamias* was due to masculinization of the originally feminine form *tamia*.[5] The historical development has been correspondingly seen in the transference of housekeeping duties carried out by a female *tamia* in a palace to supervision and dispensation of communal funds by her male counterpart.[6] In order to reexamine this assumption, I will first give a brief survey of attestations of *tamiai* in Homeric epic and then contextualize transactions in which they are involved.[7]

1. Female *tamiai*

The word ταμίη appears in Homeric epic, often in a formulaic verse, to describe a servant who, for the lack of a more precise word, can perhaps be best rendered as 'housekeeper'. It can stand alone or in apposition to γυνή, 'woman', or ἀμφίπολος, 'attendant'. What distinguishes a woman referred to as ταμίη from other household personnel is that she is usually held in high honor and may be called αἰδοίη, 'venerable'. The *tamiai* are persons of particular trust: Eurynome and Eurycleia, the most loyal servants and once nurses of Penelope and Odysseus, respectively, are each called ταμίη. These women may have been in charge of provisions stored in the house of the ruler, usually a prince (*basileus*), though once a priest of Apollo, Maron, and would have had as good if not better knowledge of the owners' possessions. Although the word can be applied almost as a title with no immediate description of the associated tasks or duties (e.g. in *Od*. 17.495), in most occurrences *tamiai* are engaged in management or allocation of goods, often associated with feasts. Thus, there are seven passages in the *Odyssey* in which *tamiai* serve food at meals given by various hosts, such as Telemachus, Menelaus, Alcinous, or even Circe. Each time an unnamed housekeeper is referred to in the same formulaic verses:

σῖτον δ' αἰδοίη ταμίη παρέθηκε φέρουσα,
εἴδατα πόλλ' ἐπιθεῖσα, χαριζομένη παρεόντων

A venerable housekeeper brought and served bread, adding many dainties with it, giving generously of her store. (*Od.* 1.139-140 et al.[8])

L. Godart, and A. Sacconi (eds), *Thèbes. Fouilles de la Cadmée I. Les tablettes de l'Odos Pelopidou. Édition et commentaire*, Pise – Rome 2001, p. 31-32 and p. 176-178.

5 C.D. Buck and W. Petersen, *A Reverse Index of Greek Nouns and Adjectives Arranged by with Brief Historical Introductions*, Chicago 1945, p. 169.

6 Cf. perhaps the most influential expression of this supposition in G. Busolt, *Griechische Staatskunde*, 3. neugestaltete Auflage, Vol. 1, Munich 1920, p. 589-590, but see now Bubelis, *Hallowed Stewards*, esp. p. 17 with n. 39 and p. 121.

7 For the development of the office, in particular in archaic and classical Athens, see now Bubelis, *Hallowed Stewards*.

8 *Od.* 1.139-140, 4.55-56, 7.175-176, 10.371-372, 15.138-139, 17.94-95, and 17.259. Some of the occurrences are suspected interpolations from elsewhere in the poem, cf. A. Heubeck, S. West, and J.B. Hainsworth, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey*, Vol. 1, Oxford 1988, p. 94, but this is irrelevant for us here; the verse following 17.259 differs from that in other appearances of the formula.

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The food that these *tamiai* bring is distinct from both wine and meat, which are served by other servants or even by the participants of the feast themselves; *sitos* in these passages refers to cereal in the form of bread, while the things described as 'many dainties' are never explained but perhaps included cheeses, honey, or produce.[9]

Although the female *tamiai* in these scenes and elsewhere never mix and serve wine, they can be in charge of its storage and dispensation,[10] as, for example, a *tamia* at Nestor's palace at Pylos is, who furnishes from the cellar the ten-year wine that her master mixes at the feast he gives for his guests.[11] And when Telemachus is about to leave Pylos, Nestor's sons bring and yoke horses under a chariot, "in which a woman, the housekeeper, put food and wine and dainties of the kind that Zeus-cherished kings eat."[12] The wine under a housekeeper's control could be of different quality, and she was the one to know the difference. Nestor's housekeeper must have kept track of the vintages to know which were 'ten-year' jars, while Eurycleia gets for Telemachus twelve jars of 'second best' wine, that is, after the one kept in the hope of Odysseus's return (*Od.* 2.349-352). One assumes that there were wines of lower grades in his cellar, too, from which the suitors were served, and the arrangement of the jars in the cellar must have helped differentiate them. Eurycleia is presented as having full control and knowledge of the stored victuals:

ἐν δὲ πίθοι οἴνοιο παλαιοῦ ἡδυπότοιο
ἕστασαν, ἄκρητον θεῖον ποτὸν ἐντὸς ἔχοντες,
ἐξείης ποτὶ τοῖχον ἀρηρότες, …
…
κλισταὶ δ᾽ ἔπεσαν σανίδες πυκινῶς ἀραρυῖαι,
δικλίδες: ἐν δὲ γυνὴ ταμίη νύκτας τε καὶ ἦμαρ
ἔσχ᾽, ἣ πάντ᾽ ἐφύλασσε νόου πολυϊδρείῃσιν,
Εὐρύκλεα …

> Storage jars of sweet old wine stood there, filled with the unmixed divine drink, in rows and fastened along the walls … And the double doors thereto were fastened tightly. The housekeeping woman was in charge day and night, Eurycleia, who kept track of everything there in her knowledgeable mind. (*Od.* 2.340-342, 344-347)

Another knowledgeable housekeeper was a member of the house of Maron, a priest of Apollo, whose shrine Odysseus and his men spared when plundering the Ciconian city of Ismarus. Maron made a gift of wine to Odysseus, which would prove crucial to his rescue from the Cyclops. The preciousness of the wine is emphasized by the fact than nobody in the household except the host, his wife, and one housekeeper had access to it:

9 There is a vast amount of scholarly literature on Homeric feasting; for the kind of foods consumed by Homeric heroes, cf. above all S. Sherratt, "Feasting in Homeric Epic," *Hesperia* 73 (2004), p. 301-337, esp. p. 305-306 for what could be referred to by εἴδατα πόλλ(α).

10 *Tamiai* are never depicted drinking wine, but there is no apparent prohibition on women's consumption of wine as there seems to be one for meat, cf. Z. Papakonstantinou, "Wine and Wine Drinking in the Homeric World," in *L'antiquité classique* 78 (2009), p. 1-24, esp. p. 7-8.

11 τὸν ἑνδεκάτῳ ἐνιαυτῷ / ὤιξεν ταμίη καὶ ἀπὸ κρήδεμνον ἔλυσε, "in the eleventh year the housekeeper drew [the wine] after loosening the sealing string" (*Od.* 3.391-392).

12 ἐν δὲ γυνὴ ταμίη σῖτον καὶ οἶνον ἔθηκεν / ὅψα τε, οἷα ἔδουσι διοτρεφέες βασιλῆες, *Od.* 3.479-480.

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οἶνον ἐν ἀμφιφορεῦσι δυώδεκα πᾶσιν ἀφύσσας
ἡδὺν ἀκηράσιον, θεῖον ποτόν: οὐδέ τις αὐτὸν
ἠείδη δμώων οὐδ᾽ ἀμφιπόλων ἐνὶ οἴκῳ,
ἀλλ᾽ αὐτὸς ἄλοχός τε φίλη ταμίη τε μί᾽ οἴη.

He [sc. Maro] filled twelve jars in all, wine sweet and unmixed, a drink divine. Not one of his slaves nor of the maids in his halls knew thereof, but himself and his dear wife, and one housekeeper only. (*Od*. 9.204-207)

Besides dealing with various food supplies, a *tamia* might help arrange a bath for her master or for an important guest, a task that entailed access to such stored goods as valuable utensils, oils, and clothing.[13] Notably, *tamiai* are never involved in carving or serving meat. This could be done by a male 'divider', sc. 'carver', as, for example, at the meal in Odysseus's house cited earlier where a *tamia* served bread and other dainties, but "the carver raised and placed in front of them boards with various meats."[14] The fact that *tamiai* did not handle meat somewhat undermines the hypothesis that the feminine form of the word was the source for the masculine.[15] For, if the meaning of 'cutting' is inherit in the root, it is likelier to have been at some stage connected with the tasks of a male agent than a female one.

Since female *tamiai* are associated with a household, it is not surprising that in the *Iliad* they make but brief appearances and only on the Trojan side, in Priam's palace. One informs Hector, who comes home looking for his wife, that Andromache has gone to the wall overlooking the battle field (*Il.* 6.381 and 390), and another pours water over Priam's hands as the old man prepares to pray to Zeus before setting out for the camp of the Greeks (*Il.* 24.302-304). The two instances do not have to feature the same *tamia*—even in the much smaller household of Odysseus, at least two women, Eurycleia and Eurynome, are called *tamiai*, and thus the palace of Priam could presumably have many more. Unlike in the *Odyssey*, where *tamiai* are engaged mostly in the dispensation of stored provisions, in the *Iliad* they appear rather as a token feature of palace-life.[16] On the Greek side, where life of the military camp is managed mostly by men and all women are but prizes of war, there are no female *tamiai*.[17]

13 Cf. *Od*. 8.449-850, 23.154-155; *Il*. 24.302-304.

14 δαιτρὸς δὲ κρειῶν πίνακας παρέθηκεν ἀείρας / παντοίων, *Od*. 1.141.

15 The refraining from dealing with meat on the part of *tamiai* might not have been a special feature of their tasks, but a more general abstinence of women in epic from any kind of handling and eating meat. Cf. J. Rundin, "A Politics of Eating: Feasting in Early Greek Society," *American Journal of Philology* 117 (1996), p. 179-215, esp. p. 189-190; H. van Wees, "Princes at Dinner: Social Event and Social Structure in Homer," in J.P. Crielaard (ed.), *Homeric Questions*, Amsterdam, 1995, p. 147-182, esp. p. 154-163.

16 This is similar to the usage of the word in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, where Demeter in her anguish for Persephone sits herself by the roadside in Eleusis and assumes the appearance of an old woman like those "who are nurses for the children of kings, ministers of justice, and housekeepers in their echoing palaces" (οἷαί τε τροφοί εἰσι θεμιστοπόλων βασιλήων / παίδων καὶ ταμίαι κατὰ δώματα ἠχήεντα, *Hom.Hymn.Dem*. 103-104).

17 Most women on the Greek side in the *Iliad* are acted upon rather than act and thus the tasks they might perform are not spoken of; Hecamede, Nestor's prize from Achilles' raid of Tenedos, is an apparent

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2. Male *tamiai*

The masculine form ταμίης or ταμίας is, at first glance, associated with a wide range of subjects, from Zeus himself to unnamed army support personnel, but a closer look reveals some important similarities in the literal and metaphorical usages. In the *Odyssey*, the word appears only once, when Odysseus tells the Phaeacians about his month-long visit to Aeolus, "whom the son of Cronus made a keeper (ταμίην) of winds, to stop or set them in motion, whichever he wishes."[18] The mythical character, depicted as a mortal but dear to the gods somewhat like the Phaeacians, famously gives Odysseus a skin with winds, which his friends, presuming it contains treasures, secretly untie, thereby ruining their chance of reaching home. This description of Aeolus as a steward of winds, which he dispenses even though they are ultimately the gods' possession, is somewhat akin to those of the female housekeepers who dispense their master's possessions as gifts to foreign visitors.

In the *Iliad*, Zeus is twice described with the same formulaic verse as 'the dispenser (ταμίης) of battle', but it is instructive to examine the context of the verses. Its first appearance is in the scene of Athena's descent to Earth in the form of an exceptionally bright star. As she plunges between the two hosts brought to a temporary armistice, onlookers on both sides are bewildered:

> … θάμβος δ' ἔχεν εἰσορόωντας
> Τρῶάς θ' ἱπποδάμους καὶ ἐϋκνήμιδας Ἀχαιούς·
> ὧδε δέ τις εἶπεσκεν ἰδὼν ἐς πλησίον ἄλλον·
> ἦ ῥ' αὖτις πόλεμός τε κακὸς καὶ φύλοπις αἰνὴ
> ἔσσεται, ἢ φιλότητα μετ' ἀμφοτέροισι τίθησι
> Ζεύς, ὅς τ' ἀνθρώπων ταμίης πολέμοιο τέτυκται.
>
> Amazement seized the onlookers, both the Trojans, breakers of horses, and the Achaeans, wearers of beautiful gaiters, so that a man who saw it would say to the one next to him, "Really, there will be dreadful war and terrible fighting, or else Zeus is bringing about amity between both sides, he who is the dispenser of war among the mortals." (*Il.* 4.79-84)

The entire scene is presented as a metaphorical balance, with the Trojans and Greeks ready either to plunge into battle or to settle a peace, depending on what Zeus the dispenser sends forth. The second occurrence is in the context of Odysseus's insistence to Achilles that the army eat before launching into the fighting, for otherwise:

> αἶψά τε φυλόπιδος πέλεται κόρος ἀνθρώποισιν,
> ἧς τε πλείστην μὲν καλάμην χθονὶ χαλκὸς ἔχευεν,
> ἄμητος δ' ὀλίγιστος, ἐπὴν κλίνῃσι τάλαντα
> Ζεύς, ὅς τ' ἀνθρώπων ταμίης πολέμοιο τέτυκται.
> γαστέρι δ' οὔ πως ἔστι νέκυν πενθῆσαι Ἀχαιούς.

exception as she is depicted preparing and serving food and restorative drink in Nestor's tent (11.624-640) and making a bath for Machaon (14.5-8).

18 κεῖνον γὰρ ταμίην ἀνέμων ποίησε Κρονίων / ἠμὲν παυέμεναι ἠδ' ὀρνύμεν, ὅν κ' ἐθέλῃσι, *Od.* 10. 21-22.

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> Quickly will the men have their fill with fighting, as when the bronze cuts mostly straw to the ground, but the harvest is very small, whenever Zeus inclines his balance, he who is the dispenser of war among the mortals. It should not be that the Achaeans mourn the dead men with their bellies. (*Il.* 19.221-225)

The precise meaning of the metaphor in lines 222-223 has been much discussed already in antiquity, but, significantly, the image of harvested wheat brings to the fore the main issue at stake, namely, the meal for the soldiers that Odysseus is insisting on. In the context of the harvest and meal, Zeus as dispenser, as Mark Edwards observes, is holding his balance "like a steward weighing supplies from the commissariat."[19]

Curiously, both instances of Zeus being called ταμίης, 'dispenser', occur in reported speech, as if the speaker within the poem makes an allusion to an immediately familiar image. This familiarity is borne out by a brief and matter-of-fact reference to *tamiai* as support personnel in the Greek camp: at the beginning of the same book, which is devoted to Achilles' return to the battle after the death of Patroclus, Achilles calls a gathering of all the Achaeans. Walking along the sea shore, he utters a cry with the result that

> καί ῥ' οἵ περ τὸ πάρος γε νεῶν ἐν ἀγῶνι μένεσκον
> οἵ τε κυβερνῆται καὶ ἔχον οἰήϊα νηῶν
> καὶ ταμίαι παρὰ νηυσὶν ἔσαν σίτοιο δοτῆρες,
> καὶ μὴν οἳ τότε γ' εἰς ἀγορὴν ἴσαν …

> even those who before stayed in the gathering place of the ships, those who were helmsmen and held the steering oars of the ships and those who were stewards by the ships, distributors of food, even they came then to the gathering … (*Il.* 19.42-45).

The phrasing of this passage along with similes discussed above suggest that ταμίαι, equated here with σίτοιο δοτῆρες, 'the distributors of food', must have been an ordinary feature of a military camp. While it is common sense that an army needs food, the question that presents itself is why the job of distributing victuals has a special designation and this designation is even befitting a god, even if metaphorically. This brings us to the issue of food allocation as reflected in the world presented by epic. Of interest are not the social aspects of food consumption, but rather the venues of food supply, which in turn affect the modes of its distribution.

3. Venues of food acquisition in Homeric epic

Feasting is the most frequent activity in the *Odyssey* and second—after fighting—in the *Iliad*, and the poems do give some, even if very brief, indications of how victuals were acquired and distributed, which varied depending on circumstances. Leaving aside undefined 'dainties', εἴδατα πόλλα, food in Homeric epic falls into three major categories: cereal in the form of bread (both wheat and barley), wine, and meat, the acquisition of which may vary in (a) a settled community in ordinary, or (b) in extraordinary circumstances, and (c) on a military campaign.

19 M. Edwards, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, Vol. V: Books 17-20, Cambridge 1991, 260-262.

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(a) The sources of the main types of sustenance in a settled community in ordinary circumstances are exemplified by the scenes on Achilles' shield: the supply of cereal is indicated by the depiction of ploughing and harvesting, that of wine by grape-picking, while a herd of cattle and a sheep farm attest to meat and milk production (*Il*. 18.541-589). The estate is said to be that of a prince, *basileus* (τέμενος βασιλήϊον, *Il.*18.550), and is worked presumably by people who depend on him in various ways as well as by hired hands.[20] Except meat, which is never stored in Homeric epic but is consumed immediately after slaughter, victuals are stored at the owner's house, from where they can be distributed by a housekeeper upon the demand of an authorized person, such as the head of the household or his close relations.

A meal can be given by a host, be it Alcinous, who invites all the present Phaeacians to a feast (*Od*. 8.37-39) or the swineherd Eumaeus who makes a meal for his comrades and Odysseus (*Od*. 14.414-417). Telemachus's futile attempt to drive the suitors out of his house by appealing to them, "partake in other meals eating from your own possessions and taking turn at your houses!" shows that the duty of hosting a feast was expected to rotate. [21] Alternatively, participants could contribute to a common meal.[22] Thus, a festival of Poseidon, which is taking place in Pylos when Telemachus arrives, furnishes a picture of a communal feast at which nine companies of men, 500 each, contribute nine oxen each (*Od*. 3.5-8). The boundaries between the two types of feasts, however, are not strictly drawn. Non-contributors could be invited to join a communal meal and guests could bring contributions to a hosted feast, as do those arriving to the weddings held in the house of Menelaus and Helen in Sparta.[23]

(b) In extraordinary circumstances, such as, for example, hosting outsiders, whether as guests or allies, a community may be required to support more than its own immediate needs, be it in food or material supplies.[24] When Odysseus, pretending to be Aethon, a younger brother of prince Idomeneus of Cnossus, the leader of the Cretan contingent at Troy (cf. *Il*. 2.645-652), tells Penelope about Odysseus's stop at Crete on his way to Troy, he describes a meal that involved contributions from the collective. While he, that is, Aethon, entertained Odysseus from the stock of his own house, feeding his company called for contributions of provision—bread, wine, and meat—from the people, δημόθεν:

20 On hired workers in epic, see, for example, M. Finley, *The World of Odysseus*, New York 1982, p. 52-54; A. Brown, "Homeric Talents and the Ethics of Exchange," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 118 (1998), p. 165-172, esp. p. 167-168.

21 ἄλλας δ' ἀλεγύνετε δαῖτας,/ ὑμὰ κτήματ' ἔδοντες, ἀμειβόμενοι κατὰ οἴκους, *Od*. 1.373-375, cf. *Od*. 2.139-140.

22 Sherratt, "Feasting in Homeric Epic," p. 304; cf. M. Dietler, "Feasts and Commensal Politics in the Political Economy: Food, Power and Status in Prehistoric Europe," in P. Wiessner and W. Schiefenhövel (eds), *Food and the Status Quest: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*, Oxford 1996, pp. 87-125.

23 "They [sc. guests] drove sheep and brought wine, the joy of men, and their beautifully-veiled wives sent bread with them" (οἱ δ' ἦγον μὲν μῆλα, φέρον δ' εὐήνορα οἶνον·/ σῖτον δέ σφ' ἄλοχοι καλλικρήδεμνοι ἔπεμπον, *Od*. 4.621-623).

24 This is also the situation in besieged Troy: while the city seems to have enough to feed the Trojan contingent (*Il*. 8.505-507), Hector talks of wearing out his people by requisition of food and gifts for the allies (*Il*. 17.220-226) and laments that the wealth of Troy is not what it used to be (*Il*. 18.288-292).

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τὸν μὲν ἐγὼ πρὸς δώματ' ἄγων ἐὺ ἐξείνισσα,
ἐνδυκέως φιλέων, πολλῶν κατὰ οἶκον ἐόντων·
καί οἱ τοῖς ἄλλοισ' ἑτάροισ', οἳ ἅμ' αὐτῷ ἕποντο,
δημόθεν ἄλφιτα δῶκα καὶ αἴθοπα οἶνον ἀγείρας
καὶ βοῦς ἱρεύσασθαι, ἵνα πλησαίατο θυμόν.

I led him [sc. Odysseus] to our home and entertained him well, treating him kindly from the plenty that was in the house. And to the others, his comrades, who followed him, I gave barley and dark wine, collecting it from the people, and cattle to sacrifice and eat so that they could satisfy their desires. (*Od*.19.194-198)

These contributions would have been immediately expendable: people contributed food for Odysseus's comrades to consume. In other instances of communal contributions, however, some additional transactions seem to have been implied. Thus, Alcinous asks the princes of the Phaeacians to contribute each a tripod and a cauldron as a gift to Odysseus when the latter is about to leave Scheria for Ithaca. While this would be an immediate transaction, Alcinous adds that the princes will collect from the community to repay themselves:

ἀλλ' ἄγε οἱ δῶμεν τρίποδα μέγαν ἠδὲ λέβητα
ἀνδρακάς, ἡμεῖς δ' αὖτε ἀγειρόμενοι κατὰ δῆμον
τεισόμεθ'· ἀργαλέον γὰρ ἕνα προικὸς χαρίσασθαι.

Let us each give him a great tripod and a cauldron, we will later collect from the people to repay ourselves, for it is hard to give from one's own store without being repaid. (*Od*. 13.13-15)

Whatever was to be collected from the people (ἀγειρόμενοι κατὰ δῆμον), it would *not* be tripods and cauldrons, but something that could be gathered and converted into wealth equal to that of cauldrons and tripods. When the suitors attempt to buy their lives, the proposed deal also entails collecting unspecified contributions from among the people and converting them into portable wealth. Eurymachus makes an offer to Odysseus:

… ἀτὰρ ἄμμες ὄπισθεν ἀρεσσάμενοι κατὰ δῆμον,
ὅσσα τοι ἐκπέποται καὶ ἐδήδοται ἐν μεγάροισι,
τιμὴν ἀμφὶς ἄγοντες ἐεικοσάβοιον ἕκαστος,
χαλκόν τε χρυσόν τ' ἀποδώσομεν …

and we will collect from the people to pay you back whatever had been drunk and eaten in your house, each paying the price of twenty oxen, giving it in bronze and gold … (*Od*. 22.55-58)

Although there is no explanation of how this would be carried out, it seems plausible that the initial step involved collecting agricultural products, which would have to be stored and measured for eventual exchange. While epic provides some information on the comparative values of expensive objects,[25] the values of more mundane commodities, such as cereal, are

25 Cf., above all, A.L. Macrakis, "Comparative Economic Value: The Oxen-Worth," in K. Rigsby (ed.), *Studies Presented to Sterling Dow on his 80th Birthday*, Durham, N.C., 1984, pp. 211-215.

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never given, probably because they were of no interest for the epic story.[26] Yet, measured and quantified they must have been, and since the *Odyssey* assigns a *tamia* to storage, it may have been her task, too, to keep track of the collected goods.

(c) On a campaign, the three main categories of food—cereal, wine, and meat—could not have been produced in the same way as they were in settled communities, but had to be supplied long-distance or acquired by some means of exchange or pillage, or both, on the spot.[27] Let us start with meat, which was consumed in great quantities and the distribution of which at a feast was of paramount significance.[28] Methods of its supply, however, can be gleaned only from fleeting allusions. Thus, before his duel with Achilles, Aeneas recalls his previous encounter with the Greek hero, "when he came after our cattle and sacked Lyrnessus and Pedasus."[29] The casualness with which the purpose of Achilles' forage is given suggests that this was the default method of acquiring meat on a campaign. Cattle, of course, was not the only object of the raids; when later in the duel Achilles recounts the same episode, he talks of capturing also the women of Lyrnessus (*Il.* 20.187-194), a common commodity in war. Captive women, cattle, and whatever else could be pillaged on such raids, constituted portable wealth that could be consumed or exchanged, providing a means for the acquisition of further provisions, such as wine. Bartering war booty for wine is depicted in the famous vignette:[30]

νῆες δ' ἐκ Λήμνοιο παρέσταν οἶνον ἄγουσαι
πολλαί, τὰς προέηκεν Ἰησονίδης Εὔνηος,
τόν ῥ' ἔτεχ' Ὑψιπύλη ὑπ' Ἰήσονι ποιμένι λαῶν.
χωρὶς δ' Ἀτρεΐδῃς Ἀγαμέμνονι καὶ Μενελάῳ
δῶκεν Ἰησονίδης ἀγέμεν μέθυ χίλια μέτρα.
ἔνθεν οἰνίζοντο κάρη κομόωντες Ἀχαιοί,
ἄλλοι μὲν χαλκῷ, ἄλλοι δ' αἴθωνι σιδήρῳ,
ἄλλοι δὲ ῥινοῖς, ἄλλοι δ' αὐτῇσι βόεσσιν,
ἄλλοι δ' ἀνδραπόδεσσι· τίθεντο δὲ δαῖτα θάλειαν.

Numerous ships from Lemnos arrived carrying wine, which the son of Jason, Euneus, sent, whom Hypsipyle had borne to Jason, the shepherd of his people. A thousand measures of sweet wine gave the son of Jason separately to the sons of Atreus, Agamemnon and Menelaus, to take. From the ships the flowing-haired Achaeans

26 The smallest comparative value is perhaps that of a sheep, which seems to be a tenth of an ox, cf. *Il.*11.244-245, with Macrakis, "Comparative Economic Value," p. 212.

27 The problem of food supply of the Greek army has been famously discussed already by Thucydides (1.11).

28 See, for example, J. Rundin, "A Politics of Eating"; R. Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind: Homer, Philosophy, Tragedy*, Cambridge 2004, p. 23-47.

29 ὅτε βουσὶν ἐπήλυθεν ἡμετέρῃσι,/ πέρσε δὲ Λυρνησσὸν καὶ Πήδασον, *Il.* 20. 91-92.

30 The scene is discussed in most treatments of trade in early Greece or Homer, and thus bibliography is abundant, cf., for example, W. Donlan, "The Homeric Economy," in I. Morris and B. Powell (eds), *A New Companion to Homer*, Leiden 1997, p. 649-667; D.W. *Tandy, Warriors Into Traders: The Power of the Market in Early Greece*, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London 1997, p. 72-75; W. G. Kopcke, *Handel* (ArchHom M), Göttingen 1990. What is of interest to us here, however, is not the items of trade, but the mechanism of collective participation in acquisition and distribution of supplies.

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> supplied themselves with wine, some in exchange for bronze, others for shining iron, others for hides, others for whole oxen, and others for slaves taken in war. And they made a sumptuous feast. (Il. 7.467-475)

Agamemnon and Menelaus receive wine as a gift, but the rest—presumably including other heroes and leaders—have to barter, and at least some of the described transactions would have to be carried out by or on behalf of a collective. Indeed, it is rather unlikely that the poet wants us to imagine each man individually bringing something for the traders on the ships and leaving with his personal jar. Rather, a collective formed by those who had acquired the object of barter, for example, a company of men that carried out a successful raid, would carry out the transaction, whether through its leader or some other representative. Consumption of wine acquired in this way would presumably be shared by those who contributed to its acquisition, though a leader would enjoy privileged access, as it transpires in Menelaus's reference to the leaders of the Achaeans, as "those who beside Agamemnon and Menelaus, sons of Atreus, drink people's wine (δήμια πίνουσιν) and each give command to his people."[31]

Besides Lemnian, there is also wine from Thrace in the Greek camp, as we learn from Nestor, who reminds Agamemnon that "your tents are full of wine that the ships of the Achaeans carry every day from Thrace across the wide sea."[32] It is not clear whether this wine was sent as a gift, upon some mutually agreed conditions,[33] or in the hope of future advantages.[34] Whatever the nature of Agamemnon's transactions with the source of Thracian wine, its daily supply would hardly be intended for his personal consumption, but must have been distributed further.

The sources of supply of cereal for the Greek army at Troy is never mentioned, but we learn that *sitos*—which ought to have included grain but perhaps also wine—was distributed by *tamiai*, and since they are said to be 'by the ships' (*Il*. 19.44), it must have been supplied by ships, similar to, or along with, wine. And as with wine, it must have been acquired on behalf of a collective; whether it originated back at a military contingent's place of origin or it resulted from a transaction elsewhere, it would have needed to be regularly allotted since the demand for it would have been both constant and high. The role of those distributing it, the *tamiai*, perhaps with a balance or some device for measuring

31 οἵ τε παρ' Ἀτρεΐδῃς Ἀγαμέμνονι καὶ Μενελάῳ / δήμια πίνουσιν καὶ σημαίνουσιν ἕκαστος /λαοῖς, Il. 17.249-251. It seems somewhat misleading to interpret this as drinking at public expense (cf., e.g. van Wees, "Prince at Dinner," p. 165-166.), for the wine is not contributed by the king's subjects; rather, it is acquired on behalf and through the contributions of a collective, but with the prince, or princes, having a special entitlement to it.

32 πλεῖαί τοι οἴνου κλισίαι, τὸν νῆες Ἀχαιῶν / ἠμάτιαι Θρῄκηθεν ἐπ' εὐρέα πόντον ἄγουσι, *Il.* 9.71-72.

33 Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind*, p. 23-26, outlines ten types of transaction in which goods or funds, including humans, are allocated in Homeric epic, which range from the acquisition by force with no recompense to a form of trade, which he defines as "the impersonal instantaneous exchange of goods equivalent in value" (p. 23).

34 Presumably gift-giving could help one access more lucrative deals, constantly offered by opportunities of war. Thus, Euneus, who sends wine as a gift to Agamemnon and Menelaus, on another occasion buys the captive Lycaon, one of Priam's sons, from Achilles for a silver bowl worth one hundred oxen, and then lets Eetion of Imbros ransom him for three times that (Il. 21.79-80; 23.746-747). On opportunistic trade in Homeric epic, see Donlan "The Homeric Economy," p. 652-654.

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volume, would essentially have been to enable collective consumption in the form of communal meals. There is no reason then to suppose, that this function, which was performed by male *tamiai,* would have derived from their female counterparts in a prince's palace,[35] for the need for the constant distribution of resources, in particular, victuals, would be no smaller but likely bigger in any kind of collective undertaking, especially on a military campaign.

If the function of *tamiai* as depicted in Homeric epic was closely related to enabling and regulating commensality by keeping track of the supply and distribution of victuals, can any continuity be detected with a later office of temple attendants? Some recent studies of state formation in early archaic Greece stress the role of commensality in the emergence of political communities, for it helps explain "how Greek political communities could make up through participation what they lacked in administration."[36] Since commensality was intrinsic to religious celebration, the task of distribution of either collectively contributed supplies or those supplied on behalf of a collective, which initially may have been confined to victuals but within the 8th century came to include utensils and other equipment, would perhaps have been conceived of belonging to *tamiai*. With the monumentalization of shrines and their accumulation of wealth, these tasks would eventually crystallize into an office concerned with 'keeping-track of' or managing—widely understood—the sacred precinct, while also retaining from an earlier period the aspects of community trust and the authority for regulating matters under their guardianship.[37]

35 Cf. Buck – Petersen, *A Reverse Index*, p. 169: "ταμίης 'dispenser, steward' is clearly a masculinization of the fem. ταμίη 'house-wife, stewardess' … for it was she who dispensed the store of victuals in Homer."

36 J. Whitely, "Citizenship and Commensality in Archaic Crete. Searching for the Andreion," in A. Duploy and R. Brock (eds), *Defining Citizenship in Archaic Greece*, Oxford 2017, p. 227-248, at p. 227; cf. also J. Block, "Citizenship, the Citizen body and Its Assemblies," in H. Beck (ed.), *A Companion to Ancient Greek Government*, Malden – Oxford 2013, p. 161-175.

37 For the duties and social standing of archaic *tamiai*, cf. Bubelis, *Hallowed Stewards*, p. 118-146.

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