ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΜΕΙΖΟΝΟΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΣΜΟΥ

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Translation : *Βελέντζας Γεώργιος*
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Summary :

Title given to officials assigned with the task of maintaining public order in Asia Minor cities towards the late 1st c. AD. The eirenarchs (guardians of peace) belonged mainly to the upper social classes. Apart from the title of eirenarch, they were also given the offices of agoranomos, strategos and first archon, while various benefactions were included in their activities as well. Assuming the specific office was part of their career in the public sector.

Date

Late 1st century AD

Geographical Location

Asia Minor

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1. Introduction

One of the main concerns of the Roman administration in the provinces was to keep law and order. Although the army was the major supervising organ, the contribution of the numerous cities included in the Roman Empire was also significant to this field. Besides, bureaucracy was something rare in Roman administration, thus allowing the subordinated cities to be self-governed to a great extent and undertake a great part of duties necessary for the smooth operation of the state.[1]

2. The Institution of the Eirenarch

Under these circumstances, the cities of Asia Minor saw the emergence of certain officials responsible for maintaining public order in the Imperial period, particularly from the late 1st c. AD onwards.[2] These were the eirenarchs or guardians of peace. The title appears under different names depending on the local habits and possibly the literary background of the reporting writer.[3] However, the term “eirene” (peace) remains unaffected in the name of the title in order to underline the public benefit the said officials were summoned to defend. It was a matter concerning internal security and generally the preservation of the inherited social institutions.[4]

These officials are incorporated into the institutional framework of Asia Minor cities. The way in which they take up the office of eirenarch is of particular interest, as they are jointly chosen by the local civil authorities and the Roman provincial administration. The details of this procedure have become known thanks to an excerpt of the sophist Aelius Aristides. Each city prepared a list with the names of its ten most eminent citizens. The list was sent to the provincial governor, who would contemplate and select a person for the annual term in office.[5] Although there is evidence suggesting that this procedure changed over the course of time, its basic directions remained unchanged.[6] The law texts of the Late Imperial period confirm that the eirenarchs were selected among the curiales of each city and underline that their appointment was made by the governor and was validated by the emperor.[7]

3. Jurisdictions

It becomes obvious that the Roman administration intervened decisively in the selection of the eirenarchs and had the last word, which was quite uncommon in the self-governed cities of Asia Minor. The reason, of course, must have been the special character of the office. The main duty of the eirenarchs was to find, arrest and bring to the court of the governor anyone who committed an offence. They should also conduct a first-degree interrogation and send their outcome in the form of a memorandum to the provincial authorities, in front of which they had also to appear, in order to inform them of the findings of their investigation.[8] Their job was done more effectively thanks to a small armed force consisting of the *diogmites*, who had executive power while the criminals were on the run.[9] The eirenarchs operated mainly in the country,[10] as the rural surroundings of the cities and any mountainous or inaccessible regions around were the safest shelters and bases for the gangs, who often managed to escape the civil authorities.[11]

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However, eirenarchs were not focused exclusively on organised robberies committed in the countryside. According to sources, they operated against Christian bishops, whom they arrested and took before the Roman governor to be tried.[12] Moreover, there is evidence indicating their involvement in what is today called civil crime (burglary, battery, petty theft)[13] and their intervention in case riots and conflicts broke out in the cities.[14] As a result, their jurisdiction was exercised over urban and rural areas. It should be mentioned that the eirenarch of Colophon was responsible for the smooth operation of the agora.[15]

It becomes clear that the power and jurisdiction of the eirenarchs were particularly important and the Roman state must have been really concerned with their execution so that any abuse of power and arbitrary action could be avoided. In any case, the Romans were not disposed to show implicit faith in the eirenarchs of the cities, who could take advantage of their power and incriminate political or personal opponents by inventing offences or accusations.[16] Therefore, the persons that were to be appointed to this sensitive office should be evaluated, while the way they would exercise their duties should be checked.

4. Social Background of the Eirenarchs

The eirenarchs came mainly from the upper social classes of the Asia Minor cities. They also held a number of other offices, such as that of the agoranomos, strategos, first archon, etc. At the same time, they were involved in benevolent activities, such as supplying the city with food, organising games and undertaking duties of clerical and religious character. It becomes evident that the responsibility for supervising the Asia Minor cities and maintaining public order was assigned to the members of the economic-political elites, who became eirenarchs as part of their career in the public sector.[17]

5. The Ideological Character of the Institution

The spread of the institution of the eirenarch over almost the entire Asia Minor was without doubt an administrative regulation. It apparently aimed at the improved supervision of security issues through the formation of special organs.[18] However, the institution should be examined according to other criteria, too. Other earlier established supervising organs, such as the *paraphylakes*, still existed and acted in parallel with the eirenarchs in the cities of the East.[19] However, it should not be ignored that an integral part of the title of the eirenarch was the word “peace”, an idea of enormous importance for the ideological developments of the Imperial period.

The imposition of peace in the form of Pax Romana/Pax Augusta and the promotion of the emperors as its commissioners and guarantors were the main means for legalising the Imperium Romanum in the provinces.[20] Within this framework, the presence of the eirenarchs among the traditional ruling organs of the Greek cities signalled the incorporation of the idea-symbol of Pax Romana into their institutional framework as well as into their political tradition and identity. Local aristocracies were eager to adopt the role of the guarantor of peace, thus fulfilling on a local scale the same function the emperor and the Roman state performed on an “ecumenical” scale. In the end, they were identified with the imperial regime with respect to their common interests and common social functions. As a result, the voluntary cooperation between the self-governed cities and the Roman state helped the incorporation of these cities into the empire.

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1. A large number of studies has been carried out on issues concerning the administrative organisation of the Roman state. The reader may find a useful introduction in the book by Garnsev, P. – Saller, R., *The Roman Empire. Economy, society and culture* (London 1987).

2. The earliest relevant evidence is a Phrygian votive inscription dated to 79 AD, which reports the “eirenophylax/guardian of peace of the province” Titus Flavius Helius, a freedman of Emperor Vespasian; see Drew-Bear,T. – Naour, C., “Divinites de Phrygie”, *ANRW II* 18. 3 (1987), pp. 1967-1979. As an imperial freedman, Helius was an official in the imperial service rather than in a city. The decentralisation started and, as a result, the institution of the eirenarch was incorporated into the institutional framework of the self-governed cities. Already from the late 1st or the early 2nd c. AD an inscription from Mikra Kibyra of Cilicia Trachea reports

Artemidorus, who was assigned to keep peace in the country around an altar dedicated to Herakles; see Bean, G.E. – Mitford, T.B., *Journeys in Rough Cilicia, 1964-1968* (Wien 1970), p. 61. In any case, the office of eirenarch had already been established in Sevastopol of Caria a long before 116-117 AD and a number of the respective privileges and distinctions were granted to eminent citizens, although the latter never assumed office; see Robert, L., *Etudes Anatoliennes* (Paris 1937), p. 339.

3. As indicated by inscriptions found in Asia Minor cities . Law texts use the same term in the Latin version "irenarcha". However, Atticist writers like Aelius Aristides and Libanius preferred the term "eirenophylax" (guardian of peace); see Aelius Aristides, *The complete works* 2 (ed) Behr, C.A. (Leiden 1981), p. 124 and Jones, A.H.M., *The Later Roman Empire* II (Oxford 1964), p. 1298, n. 29.

4. It should be noted that the legist Arcadius Charisius, who lived in Diocletian's years, believes that the eirenarchs were responsible for public discipline and the application of moral principles (see *Pandektes* L.IV. 18.7.... disciplinae publicae et corrigendis moribus praeficiuntur.....).

5. See Aelius Aristides from 50.72 onwards. Although his name was not included in the list of prospective eirenarchs submitted by his birthplace, Αδριανο? Θ?ραι, Aristides was selected by the proconsul Severus to serve as an eirenarch. However, he tried to avoid the office with the intervention of influential friends. At this point it should be underlined that more than one person could be appointed as eirenarchs, as indicated by inscriptions reporting someone who served as "the only eirenarch". This is what happened in Miletus (I. Didyma 333) and Ephesus (I. Eph. 30388, 3091, 3071). Moreover, specific areas of jurisdiction could also be specified, as evidenced by the inscription from Mikra Kibyra reported in footnote 2 and an inscription found in Termessus, Pamphylia (*T.A.M.* 1.104 = *SEG* VI,31), referring to an "eirenarch of the upper towns and the forest." This distribution of duties was probably due to the extended rural territory of the city or its vicinity with regions not effectively controlled by the Roman state, which were inhabited by tribes that were traditionally used to robbing in order to support their lives (see also footnote 11).

6. Aelius Aristides underlines that the procedure was in effect "in those years". He was appointed by the proconsul Severus in 153 AD, while the text including the incident was written in 171 AD; see Behr, C.A., *Aelius Aristides and the Sacred tales* (Amsterdam1968), p. 88, n. 69 and pp. 109 -110. It becomes evident that when the work was written, the procedure for selecting the eirenarchs had somehow changed.

7. See *Codex Theodosianus* VIII. 7.21 and *Codex Justinianus* X. 77[75].

8. These duties are reported in *Pandektes* XI,VIII. III. 6. It should be noted that although the eirenarchs were officials of the self-governed cities, in practice they served as organs of the state mechanism in aspects concerning order and administration of justice (see also footnote 12).

9. The names of eirenarchs accompanied by diogmites are reported in inscriptions found on the walls of a cave on Mount Hissar-Dag in southern Pisidia; see *SEG* VI 684-714; see also Robert, L., "Etudes Epigraphiques", *BCH* 52 (1928), pp. 407-409., The "diogmites" are also present in martyria of saints as inferior to the eirenarchs (see footnote 12). In Antioch of Syria the subordinates of the eirenarchs were called "Korynephoroi" (Libanius 48.9), meaning men holding a club (koryne). For the diogmites, see Magie, D., *Roman Rule in Asia Minor* (Princeton 1950).

10. Eirenarchs in Hissar-Dag were responsible for patrolling the area and pursuing bandits; see Robert, L., *Etudes Anatoliennes* (Paris 1937), p. 339. Moreover, in the martyria (see footnote 12) the eirenarchs arrested the Christians in the open air.

11. Robbery in the countryside was a very common crime committed throughout the Imperial period, even in regions that had long ago been incorporated in the Imperium Romanorum; see Shaw, B.D., "Bandits in the Roman Empire", *Past and Present* 105 (1984), pp. 3-52. Useful information about the phenomenon of robbery is reported by Mc Mullen, R., *Enemies of the Roman Order* (Oxford 1966), pp. 255-256 and 261-266.

12. See *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* III-VIII, *The Martrdom of Nestor* and *The Martyrdom of Conon* I-II. These texts have more recently been published in Musurillo, H., *Acts of the Christians Martyrs* (Oxford 1972). In the case of Polykarp, the eirenarch finally decided to arrest the bishop of Smyrna following accusations from the citizens. However, in the case of Conon and Nestor, the eirenarch was ordered by the

Roman praeses, which confirms that the eirenarchs were in practice included into the state mechanism (see footnote 8).

13. The sort of evidence concerning the eirenarchs (honorary inscriptions, law and literary texts) does not provide any further information about the range of issues they dealt with. However, the Egyptian papyri report that the eirenarchs serving there, apart from referring the fugitives to a superior authority (see *P. Oxy*. 2107), they were also responsible for the restoration of stolen goods (see *P. Stras* n. 5) and violent actions against citizens (see *SB*9105 and *P. Col*. 242). The same might also have happened in Asia Minor.

14. Between 396 and 398 the eirenarchs collaborated with other noblemen of the Gaza Strip and Palestine and intervened in conflicts between Christians and idolaters; see Gregoire, H. – Kugener, A.M., *La vie de Porphyre, évêque de Gaza* (Paris 1930), pp. 22-25.

15. See *SEG* XLII 1038. It becomes evident that in this case the eirenarch certifies the weight of the standard weights used in commercial transactions in the agora of the city. Any distrust could lead to public disorder.

16. According to the sources, such problems were quite frequent, although their character remains rather unclear. The legist Marcian (*Pandektes* XLVIII.III.6) reports that Emperor Hadrian noted that the eirenarchs did not prepare bona fide memoranda. Thus, they were summoned before the court so that the accuracy of their claims could be checked. What is more, Marcian suggests that any devious or mischievous eirenarch should be punished.

17. There are numerous relevant inscriptions; see *IGRR* III 203 (Ankara), *SEG* XXXIV 1107 (Ephesus) *IGRR* III 226 (Pessinus), *IGRR* IV 658 (Acmonia), *IGRR* IV 785 (Apamea), *SEG* XXXV 1365 (Aezani), *MAMA* VIII 520 (Aphrodisias).

18. The office of eirenarch was found in numerous cities of the provinces of Asia, Cilicia Trachea, Pisidia, Pamphylia and Galatia. In front zones, such as Cappadocia, the powerful military units were also patrol forces. Besides, major safety problems like large-scale revolts always required the intervention of the army; see Shaw, B.D., "Bandits in the Roman Empire", *Past and Present* 105 (1984), pp. 18-19.

19. For the paraphylakes, see Jones, A.H.M., *The Greek City from Alexander to Justinian* (Oxford 1940), p. 212 and Magie, D., *Roman Rule in Asia Minor* (Princeton 1950), p. 1515, n. 47; see also Robert, L., *Études Anatoliennes* (Paris 1937), pp. 91-104.

20. See Woolf, G., "Roman Piece" in Rich, J. – Shipley, G. (ed), *War and Society in the Roman world* (London – New York 1993), pp. 171-194. For the developments about peace and the efforts of the emperors to be identified with peace, see Weinstock, S., "Pax and the ?Ara Pacis?", *JRS* 50 (1960), p. 44-48. It is indicative that the scholars of the Imperial period considered the absence of robberies and violent actions an essential element of Pax Romana; see Philo, *Legatio at Gaii* 146-147 and Epictetus, III. 13.9 and III. 22. 55. The Jewish Philo gives Augustus the title of eirenophylax.

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Glossary :

agoranomos, the

Civil official responsible for the maintenance of the market and the price balance of foods.

curiales

Curiales were the members of the city councils (gr.: *boule*) in the late Roman Empire. They belonged to the local aristocracy and were officials of the municipal administration, responsible for the normal functioning of the city's institutions as well as for local tax-collecting. A city's *boule* could count from 100 to 200 curiales, depending on the city's population.

strategos ("general")

During the Roman period his duties were mainly political. Office of the Byzantine state´s provincial administration. At first the title was given to the military and political administrator of the themes, namely of the big geographic and administrative unities of the Byzantine empire. Gradually the title lost its power and, already in the 11th century, strategoi were turned to simple commanders of military units, responsible for the defence of a region.

Sources

Aelius Aristides 50.72.

Codex Theodosianus VIII.7.21

Codex Justinianus X.77[75]

Epictetus III.13.9, 22.55

Libanius 48.9

The Martyrdom of Conon I-II

The Martyrdom of Nestor

The Martyrdom of Polycarp III-VIII

Pandektes XI.VIII.III.6, L.IV.18.7

Philo, *Legatio at Gaii* 146-147