

Studies

ANCIENT HISTORY

THE OFFICE OF THE *PROTOS* ARCHON IN BITHYNIA AND THRACE

Abstract: The paper examines the occurrence of the office of the *protos archon* and of the *synarchia* in Greek cities of the provinces of Pontus et Bithynia and of Thrace, particularly as it concerns its relevance for the relations and reciprocal influences of the two provinces.

Key words: office, eponymous office, Greek cities, Bithynia, Thrace.

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Numerous and close were the relations connecting during the Principate the shores of the Black sea and, beyond, the interior of Bithynia and Thrace¹; they were repeatedly examined over recent years². The present paper proposes the examination of an institutional aspect of these relations.

The office of the First Archon occurs in the cities of Bithynia³ under Roman rule, doubtlessly due to the *lex Pompeia*⁴. This provincial law, of which only a few provisions are known to us⁵, was concerned with public, not private law and settled the poleis' citizen rights, their political institutions and their relations to each other. However, a precise standardization of the magistracies in the cities of the province seems to be confined to the office of the archon⁶. This was a yearly elected body of several (three to five) archons under a president bearing the title of a *protos archon*. As the holder of an office of highest prestige, he was also the president of the council (who also elected him), represented his city towards the Roman authorities and was the privileged reference person of Roman officials⁷.

First archons occur also in areas which were never part of the Pompeian or later province of Pontus et Bithynia, such as Ankyra or Pessinous or various small cities in the province of Asia⁸. A conspicuous concentration is to be found, however, in the Greek cities of Thrace and the western and north-western Black Sea coast, i.e. in those areas, which under Roman rule

¹ For Thrace in the Roman period see: GEROV 1980; POULTER 1983; WOLFF/VELKOV 1990, 600-616; IVANOV 2008; HAYNES 2011; IVANOV 2012.

² See for this AVRAM 1998-2000; BOUNEGRU 2000; CURCĂ/ ZUGRAVU 2005; RUSCU/ CIONGRADI 2005; BOUNEGRU 2007; RUSCU 2008; ALEXANDRESCU-VIANU 2008-2009; DAN 2009; AVRAM 2013; AVRAM 2014, with further literature.

³ For the province of Pontus et Bithynia, especially its creation, see: MAGIE 1950, 368-378; MARSHALL 1968; MAREK 1993, 26-46; WESCH KLEIN 2001; FERNOUX 2004; BEKKER NIELSEN 2008; WESCH KLEIN 2008, 271-275; MADSEN 2009, 27-34; MAREK 2010, 364-369.

⁴ See for this especially AMELING 1984. See also MAGIE 1950, 369, 603-604; MITCHELL 1993, 88; MAREK 1993, 42-46; FERNOUX 2004, 129-132.

⁵ Plin. *ep.* 10, 79, 80, 108-109, 112-115; Cassius Dio 37, 20, 2.

⁶ MAREK 1993, 42. No uniformity concerning the subdivisions of the citizen body: KUNNERT 2012, 73.

⁷ See for this office AMELING 1984, 22-29; MAREK 1993, 42; FERNOUX 2004, 323-326.

⁸ AMELING 1984, 22-23 n. 26; MITCHELL 1993, 88-89; DMITRIEV 2005, 231-232.

entertained close relations to Bithynia. These cities fall into two groups: the old (Milesian and Megarian) *apoikiai* on the Black Sea and the new poleis founded by Trajan in the Thracian interior.

In the old Milesian *apoikiai*, the office of the archon is of non-Milesian origin; in Miletus herself, archons occur as proposers of decrees no earlier than the late 2nd century BC⁹. In the Black Sea area, the title of archon occurs as a rule no earlier than the Hellenistic period and refers usually either to the office-holders generally or to a body of magistrates¹⁰. At Istros¹¹, Tomis¹² and Apollonia¹³, the archons occur in the pre-Roman period as proposers of decrees; at Tyras, the only inscription mentioning them is very fragmented¹⁴. In the Megarian *apoikiai*, the term ἄρχοντες either refers also to the magistrates generally¹⁵, or else to a body of magistrates¹⁶.

In the Roman period (here starting with Augustus), on the Western Pontic coast and in the Greek cities of Thrace two new designations of office appear: πρῶτος ἄρχων and συναρχία. The concept of the *synarchia*, which originally designated a body of magistrates, gradually assumed in Asia Minor in the late Hellenistic period the meaning of such a body led by one of its members who was hierarchically superior. Simultaneously, there occur increasingly often names of offices preceded by *protos*, also in order to designate the leading post within a body. This hierarchization of offices, including within a given college, came to be predominant in the Roman period¹⁷. In Bithynia, such offices, unlike in other parts of Asia Minor, do not precede provincialization, they must have been created by the *lex Pompeia*¹⁸.

In the old Greek cities on the western Black sea shore, neither First Archons nor the *synarchia* occur. Only late, in the 3rd c. AD, such offices are named by our sources, and this only at Odessos and Dionysopolis¹⁹; here, the *synarchoi* acted as “false” eponyms²⁰, for at Odessos the priest of Theos

Megas Derzelas²¹ and at Dionysopolis the priest of Dionysos²² continued to hold the eponymous office also in the Roman period. The use of the formula ἄρξαντα τὴν πρώτην ἀρχήν or similar at Tomis (ISM II 70, 96, 97) and Dionysopolis (IGB I², 16, 19) refers to the simple office of archon²³.

On the contrary, the sources attest at Nicopolis ad Istrum²⁴, Augusta Traiana²⁵, Serdica²⁶, Marcianopolis²⁷, Anchialos²⁸ and Philippopolis²⁹ the office of the First Archon as well as the *synarchia*; the simple office of archon, with the formula ἄρξαντα τὴν πρώτην ἀρχήν, is also attested³⁰. At Pautalia, apart from the *synarchia*³¹, a simple archon is also named³². As such, these offices, except for Philippopolis, are attested in six of the eleven cities founded by Trajan in Thrace. The other five – Bizye, Nicopolis ad Nestum, Plotinopolis, Topeiros, Traianopolis – have seen little archaeological research and their epigraphical output is by far lower than in the six cities above; thus, a dearth of evidence does not equate the lack of these offices in these latter poleis.

The areas of competence of the First Archon in Thrace cannot be established. They occur mostly as *epimeletai* for various constructions and dedications, which probably means that they were expected to contribute financially, otherwise in honorific or funerary inscriptions. In the cities founded by Trajan they were probably the eponymous n. 1279) holds the opinion that at Anchialos and Odessos the term *synarchia* refers to the colleges of magistrates together.

²¹ SHERK 1992, 234-235.

²² SHERK 1991, 249.

²³ AMELING 1984, 21.

²⁴ Αὐρ(ήλιος) Δινεδινίδος ἀσ πρῶτος ἄρχων, IGB II 730, AD 218-222 or 222-235. ἐπὶ συναρχίας Ἰουλίου Ἰουλιανοῦ ἀρχιερατικοῦ κὲ πρώτου ἄρχοντος, IGB II 642, reign of Gordian. Valens *protarchon*, IGB II 657, 2nd 3rd c. AD. Ἀν ἀρχιερεὺς καὶ πρωτάρχων in IGB II 764, 2nd 3rd c. AD.; *synarchia* of Felix son of Mukapor, IGB II 680. A possible further piece of evidence comes from Dojrenci by Lovech (Melta), if the completion πρῶτος ἄρχων[?] is correct (IGB V 5199, 2nd 3rd c. AD).

²⁵ *Synarchia* of the First Archon Flavius Valerianus, IGB V 5569 = SEG 37, 599, Commodus; *synarchia* of Septimius Aurelius Bassus, IGB III2, 1553 and 1554, AD 196-198; Flavius [Theopompos], *protarchon*, SEG 52, 693, Septimius Severus or Caracalla; *synarchia* of Aurelius Demetrius Apphou, IGB III2, 1556-1558, Septimius Severus or Caracalla; T. Flavius Apollodoros, *protos archon*, IGB III2, 1555, AD 210-222; Archias Archedemou, *protos archon*, IGB III2, 1560, Caracalla; Bei]thys, *protarches*, IGB III2, 1559, Caracalla; M. Aurelius Asiaticus, *protos archon*, *archiereus* of the Imperial cult, priest of Dea Roma, SEG 52, 694, after AD 212; Aurelius Ingenuus Celer, *protos archon*, IGB III2, 1562, AD 222-235; Aurelius Quintus son of Quintus, *protos archon*, IGB III2, 1565, reign of Gordian; Aurelius Kar...thos, *protos archon*, IGB III2, 1707, reign of Gordian.

²⁶ *Synarchia*, IGB IV 1907, AD 142; *synarchia* of the First Archon Flavius Pompeius Montanus, IGB IV 1926, cf. IGB V 5676, AD 161-163; Bassus Moca, priest, First Archon, *eirenarches*, *sitarches*, IGB IV 1953, cf. IGB V 5679, second half of the 2nd c. AD; *synarchia* of Iulius Philappos, IGB IV 1992, AD 222-235; First Archon, IGB IV 1914.

²⁷ *Synarchia* of P. Aelius Auluporis, IGB V 5334, AD 161.

²⁸ IGB I², 369 (AD 213-217, completed), 369 *bis* (AD 222-235).

²⁹ *Synarchia* of the First Archon doros Beithyos, IGB III1, 881, ca. AD 186; M. Aurelius Alexandros, thrakarch and First Archon, AD 218-222 (SHARANKOV 2007, 525 no. 7 = SEG 57, 625 = AE 2007, 1256 = BE 2009, 337); First Archon T. Flavius Philodemos, SEG 57, 626 and 627, Elagabal or Severus Alexander; T. Flavius Priscianus, thakarch *ek progono*, *archiereus* and First Archon, SEG 55, 760 = AE 2005, 1377, and SEG 31, 677B = IGB V 5408, Severus Alexander; First Archon Aurelius Apollonides Apollodotou, IGB III1, 1515, Maximinus Thrax; Eustochios Celer son of Asklepiades, IGB III1, 1449.

³⁰ Nicopolis ad Istrum: IGB II 665, 2nd 3rd c. AD.

³¹ *Synarchia* of Iulius Iulianus, IGB IV 2072; *synarchia* of Tarsos son of Celsus, Diogenes son of Apollonios and Apollinarios son of Auloutrales, IGB IV 2074; *synarchia*, IGB IV 2214 = IGB V 5968.

³² SEG 46, 867, late 3rd c. AD.

⁹ I.Didyma 46, 47; NAWOTKA 1997, 114-115.

¹⁰ See for this in detail EHRHARDT 1983, 208-210; NAWOTKA 1997, 134-137, 154-157, 165-166, 179.

¹¹ ISM I 7, 9, 12 (3rd c. BC), 26 (2nd c. BC), 37 (late Hellenistic); magistrates generally: 20, 22 (ca. 200 BC), 67-68 (ca. 200 AD), 180 (2nd c. BC); cf. NAWOTKA 1999, 57. Apollonis daughter of Diogenes (ISM I 120) held in the 2nd c. BC an office described as ἄρξασα; this is more likely to be understood as „magistrate“ than as (EHRHARDT 1983, 516 and n. 1282) that as „magistratearchon“ (NAWOTKA 1997, 134-135 n. 132). None of the inscriptions of Istros offers – except for the proposing of decrees – details for the field of competence and the concrete activities of the archons; the inscription ISM I 65 (first half of the 3rd c. BC), which gives such details (l. 38: the archons are to set up the stele), probably does not belong to Istros, but to Olbia, see COJOCARU 2010; COJOCARU 2012.

¹² ISM II 2 (ca. 100 BC); 4 (late 2nd c. BC; completed); 5 (ca. 100 BC). The office continues to be attested into the Roman period: ISM II 58 (second half of the 2nd c. AD); 61 (reign of Antoninus Pius); 70 (reign of Marcus Aurelius); 96-97 (Severan period); 150 (2nd c. AD); 273 (early 3rd c. AD); however, the inscriptions of the Roman period do not include indications for the field of competence of the archon. Cf. NAWOTKA 1999, 62.

¹³ IGB I², 389 (mid-3rd c. BC), 392 (early 1st c. BC). Cf. NAWOTKA 1999, 67.

¹⁴ NICORESCU 1933, 566 no. 2.

¹⁵ At Kallatis: ISM III 3 (early Hellenistic), 75 (second half 3rd c. BC); cf. A. Avram, ISM III, p. 90.

¹⁶ At Mesambria, supposing that the completion τοὺς [ἄρχων]τας in IGB I², 315 (late 1st c. BC) is correct.

¹⁷ See for this DMITRIEV 2005, 61, 112-113, 237-238, with further literature.

¹⁸ AMELING 1984.

¹⁹ Odessos: IGB I², 47 (*synarchia*; AD 215); IGB I², 47**bis** (*synarchia*; AD 221); IGB I², 48 (*synarchia*; AD 238). Dionysopolis: IGB I², 14 (First Archon; after AD 212).

²⁰ For the “false” eponyms see PIPPIDI 1967, 82-85. Ehrhardt (1983, 209 and

magistrates, various documents are dated after them³³.

The same body of archons occurs in the Roman period also in the cities of the northern Black Sea shore. At Tyras³⁴, the *protos archon* presided over a body of three further archons; he also held the eponymous office³⁵. It is unknown who held this in the pre-Roman period; possibly here, as in other Milesian Black sea *apoikiai*, the priest of Apollon Ietros³⁶. At Olbia there is also attested in the Roman period a body of five archons, presided (with the formula οἱ περὶ τὸν ...) by the First Archon³⁷. The eponymous office was at this time held by the archon³⁸. There had been archons at Olbia since the Hellenistic period at the latest³⁹, a panel with various, but specific tasks⁴⁰; but in the pre-Roman period, the eponymous office was held by the priest of Apollo and/or the *aisymnetes* of the Molpoi⁴¹. At Chersonesos also there occurs in the Roman period a body of archons, led by a First Archon⁴², which does not hold the eponymous office; eponymous are here, in the 1st- 3rd c. AD as previously, still the *basileis*⁴³.

These areas, the Thracian interior as well as the western and northwestern Black Sea shore, held during the Principate especially close relations to Bithynia and the Bithynian influence is visible particularly in the cities founded by Trajan. In the old cities on the Black Sea, the presence of the *synarchia* and/or of the First Archons may be explained through such relations and influence only. As far

³³ SHERK 1992, 250-251. Anchialos and Marcianopolis are not included.

³⁴ IOSPE I², 2 (AD 181), 4 (AD 201).

³⁵ SHERK 1992, 253.

³⁶ See for this EHRHARDT 1983, 198 and n. 1170.

³⁷ HUPE 2006, no. 22 (late 1st- early 2nd c. AD); IOSPE I², 131 = HUPE 2006, no. 1; IOSPE I², 130 = HUPE 2006, no. 31 (second half of the 1st- first half of the 2nd c. AD); HUPE 2006, no. 16 (first half of the 2nd c. AD); IOSPE I², 132 (= HUPE 2006, no. 13, first half of the 2nd c. AD; ca. AD 145 or somewhat later); IO 88 = HUPE 2006, no. 30, mid-2nd c. AD; IO 86 = HUPE 2006, no. 34 (second half of the 2nd c. AD); IOSPE I², 134 = HUPE 2006, no. 32 (2nd c. AD); IOSPE I², 42, 43, 46, 47 (ca. AD 200); IO 52 (ca. AD 205); IOSPE I², 133 = HUPE 2006, no. 11 (third quarter of the 3rd c. AD). For the dates see IVANTCHIK/KRAPIVINA 2007; cf. also SEG 57, 722.

³⁸ E. g.: IO 42 (1st- early 2nd c. AD); IVANTCHIK/KRAPIVINA 2007, 111 = SEG 57, 725 (ca. AD 110); IOSPE I², 128, 129 (ca. AD 145); SEG 49, 1028B (ca. AD 150); IVANTCHIK/KRAPIVINA 2007, 115-116 = SEG 57, 726 (ca. AD 165); IO 47 (second half of the 2nd c. AD); 86 (ca. AD 200); 87 (completed); 88, 90 (late 1st- mid-2nd c. AD). See NAWOTKA 1999, 51-52; SHERK 1992, 236.

³⁹ EHRHARDT 1983, 209 and n. 1284-1287; NAWOTKA 1999, 47-48.

⁴⁰ Proposers of decrees: IOSPE I², 25 + 31; SEG 32, 794, ca. 325 BC (completed); IOSPE I², 26, 29 (completed), 31 (completed), 32, 3rd c. BC; IO 163, first half of the 2nd c. BC (completed); IO 45, 2nd c. AD (completed); purchase of wine for the city: IOSPE I², 32, l. 19-20, and the convocation of the People: IOSPE I², 32, l. 85-86, ca. 200 BC; responsible for the erection of decrees: IO 29, mid-3rd c. BC; IO 35, 2nd c. BC; IVANTCHIK/KRAPIVINA 2007, 101, second half of the 2nd c. BC, cf. SEG 57, 723.

⁴¹ See for this GRAF 1974; GRAF 1979; EHRHARDT 1983, 198-199; SHERK 1992, 235-236.

⁴² Five archons besides the First Archon: IOSPE I², 359 (AD 129/30); in SEG 56, 873 (ca. AD 75-175) the name of the office is completed. The inscription IOSPE I², 471, naming the First Archon (πρωταρχωντεύων) Gazourios son of Metrodoros, was tentatively dated by Watzinger (KIESERITZKY/WATZINGER 1909, no. 409) to the early 1st c. AD, which would turn it into the by far earliest evidence for First Archons on the western Black Sea shore and in Thrace. A broader date (1st- 3rd c. AD) is preferable.

⁴³ IOSPE I², 353, ca. 107 BC; IOSPE I², 354, 17-16 BC (completed); IOSPE I², 357, ca. AD 100; IOSPE I², 358, AD 129-130; NEPKh II 112, ca. AD 140 (completed); IOSPE I², 359-361, early 2nd c. AD (completed); IOSPE I², 365, 699, 2nd c. AD (completed); IOSPE I², 376, 384, 698, Roman period. Cf. SHERK 1991, 239-240. For the institutions of Chersonesos in the pre-Roman and Roman periods, see SAPRYKIN 1991; ZOLOTAREV 2003.

as the Greek cities in inland Thrace are concerned, there may be something more to it.

Relatively little is known of the circumstances of foundation of these cities⁴⁴; but there are obvious similarities with the city foundations of Pompey the Great in Pontus. In both cases, comprehensive city foundations were decided as a result of difficult and prolonged military operations; in both cases, an extensive area (the interior of Pontus in the one case, inland Thrace in the other), previously lacking Greek cities, was endowed with such, either by granting polis status to already extant settlements, or by establishing new ones *ex nihilo*. Pompeius organized through his *lex provinciae* the entire newly established province and unitized at least some institutional aspects of its new and older Greek cities. Whether Trajan did the same, is unknown; it is however likely that he drew upon the precedent created by his predecessor and introduced some of the innovations of Pompey in his Thracian city foundations.

But this was not an exact imitation of Pompeian offices and institutions. None of the other offices which occur in several Bithynian cities are clearly attested in Thracian or western Pontic cities. Neither the *timetes* nor the *grammateus* of the Council and of the People are present here. There is an *argyrotamias* at Nicopolis ad Istrum (IGB II 665) and at Augusta Traiana (IGB III2, 1707), but this is hardly an office corresponding to the (ἀργυρο)ταμίας τῶν σειτονικῶν/ἐλαιωνικῶν χρημάτων attested at Prusias ad Hypium, Kios, Nikomedeia, Nikaia and Prusa⁴⁵. There are no known details on the functioning of the Council in these cities. The (few known) *phylai* offer no parallels to those in Bithynian cities; conspicuous is in the cities founded by Trajan the lack of *phylai* names derived from Roman emperors and their kin, which appear often in Bithynian cities⁴⁶.

A further example for Bithynian models which were taken on only conditionally is the cult of Zeus Olympios. It occurs in only four cities in the Thracian area, where this cult epithet is generally lacking. The four cities are Anchialos⁴⁷, Marcianopolis⁴⁸, Nicopolis/Istrum and Serdica⁴⁹, all of them founded by Trajan; at Pautalia there are only references to the Olympian gods⁵⁰. At Nicopolis⁵¹, Zeus (Olympios) was worshipped together with Hera (Zygia) and Athena (Polias), a combination which corresponds to the Capitoline triad. Against this background it is conceivable that the setting up of the newly founded cities' pantheon was due not so much to their own initiative but to the Romans'. The Capitoline triad was hardly ever present in Asia Minor and the sole instance for a collocation of these three deities occurs in an inscription of Nikaia⁵², dedicated by one of the numerous

⁴⁴ See for this ROSTOVITZ 1957, 249-253; JONES 1971, 1-27; DANOV 1979; WOLFF/VELKOV 1990.

⁴⁵ AMELING 1984, 30.

⁴⁶ See for this KUNNERT 2012, 53-65, 73-92.

⁴⁷ Votive offerings for Zeus Olympios: IGB I², 372; IGB III2, 1839.

⁴⁸ Evidence for the cult of Zeus Olympios: IGB II 800; a relief of the eagle of Zeus: TONČEVA 1960, 72 no. 7. For Marcianopolis see GEROV 1980, 289-312.

⁴⁹ A priest of Zeus Olympios: IGB IV 1917; see also ROBERT 1949, 133-134.

⁵⁰ IGB IV 2066, 2072, 2073, 2214.

⁵¹ IGB II 664-668 (in the last one only Zeus and Hera) – all erected by magistrates or chairmen of associations; see for the cult of Zeus also IGB II 669, 670. At Karaš near the river Iskär, one man, Μαρτιάλης Βειθοῦς β', dedicated for Zeus Olympios (IGB II 498) and Hera Olympia (IGB II 499).

⁵² I. Nikaia 34.

Romans settled in this city, C. Hostilius Ascanius⁵³. Thus, the cult did not reach Thrace from or over Bithynia, but was probably established in connection with the creation of the Trajanic poleis and by the wish of the founder.

The occurrence of the *synarchia* and/or of the First Archon in the Greek cities in inland Thrace was, as well as the implementation of the Capitoline triad under Greek names, a result of the foundation of these cities on Roman initiative and with little recourse to local traditions and facts. Thus, the founder took a look around and took over some features of the constitutions of his new cities from those founded under comparable circumstances in the province Pontus et Bithynia. Moreover, the close relations of Bithynia to the western and northwestern Black Sea shore made sure that the office of First Archon and the *synarchia* were received in those cities also.

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⁵³ See for him ROBERT 1978, 275-276.

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