ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΜΕΙΖΟΝΟΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΣΜΟΥ

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Summary :

Throughout Antiquity a large part of the population in Asia Minor did not live in cities but in the countryside, at settlements, which ancient writers and inscriptions refer to them as *komes* (henceforth villages), dwellings, areas or *demoi*. These settlements, as well as the surrounding rural and forest areas usually belonged to the bigger cities or were considered as sacred land.

Date

Antiquity

Geographical Location

Asia Minor

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1. Introduction

In Antiquity many of the inhabitants in Asia Minor did not live in cities but in the countryside, at settlements which ancient writers and inscriptions call them villages, dwellings, areas or *demoi*, while their residents are called *kometes*, *katoikoi*, *perioikoi*, *paroikoi*, *enchorioi*, *chorites*, *geoteiktes*[1] or *laos*.

2. Classical and Hellenistic Periods

Our first information about people living in villages in Asia Minor has to do with the various non-Greek speaking tribal groups. Until the Hellenistic period, where many new cities were founded (with the exception of the Greek cities on the coast, the capitals of the great kingdoms (Sardis, Gordium) and some seats of local notables) the largest part of the population lived in villages due to its tribal organization. It is characteristic that Herodotus and Xenophon, when referring to the interior of Asia Minor in the 5th and early 4th century BC, use the expression “choraton laos” (villagers), while the cities that are mentioned are very few. As a matter of fact, Xenophon is the one who, in his work *March of the Ten Thousand* offers us with the best information about villages of that period. More specifically, when he mentions the villages of Armenia, he informs us that they were under the authority of the “komarchos” (chief of the village), they were surrounded by walls, the houses were spacious, but underground, and they were also used as stables for goats, oxen and chicken, and as storage areas for wheat, barley, straw, pulses and beer.[2] He also informs us that the Drilai, people settled near Trapezus, used to live in “choria” (villages), one of which was their metropolis, that is their administrative centre. Others, like the Isaurioi in Taurus and the Mossynoeci[3] in the area of Pontos, had urban centres (Metropolis, Isaura) but part of the population lived in villages. A lot of these villages were under the control of the nearby Greek cities and as a matter of fact their citizens found themselves in a state like that of the *helots* of Sparta. For example, the Bithynians were under the control of the Byzantines and the Mariandynoi under Heraclea Pontica.[4]

In other cases, the population of villages constituted the so-called “royal people” of the Persian kings and later of the Hellenistic kings, who cultivated the royal farms and could be granted together with the land to whoever the king wanted. So, for example, Antiochus II (261-246 BC) sold to his ex wife Laodice an estate in Zelia, near Cyzicus,[5] with all the people living there, while at a man named Menemachos it was granted an area of Sardis' territory that included the villages of T(o)valmoura, Gandos, Komvdilipia, Periasostra and Iliou kome in the 3rd century BC .[6]

Another category of villages is the “katoikies”, military settlements of Macedonian veterans who started to be created from the beginning of the Hellenistic period (for example Macedonian Hyrkanoi, Mysian-Macedonians). The kings of the Hellenistic kingdoms granted land for the creation of settlements and for cultivating the land and this served two objectives: better control of the area and rewarding soldiers for their services, like for example the veterans who were given land by Antiochus I (281-261 BC) in the land of Magnesia ad Sipylum, and those that lived in the village of Palaimagnesia in the same area.[7]

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Possibly many of the cities-colonies of the Macedonians in Lydia, Phrygia and Mysia were initially nothing more than villages. These residencies quite often belonged to the land (chora) of the nearby towns, but their residents did not always have full political rights, as it is obvious by the fact that Attalus III granted such rights to the people of the land of Pergamon in 133 BC (Macedonians, Mysians, Masdyanoi).[8]

In other cases, Macedonians settled next to non-Greek settlements and it seems that they quickly united with them forming cities with an intense Macedonian element (for example in Lydia the cities Thyateira, Doedye and Kobedyle, in Phrygia Blaundos and Dokimeion).

A lot of villages were created near temples; priests and generally people who served in the temples lived there and cultivated the sacred land. These villages also functioned as markets that accommodated the pilgrims. During the Hellenistic period, some villages were given by kings to various temples and their taxes ended there as well.

The settlements of the first case will develop into towns,[9] or they will create a synoecism in the larger village and will at some point in the Hellenistic and Roman periods form cities, changing their name;[10] another case is for villages to become so important that they obtained privileges of cities, like the right to mint coins.[11]

Finally, a peculiar case is the one of the villages of Caria in the Hellenistic period. These constitute ten or more koina (confederations), where decisions are taken by the *ecclesia*, and they had officials such as *archons*, *demarchs*, *grammateis*, and agoranomoi. These data show an area that continuous to be settled in villages, but with Greek institutions, which are absent from the interior of Asia Minor. The villages and, generally, the countryside was guarded by the “generals on the countryside”, who were elected in the cities in the lands o which belonged the villages.

3. Roman Period

Living in villages continued in the Roman period from where we have a lot of information about their residential and administrative organization. It is characteristic that apart from Caria –whose larger part of the population continued to live in villages– we know from inscriptions and philological testimonies that a lot of villages were in Ionia, Lydia, Mysia and Bithynia. Furthermore, a large number also existed in the area of central Pisidia, Phrygia-Galatia, while the sources indicate a smaller number in Lycia, Cilicia, Isauria (Astrenon kome, Olosadeon kome, Thouthourvioton kome) and Lycaonia (perhaps due to the fact that in the last two examples many of them became cities). Noteworthy is the great number of villages in the Chiliokomon pedion (Plain of the thousand villages)[12] near Amaseia of Pontos.

Most of these villages belonged to the land of cities, either because this took place before the Roman conquest, or because this was preferred by the Roman administration, which had placed the city as the main state unit of the provinces, but at the same taking care that the people living in villages and in cities had the same political rights and that villages would be self-governed.[13] So, we find a lot of the people living in Synnada of Phrygia living in villages, like the citizens of the 17 cities –members of the religious association of "Xenon Tekmoreion", whose sanctuary was in Pisidian Antioch. However, this did not stop villages, like Anossa and Antimacheia, to address the procurator of Synnada for solving disputes among them, while the Mandragorians asked from the proconsul of Asia to maintain their market.[14] Other villages were part of large estates of Roman officials or of imperial estates. In spite of all these, there were villages with the rights of cities, like the kome of Kidyessians in Bithynia, which minted coins in the era of Domitian, or Garsauira in Cappadocia, which is called a town from Strabo.[15] As a matter of fact, a lot of these independent villages constituted *koina*, like the Hyrgaleis in Galatia, the Aragouenoi or the Totteanoi Soenoi, while there is mention of confederations of two, three, four, five and seven komes.[16]

The need of the provincial Roman administration to deal with organized political communities led to the administrative organization of the villages similar to the one of the Greek cities. Therefore, the decisions were taken by the association or the council of the villages,

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that is the assembly of the citizens who had the right to vote,[17] while administrative and executive responsibilities were held by the *archons* or the annually elected *komarches* or *proagon* or *protokometes*, or *protos tes komes* or *proteuon tes komes* or *proestos tes katoikias* (all meaning chief of the village), assisted by the *grammateis* (secretaries).[18] The financial issues of the villages were controlled by *argyrotamies*, *oeconomoi*, *logisteusantes*, while judicial affairs were the responsibility of *ekdikoi*. Finally, *brabeutai* were also mentioned, who were responsible for sacrifices, celebrations and for bestowing honors after a decision by the village.

4. Financial development and prevention of crime

An important role in the development of the villages was played by the benefactors, who were responsible for the construction of public buildings or the organization of celebrations and sacrifices in honor of the emperor (for example Moschakome in Magnesia ad Sipylum, Dagouta at Olympus in Mycia, Nanokome in Lydia), while during the Late Imperial period there were many patrons of villages (they protected their rights to the Roman authority or the owners of large estates where many of them belonged), or patrons that supported the villages in judicial disputes, like the Asiarch Marcus Aurelius Manilius Alexandros, who defended the rights of the Mouleiton Katoikia near Philadelphia in Lydia.[19]

In the development of the villages contributed the fact that the countryside was better protected against crime and responsible for this were the *eirinarchoi* of cities and later the *eirenophylakes* of the provinces assisted by the *antieirenarchoi* and the *paraphylakites*, who led the armed forces of the *diogmites*.[20]

5. Intellectual level and religious life

The Hellenization of the countryside seems that in several cases was superficial. Apart from the names of the residents and the mistakes that can be found in the Greek inscriptions, to this conclusion lead the information about religious beliefs and burial practices of their ancestors.

The phenomenon of the survival of old local deities, either identical (Meter, Men, Ma, Cybele, Attis, Sandon, Tlos, Anaitis, etc.) or through comparison with the Greek ones (Athena-Ma, Artemis-Anaitis, Artemis-Cybele, Herakles-Sandas, Apollo-Sozon/Sabazius etc), which is observed in the cities is more intense in the countryside where many local variations of the Greek gods were created (Athena Lamatorma in Cilicia Tracheia, Zeus Astrinos in Astrinon Kome of Isauria, Apollo Lairbenos, Zeus Masfaltenos etc). As a matter of fact, many of the gods were called *katechontes* (possessors) or kings of villages or tyrants.[21] Of course, elements of imperial cult are also present.

Important role in the religious life was played by celebrations and festivals at outdoors sanctuaries which were organized jointly by many villages, like the Xenon Tekmoreion in Pisidian Antioch, which we mentioned above, of Zeus Boussourigios in North Galatia, of Zeus Anpeleites, of Zeus Thallos and Zeus Andreas near Appia or Apollo Lairbenos in the villages of Hierapolis of Phrygia.[22] Characteristic for these celebrations at the outdoor sanctuaries in Bithynia were the *oinoposia* (wine drinking) and the contests (for example torch relays). In Thiountas of Hierapolis at Phrygia the members of the 24 phratries (civic subdivisions) that became *agonothetai* (responsible for the organization of athletic contests) and provided oil and money for the festival that lasted for 8 days and nights. An element which, from the 2nd century onwards, was frequently encountered in the cemeteries of the cities, but mainly in the cemeteries of the villages were the funerary invocations to Selene, Hecate, Men, Anaitis, to protect the tombs, and the curses for those that will attempt to rob them. Equally characteristic are the repentance stele that were erected by the impious themselves or their relatives, a sign of the pietism of the people living in the countryside, who attributed every misfortune or sickness to the wrath of gods.

Many of the komes of the Roman period continued to exist either as cities or as villages in the Byzantine period.

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1. CIG, 3695 b• Sartre, M., *L'Orient Romain: Provinces et sociétés provinciales en Méditerranée orientale d'Auguste aux Sévères (31 avant J.-C.-235 après J.C.)* (Paris 1991), p. 285• Mitchell, S., *Anatolia. Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor I: The Celts in Anatolia and the Impact of Roman Rule* (Oxford 1993), p. 76.

2. Xen. 4.4.9-10, 4.5.24-33. 4.6.1.

3. Xen. 5.4.31.

4. Phylarchus, *FGrHist* 81 F8, Strabo 12.3.4 (C 542).

5. Welles, C.B., *Royal Correspondence in the Hellenistic Period: A Study in Greek Epigraphy* (New Haven 1934), no. 18.

6. Buckler, W.H. – Robinson, D.M., *Sardes VII 1: Greek and Latin Inscriptions* (Leyden 1932), no. 1.

7. OGIS, 229.

8. OGIS, 338.

9. Such cases are Hierapolis of Caria, Dionysopolis and Hierapolis of Phrygia.

10. In Phrygia, the komes Kiddioukome, where they worshipped Apollo, Vavakome, where they worshipped a local god Vavas who later assumed the Greek name Zeus, and Neoteichos joined to form Laodicea. Traversari, G., *Laodicea di Frigia I* (Roma 2000), pp. 15-23. Commana in Cappadocia was renamed to Hierapolis (Strabo 12.535) and Hierokometes to Hierocaesaria (compare. Plin., HN 5.126, Tac., Ann. 2.47.4, 3.62.4).

11. Dios Hieron or Hierokometes and Apollonhiereites in Lydia, BMC Lydia, 23 onwards, 74 onwards.

12. Strabo 12.3.39 (C561).

13. Characteristic is the decision of the senate for granting privileges to the residencies of the people of the cities Phlarasa and Aphrodisias in Caria, which mentions explicitly that they include the people living in the countryside, Reynolds, J.M., *Aphrodisias and Rome* (London 1982), Doc 8. Probable similar meaning has the provision in "lex provinciae" in 63 BC about the province of Pontos, where complete rights are given to the children of a woman from Pontos and a man that does not have citizen rights.

14. Frend, W.H.C., "A Third-Century Inscription Relating to Angareia in Phrygia", *JRS* 46 (1956), pp. 46-56• Levick, B., *The Government of the Roman Empire* (London 1985), pp. 57-60• *SEG* XXXII, 1982, 1149.

15. Strabo 12.2.6, 12.6.1.

16. IGR IV, 756• OGIS 519• Strabo 12.3.17-18• MAMA V, 87• BE 1974, 580.

17. Kastollon, a village of Philadelphia in Lydia, had a senate and ecclesia (OGIS 488), and an ecclesia is mentioned at Orkiston in Phrygia, Buckler, W.H., "A charitable foundation of A. D. 237", *JHS* 57 (1937) pp. 1-10, mainly p. 9, however it is possible that they had the status of a city.

18. Mayors are also mentioned, but this is a title that is rather common in Caria and Lycia, Wörrle, M., *Stadt und Fest in kaiserzeitlichen Kleinasien: Studien zu einer agonistischen Stiftung aus Oinoanda* (München 1988), pp. 145-146.

19. IGR IV, 1635.

20. In some cases groups of young people, with *neaniskarches* (chief of the young people) in charge, probably played a helpful role.

21. TAM V1, 159, 167, 255, 350, 460, 461, 499, 526, 536, 537.

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22. SEG XXXIII, 1983, 1144-56.

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Glossary :

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agoranomos, the

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

chora, the

The agricultural land (including villages and land-plots) belonging to a polis. It was bounded with the polis on an administrative and economic basis.

koinon, the

The term koinon pertains to every confederacy of ancient cities.

proconsul, -lis

A quite high ranking official, vir spectabilis according to the rank of the senate, who was inequable only to the Domestikos of the Scholae and to the Magister Militum per Orientem. The proconsul usually served as a governor of the Imperial provinces (i.e. in Asia Minor the provinces of Asia and Cappadocia). The office was demoted from the 9th century onwards and the term was in use until the 12th century meaning a dignity.

procurator

Administrator of a roman Province deriving from the class of equites. He was controlled directly by the Emperor and his legati Augusti pro praetore.

synoecism, the

Amalgamation of villages and small towns in Ancient Greece into larger political units such as a single city.