

## BOOK OF THE EPARCH (Eparchikon Biblion)

The title, the Book of the Eparch, was given to this work by Jules Nicole, the Swiss professor who discovered the work in 1891. The full text is preserved in a single 14th-century manuscript (Cod. Genevensis gr. 23), although the title and preamble survive in a second ms (Metochion Taphou 25), and the first three paragraphs of chapter 1 are excerpted in several additional mss. The Metochion Taphou ms. gives the name of the legislator, Leo VI, and the date 911-12. This has been disputed, but seems sound.

The book is a collection of 22 chapters of regulation pertaining to the guilds, whose activities comprised the greatest proportion of economic life in the city of Constantinople. The eponymous eparch was the equivalent of the mayor of the city, and responsible for enforcing the strict rules which governed everyday process of urban production and exchange. Chapters are devoted to: (1) notaries; (2) "dealers in bullion and money-lenders"; (3) bankers and money-changers; (4) merchants of silk stuffs; (5) merchants of manufactured goods imported from Syria and Baghdad; (6) raw silk merchants; (7) raw silk dressers; (8) silk dyers; (9) linen merchants; (10) perfumers; (11) wax-chandlers and taper-makers; (12) soap-chandlers; (13) grocers; (14) saddlers; (15) butchers; (16) pork butchers; (17) fishmongers; (18) bakers; (19) Inn-keepers; (20) deputy of the Eparch; (21) agents and assessors of the market; (22) contractors (of all kinds, including carpenters, gypsum workers, marble masons, locksmiths, painters ...)

The Greek text and a full English translation with notes can be found in: E. H. Freshfield, *Roman law in the later Roman empire. Byzantine guilds, professional and commercial. Ordinances of Leo VI c. 895 from the Book of the Eparch* (Cambridge, 1938). This was reproduced in a composite volume, *The Book of the Eparch* (with the same title in Greek and French), with an introduction by I. Dujcev (London, 1970).

The abridged excerpts [given] below are modified translations from this work [including most of Chapters 4, "Merchants of Silk Stuffs," and 8, "Silk Dyers," and 13, "Grocers," and 18, "Bakers"].

From a collection of translated excerpts on Byzantine history produced by Paul Stephenson: <http://homepage.mac.com/paulstephenson/trans.html>, accessed on 1/20/2011.

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### [Regulations concerning Silk]

#### Chapter 4: Merchants of Silk stuffs

§ 1. The silk merchants will be concerned in the purchase of silk garments. They will not engage in other purchases except those articles they require for their personal use, and they are forbidden to sell the latter. They are moreover forbidden to resell to persons who are 'strangers' to the city the articles which are on the prohibited list, that is to say purple of the distinctive' dyes (red or? violet), so as to prevent

exportation of these out of the Empire. Offenders will be flogged and liable to confiscation.

§ 2. Silk merchants whether freemen or slaves who purchase from the nobility or silk buyers, or from anyone else, garments exceeding ten nomismata in value shall declare the same to the eparch so that he may know where these articles are to be sold. Offenders will suffer the above-named punishments.

§ 3. Anyone else who has not declared to the eparch the peach-colored or red garments or mantles of two-thirds dye will be punished.

§ 4. Any person who fails to inform the eparch of a sale of an article destined for aliens of the Empire, so that the eparch may certify the transaction, shall be held responsible.

§ 5. To obtain admittance to the guild of silk merchants five members of the craft must testify to the eparch that the candidate is a person worthy to exercise the craft. He shall then be admitted to it, he shall open a shop, and carry on business. His entrance fee to the guild is six nomismata.

§ 6. To obtain a license to acquire the workshop of a silk merchant the tax is ten nomismata. The recommendation of the eparch is necessary.

§ 7. Every person exercising at one and the same time the craft of silk merchant and silk dyer I shall be put to his election to choose one or other of these crafts to the exclusion of the other. Anyone attempting to carry on both crafts shall be liable to the aforesaid punishments.

§ 8. Care must be taken to ensure that strangers who lodge in caravanserais do not purchase prohibited or unsewn garments, unless for their personal use; and in the latter case the articles must have been manufactured in Constantinople.

When strangers leave the city their departure must be notified to the eparch so that he may take cognizance of the articles they have purchased.

Anyone helping them to evade this obligation shall be flogged, shaved and have his property confiscated.

§ 9. Every silk merchant who secretly or openly causes the rent of any other silk merchant to be raised, shall be flogged, shaved and shall be liable to confiscation.

## Chapter 8: Silk Dyers

§ 1. Dyers are forbidden to make up the purple of the so-called prohibited grades, that is to say in the series of great mantles, including those of self color or those where the purple alternates with dark green or yellow in half-tint. They may dye

peach tint where that color is combined with others, or common turbans of Slavonian style slashed with scarlet bands. Peach-colored, purple and fine dresses of (?) two palms' length must be declared to the eparch and also the cloaks worth more than ten nomismata, even if of divers colors.

§ 2. All noblemen and simple citizens are forbidden to make cloaks of purple of six or eight lyes. This prohibition does not extend to cloaks of ten or twelve lyes provided the tints are real purple and are of small type and such as would not come within the category of dyed material which the eparch must reserve for the use of the imperial house of the sovereign. And this includes the cloaks rounded at the lower part reserved for the prince's use, excepting those of shorter model which fall in folds on the tunic, counting at least ten lyes and colored in different tints. Whoever is convicted of making articles which we forbid shall be liable to have his goods confiscated and shall cease trading.

§ 3. Whoever refuses to open his premises for inspection by the inspector of seals or the inspector of cloths,' or who sells to aliens to the city a cloak worth more than ten nomismata shall be flogged and shaved.

§ 4. Whoever dyes raw silk with blood (i.e. synonymous with the liquid of murex) or converts it into parti-colored purple, double, triple or two-thirds red, shall have his hand cut off.

§ 5. Whoever sells goods to aliens without the knowledge of the eparch shall have his goods confiscated.

§ 6. Whoever attempts to carry on at one and the same time the trade of *serikarios* and *vestiopratis* shall be put on his election to choose one trade or the other.

§ 7. Every dyer who sells a slave, a workman, or a foreman craftsman, to persons alien to the city or the Empire, shall have his hand cut off.

§ 8. Dyers shall buy raw silk from the raw silk merchant. If they buy it from aliens of the city they shall be flogged, shaved and cease trading.

§ 9. Should bales of cloaks be found in the store-shops of the dyers which do not bear the eparch's stamp the same shall be confiscated and the workman who had them shall have his goods confiscated.

§ 10. If a dyer receives the workman of another dyer wittingly before such workman has finished the work for which he was paid he shall be fined an amount equal to what the workman had not earned by his work.

§ 11. Anyone who has purchased garments made outside the city and delivers them to the imperial store shall be flogged and shaved.

§ 12. Cf. chapter vi, § 2.

§ 13. Anyone wishing to open a workshop must, if he is a freeman, be guaranteed by five persons. If he is a slave his master must be surety for him; providing him also with adequate means. In both cases the guarantors will be subject to the same liabilities as the person for whom they stand surety. And he shall pay an entrance fee of three nomismata.

[Regulations concerning food and hardware]

### Chapter 13: Grocers

§ 1. Grocers may keep their shops throughout the city as well in the squares as in the streets, so that the necessaries of life may be easily procurable.

They shall sell: meat, salt fish, meal, cheese, honey, olive oil, vegetables of all kinds, butter, dry and liquid resin, cedar oil, camphor, linseed oil, gypsum, bowls, vessels, etc. nails, bottles--in fact every article which can be sold by steelyards and not by scales. They are forbidden to sell any article which comes within the trades of perfumers, soap-chandlers, linen-drapers, taverners or butchers. Any contravention is punished by flogging, shaving, and exile.

§ 2. Any grocer who has weights or measures which do not bear the seal of the eparch or who files the coinage (i.e. sweats), or refuses to take a *tetarteron*, bearing for authenticity the effigy of the sovereign, shall be flogged, shaved and exiled.

§ 3. Every grocer convicted of fraud in completing a sale or who raises the agreed price, shall pay a fine of ten nomismata. Anyone exposing his wares for sale on a Sunday or a feast day shall be liable to the same penalty.

§ 4. Grocers are to watch over the special commodities of their trade imported from abroad so that anyone, whether or not a member of the guild, who hoards against a time of scarcity may be denounced to the eparch and punished by him.'

§ 5. Grocers shall sell their wares and make a profit of two miliaresia per nomisma. If their measures show that they have exacted a greater profit they shall be flogged, shaved and cease to trade as grocers.

§ 6. Any grocer who openly or secretly tries to raise the rent of another grocer shall be liable to the aforesaid penalty.

### Chapter 18: Bakers

§ 1. Bakers shall sell bread by weight fixed according to the price of corn as ordered by the eparch.

They are to buy corn in the warehouse of the assessor by quantities corresponding to the amount upon which the tax of one gold nomisma is payable; and after grinding it and making it into fermented bread they shall calculate their remuneration at the rate of one keration plus two miliaresia per gold nomisma, the keration for the net profit, and two miliaresia for paying the hands and the animals employed in grinding the grain as well as the cost of firing and lighting.

§ 2. Bakers are never to be liable to be called upon for any public service, neither themselves nor their animals, to prevent any hindrance to baking bread.

§ 3. Bakers must not have their ovens under any dwelling house; and this rule is made because of the inflammable character of the materials used. Moreover, private persons shall not keep their stores of kindling wood and rushes otherwise than in open places or in buildings built of large stones, so as to prevent the risk of conflagrations in the city owing to the inflammable character of the materials.

§ 4. Bakers are to go to the eparch whenever the price of wheat rises or falls so that with the help of the *symponos* the weight of bread may be regulated according to the cost of the wheat.

§ 5. Let this important decree obtain universally. Persons who contravene the following rules shall from this day forward, upon conviction before the eparch of contravention, be flogged, shaved, and perambulated through the city, and then exiled in perpetuity. Any person attempting to raise the rent of a bakery. Anyone coveting the wares of another trader who tries to reduce the price thereof below the tariff value to get them at a cheaper rate.