

= Droungarios of the Watch =

The Droungarios of the Watch (Greek : ??????????? ??? ?????? / ?????? , droungarios t?s viglas / vigl?s) , sometimes anglicized as " Drungary of the Watch " , was originally a senior Byzantine military post . Attested since the late 8th century , the droungarios commanded the Vigla or " Watch " , one of the elite professional cavalry regiments (tagmata) of the middle Byzantine period , and was in charge of the Byzantine emperor 's personal security . From ca . 1030 , the office was disassociated from its military origin and was transformed into a senior judicial position , thereafter usually referred to as the Grand Droungarios of the Watch (?????? ?????????????? ??? ?????? / ?????? , megas droungarios t?s viglas / vigl?s) . The office continued to exist as a mostly honorific court dignity in the Palaiologan era , until the very end of the Byzantine Empire in the mid @-@ 15th century .

= = Military office = =

The Droungarios of the Watch was originally the commander of the Vigla (" guard watch ") or Arithmos (" number ") , the third of the tagmata , professional cavalry regiments headquartered in and around Constantinople , and distinct from the provincial or thematic troops . The title of droungarios itself means " commander of a droungos " , a term of Gaulish origin which came to be used as a term for a kind of tactical cavalry formation in the East Roman army of Late Antiquity . The term droungarios (Greek : ??????????????) is not documented before the early 7th century but might have been used as an informal or unofficial designation before that date . The office and the corresponding unit appear to have initially referred to ad hoc arrangements , but during the early 7th century these were formalized , like much of the East Roman army 's rank structure .

Judging from the unit 's name and the peculiar titles of its officers , it also had a considerable ancestry , dating back to the East Roman army , but it is unknown exactly when it was constituted as a tagma . The office of the Droungarios of the Watch at any rate is first attested ca . 791 , when Alexios Mosele is recorded as " spatharios and droungarios of the Watch " . In contrast to the other tagmata , the Watch and its commanders had special duties related to the safety of the Emperor and the imperial palace . Within Constantinople , the Watch provided guards for the palace precinct , and kept a permanent garrison at the Covered Hippodrome (also the droungarios 's seat

As detailed in the De Ceremoniis , the Droungarios of the Watch always accompanied the Emperor and was a frequent participant in various imperial ceremonies , often accompanied by his principal aide , the akolouthos . His ceremonial dress is indicated as the skaramangion tunic and a red sagion cloak , while on some occasions he bore a sword , a mace and an axe . The latter weapon was highly unusual for a Byzantine officer , and Guilland suggests that this was connected to his command of foreign troops via the akolouthos (who later notably became the commander of the axe @-@ bearing Varangian Guard) . In the 10th century , when several holders of the post were scions of the most prominent families of the military aristocracy , including Eustathios Argyros , John Kourkouas and Manuel Kourtikes , the droungarios occupied the 36th place in the imperial hierarchy and usually held the senior court dignities of anthypatos , patrikios or pr?tospatharios .

= = List of known holders = = =

Note : the list does not include holders known only through their seals but otherwise unidentified , or anonymous holders .

= = Judicial office = =

In ca . 1030 , the office changed from military to purely judicial , and was further distinguished by acquiring the epithet " Grand " (megas) in the 1070s . It seems that the droungarios took over the Court of the Hippodrome , extant since the mid @-@ 9th century and so known after its location in the Covered Hippodrome (or , according to an alternative interpretation , in the substructures of the

main Hippodrome of Constantinople) . This was followed by the creation of new courts and the restructuring of the Byzantine judicial system , so that in the Komnenian period (1081 ? 1185) , the Court of the Hippodrome or " Court of the Droungarios " (?? ?????????????? ?????????????? , to droungarikon dikast?rion) was one of the seven superior civil courts , alongside those of the Eparch of the City , the dikaiodot?s , the koiaist?r , the epi t?n krise?n , the pr?tast?kr?tis and the katholikos , who headed the court for fiscal affairs (d?mosiaka pragmata) . The droungarios also served as an appellate court for the decisions of the epi t?n krise?n . The holders of the post belonged to some of the most distinguished families of the civil aristocracy , including such men as Eustathios Rhomaïos , John Skylitzes and Andronikos Kamateros .

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= = Palaiologan era = =

Following the sack of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade in 1204 , the office 's continuity was broken , and when it reappears in the sources of the Palaiologan period , it had lost any judicial functions and resembled more its original military character : according to the mid @-@ 14th century Book of Offices of Pseudo @-@ Kodinos , the Grand Droungarios of the Watch was a subordinate of the Grand Domestic , charged with the night watch and with supervising the army 's scouts . In reality , however , it had become more of a sinecure and was essentially a court dignity devoid of any but ceremonial duties .

In Pseudo @-@ Kodinos ' work , the Grand Droungarios of the Watch ranks 24th in the imperial hierarchy , between the Eparch and the megas hetaireiarches . The Grand Droungarios 's distinctive court dress , as reported by Pseudo @-@ Kodinos , consisted of a gold @-@ brocaded hat (skiadion) , a plain silk kabbadion tunic and a staff (dikanikion) with a gilded knob on top , and covered with golden @-@ red braid below . For ceremonies and festivities , he bore the domed skaranikon , of yellow and golden silk and decorated with gold wire embroidery , and with a portrait of the emperor seated on a throne in front and another with the emperor on horseback on the rear .

The dignity survived until the end of the Byzantine Empire . The historian Sphrantzes equated the Ottoman post of Agha of the Janissaries to the Grand Droungarios of the Watch .

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